The Athelney Magazine



Covering the church parishes of Burrowbridge, Lyng, North Curry and Stoke St Gregory

Dec 23 & Jan 24

Who's Who

Details of other roles can be found on the website, athelneybenefice.com/whoswho

Benefice		
Vicar	Revd Dr Simon Bale	07970 936325, 01823 491587, vicar@athelneybenefice.com
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Treasurer	Pat Sollis	01823 490750, pat.sollis1@btinternet.com
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Churchwarden	Alison Perry	07470838707, office@athelneybenefice.com
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The Athelney Bulletin

As well as this monthly Athelney Magazine, there is a weekly publication available online and in each church. The Athelney Bulletin is emailed out each weekend and printed copies can be found in readiness for Sunday worship. The bulletin contains all the readings for each Sunday and also news and notices of upcoming events. If you would like to receive this bulletin in your email either contact vicar@athelneybenefice.com or complete the form on the benefice website, athelneybenefice.com/signup



Coffee, Tea and Fellowship across the Benefice

Each month there is a pattern of gatherings, featuring tea, coffee, cakes and conversation. All are open to all. All are wonderful opportunities to chat and all the cakes are guaranteed to be of a very high standard.

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Lyng

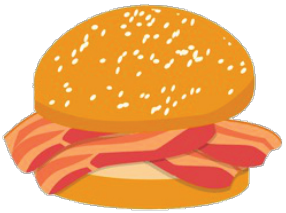
Lyng Village Hall is currently being modernised. Therefore the next coffee morning will be the 27th January 2024.



North Curry

Wednesdays at 10am in church.

Stoke St Gregory



The Levellers meet at 2.30pm every third Tuesday in the Williams Hall. A time of conversation and fellowship, often with a visiting speaker.

Thank you to everyone who helps with these events

IMPORTANT! PLEASE NOTE!

This is a double issue.
The deadline for the February issue will be 14th January.

Useful Information to help you and the editorial team

Copy deadline is **14th January** for the February Magazine;

Please send **content** in an email attachment (ideally a Microsoft Word documenet) to magazine@athelneybenefice.com. Please add "CONTENT" to the subject line. If you are sending content pertaining to more than one thing, please send separate attachments and for each please make it clear in which edition it is to appear. Please use 12-point Arial font and ensure that it fits into a maximum of 2 A5 pages where possible. To check this set your word document to be in landscape orientation with 2 columns.

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Any questions please send an email and one of the team will get back to you as soon as possible. Please use the group emails provided rather than sending things direct to one person.

Many thanks,
The Editorial Team

Prayer Across the Benefice

Prayer is at the heart of the Christian faith. It is a time to speak to God. Prayer is not simply kneeling and holding your hands together. It is not necessarily about sitting quietly and looking ever so Holy. Prayer can be a time of extreme frustration or a moment of utter joy when you can't stand still. It may happen when you read a poem or sing a song. Perhaps you have a favourite way to pray.

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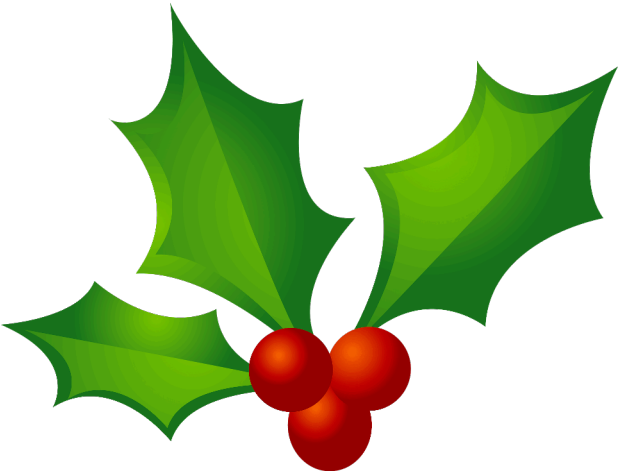


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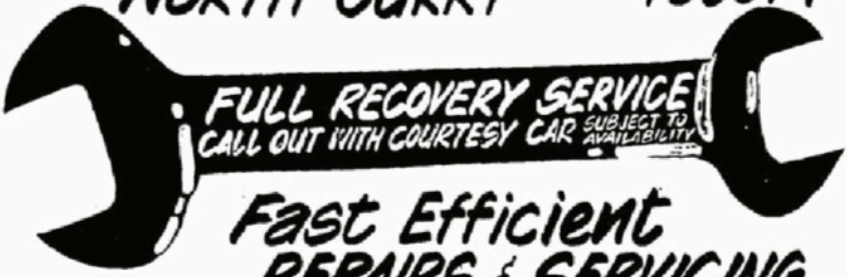


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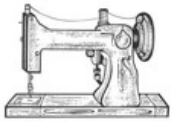
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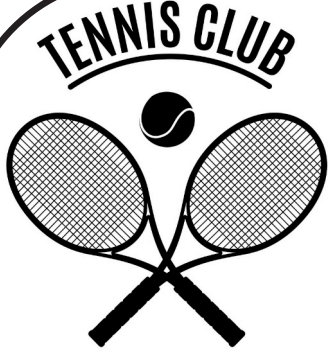


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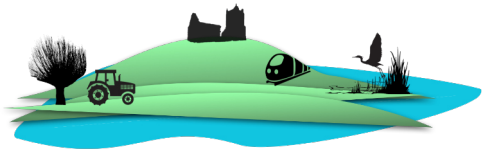
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The Athelney Benefice



Peace be with you

By Revd Dr Simon Bale, Vicar of The Athelney Benefice

Seasons greetings, right?

Peace on Earth and goodwill to all men and women (and children), right? How's that going for you? All peaceful? All happy? All settled? Thought not.

I have spent the past few months agonising over the News. I have watched through my fingers as the awful situation in The Holy Land has unfolded and I remain extremely concerned at how things are there. I am also agonised by the conflicts in all other places on Earth: Ukraine, Sudan, across the centre of Africa... the list is long. It's not just the region we clumsily call Palestine-Israel that faces conflict and death. Even so, because it *is* The Holy Land, at this time of year, as we do wish one another "Season's Greetings" it all seems even more significant… and challenging.

We are about to celebrate the "incarnate Deity": commemorating arrival into the material universe, of the child Jesus, God made man. The one who revealed to us the beauty and simplicity of humility, grace and mercy and who is the embodiment of "Peace on Earth". The irony cuts like a knife. Into the very location on Earth that is currently embroiled in a war of insane horror where children are still the victims of the aggression of adults, where families have been broken, came the child who we exult as the saviour of the world. The real world. Not the mythical one. The world of death and battles to be born.

Humans are not good at living peacefully. We fight, we bicker, we steal, we bully each other and then once a year, in our Christian world, we say, "hang on a minute: Peace and Goodwill and all that."

So, what's the problem for us as Christians as we do indeed celebrate and recall the message? Are we doing it wrong? Are we missing the point? Are we pretending Peace is possible when in fact we're just kidding ourselves? No. I truly believe we are not. And I say so because every day that I throw up my hands in horror at the violence in the world I also remember that within me, as one solitary guy in a green and pleasant land, I have all the power and ability that is required for me to be better at being an advocate for Peace. Notice the "P". I'm speaking of Shalom, the "deep Peace" of the universe that is often spoken of in the Celtic blessing:

"Deep peace of the running wave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you."

I say it often at gravesides when I am bidding farewell. But I say it also when I want to be re-earthed in the capacity of the message of Christ. The message was to live in Peace, the deep Peace that passes all understanding but we know when we feel it. At Christmas this feeling is nearer the surface than at other times and when it is we need to see what we can to do grasp it and keep it there all year long.

What happens, however, is that we rapidly put away this notion of deep Peace. We wrap it up in the swathling bands and put it back in the loft with all the baubles and tinsel. We make excuses for why it needs to be tidied up (it's the real world, remember: not that Sunday morning softly prayerful stuff) and we wander through the following year rationalising that "the real world" is different to the message of Christmas. It isn't, however, and the events in The Holy Land must remind us that unless we actually live according the humility advocated adult Jesus, who was himself almost a victim of an horrific slaughter of innocents (whose birth arguably led to the slaughter itself), we will always be living in fear of conflict. Our journey to Peace begins (or continues) by finding the capacity to live meekly, humbly, as Jesus explained in Matthew 5: blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth. Living humbly is how we can discover the Shalom of the Deep Peace. When we give away of ourselves and welcome people into our world, the capacity for Peace rises high. And, even as I write these words I think, how arrogant of me to tell you what to do. But I feel urged on. This Christmas and every day that follows it: pray for Peace, act for Peace, live for Peace. Walk humbly with God and proclaim the beauty of the reason for the season.

I wish everyone who I have bumped into this year a deep and lasting and Peaceful Christmas. I pray that you will find hope in the time you spend with those you love. I ask that you try to find time to wonder at the astounding gift of love and forgiveness we are given by God and that you can find ways to give of yourself to the real world.

Shalom
Salaam
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When I speak to my Mum on my birthday, she often recalls to me the events that surrounded my arrival in the world. These include nearly being born in the hospital lift, my older brother being smuggled in to see me under my dad's overcoat and of various aunts sneaking onto the maternity ward out of visiting hours by wearing their WRVS uniforms.

Each of us has a unique story about our birth. At Christmas we'll be recounting once again the story that we share about another birth - the birth of Jesus. Across the world we'll be re-telling and re-enacting what happened in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago. We'll recall the journey of Mary and Joseph, the birth in the stable, the arrival of the shepherds, the song of the angels, the visit of the Magi.

Our own birth stories are unique to each of us. Jesus's is common to us all. And not just because we all know about it. For in our recollection of Jesus' birth, we'll also be remembering that that in him, God came to be at one with us. In Jesus God arrived to share fully in our humanity, experiencing complete solidarity with every aspect of our human condition. Jesus is 'God with us' – in trenches in Ukraine, bomb shelters in Israel and Gaza, in hospital wards where loved ones die, in relationships where there is conflict and distress.

Just as much as he is with us in our greatest joys and our deepest woes, Jesus is also for us. One of the earliest teachers of the Church said this: 'He became what we are so that we might become what he is.' The baby born in Bethlehem stands with us not only in all that we experience. This child also comes to offer us the possibility of opening every part of our lives to the transforming power of God's life of love and joy and peace. He comes so that every day we can become a little more like him.

This is the good news of Christmas and may it be yours this year.

A very Merry Christmas to you all.

Martin's Musings December 2023



Annie and I share a very special day in October. It is OUR BIRTHDAY. (the 5th if you want to make a note for next year). Although separated by several years, each year we try to do something special we can both enjoy along with Emma and this year went to one of our favourite places – Sidmouth. There we enjoyed a fish and chip lunch, a walk along the front and then home via the Otter Garden Centre at Ottery St Mary where the cakes are for which to die.

However, whilst having lunch, I noticed that the famous department store at the centre of town had all its windows decorated for Christmas, which was not only nearly three months too early, but strange to behold on a beautiful autumn day. Although I fully realise that business needs to make the most from a financial point of view from Christmas throughout November and December, I thought this was a bit much. There is one good thing and about Halloween and its ghastly trick or treating imported from America and that it does hold Christmas at bay. For myself, I do enjoy the lights and decorations at a very dark and gloomy time of year, but I think of it as the season of Winterfest, leaving Christmas to be enjoyed from about 14th December onwards. Well, it works for me.

As this is the December magazine, however, I thought I would share a few thoughts as to the Season. Christmas for me is, of course, primarily about the annual remembrance of the birth of Jesus Christ, but it is also about enjoying the love and companionship of family and friends. I am impressed and amazed by the generosity of so many at Christmas when they go to so much trouble to find the perfect gift for a loved one, but the truth at the heart of this special time of year is that it is the thought behind any gift rather than its amount which counts. A simple and inexpensive gift carefully chosen and given with love is the most precious and valuable offering that we can make to family and or friends at this time of year to show our appreciation for their love for us given throughout the year. So, however you choose to spend the festive season, I hope you enjoy yourselves and Annie, Emma and I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a joyful New Year.



New Year's Resolutions

By Zillah Sykes

The chimes of the church clock rang out across the village as it never failed to do, hour by hour, day and night, throughout the year. Generally the people of the village paid scant attention to it, but that night the merry makers at the White Hart had spilled out of the door and with full glasses in hand they hushed their chatter and listened carefully to its ponderous chimes. "Eleven, twelve!" they shouted exuberantly and held their glasses high, calling out to one another, "Happy New Year!" - then hurried back indoors to the welcoming warmth of the log fire, it being a chill, damp night.

Around the village a few lights were still on and glowed softly through curtained windows. In her cottage Angela was snuggled cosily on the sofa with her dog Amber, sipping cocoa and nicely warmed by the dying embers of the fire. She had welcomed in the New Year with the resounding chimes of Big Ben and now she was watching a spectacular display of fireworks that was lighting up the sky so splendidly over the Thames. In previous years she and Georgia had enjoyed celebrating this memorable event together, but this year Jack had invited Georgia to greet the New Year with him, and in style. Earlier in the evening he had arrived dressed very smartly in suit and bow tie to accompany her to a dinner dance in a grand hotel in a nearby town.

"You're looking lovely tonight," Jack told her appreciatively. Georgia was wearing her sapphire blue prom dress, silver dancing shoes and her long auburn hair loose about her shoulders. She smiled a "Thank you," her eyes shining. They dined and danced the evening away, then danced some more. As the midnight hour approached, the band stopped playing, the clock chimed the hour and the old year died. Immediately the New Year was welcomed in with glasses raised and shouts of "Happy New Year!" The band resumed playing, balloons floated from the ceiling and something like golden rain began to fall, causing everyone to shine and glow in the soft light.

Jack kissed Georgia tenderly and led her back to their table where he refilled their glasses.

"Let's make this the happiest New Year ever!" he said and reaching into his pocket he brought out a plush little box and set it carefully on the table. "Marry me, Georgie!" he implored and opened up the box to reveal its contents: a solitaire diamond that shone and sparkled as it caught the light, set on a band of white gold.

"I hoped you would say that!" Georgia responded, looking into his eyes, her face full of smiles. Jack took the ring and slipped it onto her finger. "It's beautiful, Jack," she murmured, her eyes filling with tears. At that

moment he knew it had all been worth it, the waiting, the working and the saving to acquire this small, albeit costly, token of his love for her.

"You are more beautiful and far more precious than any diamond," he assured her and taking her hand he traced the ring that encircled her finger. "And my love for you will go on and on–I will love you always!" He drew her to him and she felt more than safe in his strong embrace.

"Thankyou for loving me." She spoke the words softly, quite overwhelmed by this love he had for her; a love unsought, unearned and unconditional that filled her with wonder and delight; a faint but sure reflection of the love that God has for each one of us.

The next morning Jack tumbled out of bed and bleary-eyed made his way downstairs where he found his parents turning the pages of a brand new calendar. He poured himself a coffee and joined them.

"One of those little white squares will be my wedding day!" he told them, still dazed with happiness. Then later that morning with their delight at his news and their hearty congratulations ringing in his ears he cycled round to Angela's cottage to meet, once again, the girl who had promised to be his bride.

"You'll be staying for lunch, Jack?" confirmed Angela, after warmly welcoming him into her home. And later that day as they sat together around the table, Jack all smiles and Georgia proudly wearing her engagement ring, Angela marvelled with full and grateful heart at the power of love to transform lives, bringing with it so much joy and hope for the future. When she and Georgia had arrived in the village four years ago they had lost so much; no longer wearing a wedding ring she felt that she was facing an unknown future alone.

Yet she had not been alone. She had found the Love that had been with her all along, One that would never leave her but would be with her always: the Love of God in Christ Jesus. A Love for everyone and forever.



Village Advent Christingle Service

You are all invited to the Methodist Church
on **Sunday 3rd December at 4pm**,
to share the meaning of the Christingle

Come and complete a
Christingle to take home with you

and light a candle in the darkness!

This is an ecumenical service between
the churches in North Curry and beyond.

Burrowbridge



Christmas Services in Burrowbridge

Come and join the sense of wonder in Burrowbridge church this Christmas, inside and out, in the shadow of the Mump, in the heart of the parish church.

Sunday 17th December, at 4.30pm, in the early evening darkness we gather to sing carols and hear the word of God and the foretelling of Jesus's arrival.

Wednesday 20th December, at 6.30pm, outside at the church door and around the tree we will sing carols and pray for Peace on Earth before moving to the King Alfred Inn for something to rehydrate our vocal chords.

Christmas Eve at 6.30pm we celebrate the first Eucharist of Christmas in church, welcoming God made flesh in Jesus.

All are welcome to all of these services:
blessed times for joyful prayer and song.



Thank you!

To those who organised the Autumn Quiz last month in the Coronation Hall.

What a fun evening! A great turn out, a great quiz and a wonderful plate of chilli!

All very much appreciated. More, please!



Monthly Market at the Coronation Hall

The second Saturday of every month, 10.30am to 12.30pm.

West Yeo Road, TA7 0RH

A time to gather and chat and to buy locally sourced food, goods and other produce.

Tea, coffee and breakfast rolls also available



Burrowbridge
Coronation Hall

FREE ADMISSION

CHRISTMAS FAIR

CRAFT & PRODUCE STALLS, RAFFLE, VISIT FROM SANTA,
HOT DRINKS, LIGHT SNACKS, MULLED WINE & CIDER

SUNDAY 10th DECEMBER

3pm to 6pm

West Yeo Road
TA7 0RH
WWW.BURROWBRIDGEHALL.CO.UK

Lyng



Christmas in Lyng

Advent Fair 2nd December: 10:30-12:30 refreshments, cakes, tombola stalls and raffle. Guess the weight of the cake. Trips Up the tower to admire the fantastic views.

Tuesday 19th December, 6.15pm: Carols in the Church Yard with refreshments afterwards in the church. Warm up by singing then get warmer still with seasonal refreshments!

Saturday 23rd December 4pm: Carol service in church with refreshments (again, of course!). Sing your heart out and hear the traditional readings. A time of reflection and hope in a busy world.

Christmas Eve at 6.30pm at Burrowbridge Church: The 1st Mass of Christmas. We will be joining our friends at Burrowbridge for this time of thanksgiving and praise. All welcome. Park in the King Alfred Car Park.

Sunday 31st December: United Benefice Service for all four parishes in Lyng with a special twist for new years eve, with refreshments.

Cleaning rota

4th and 11th December: Mrs A Perry Mrs L Willis.

18th: Mrs J Barnstable & Mrs S Dare.



Rotas at Lyng Church

If anyone would like to join the Lyng rotas please contact Alison harveyfudge@icloud.com or 07470 838707.

The more the merrier!

Flowers are just two small brass vases on the altar and the small container on the war memorial.

North Curry



North Curry Coffee Shop

We continue to be very busy serving our weekly lunch specials which range from homemade quiche to pork pie and salad for just £5. A range of homemade bakes are also on offer or maybe a cheese scone and chutney or a cream tea may take your fancy! Local arts, crafts, cards and jewellery stocks are refreshed every 6-8 weeks so keep an eye out for our new displays. Our opening hours are Tuesday-Sunday 10am-5pm. If you would like to join our friendly team of volunteers please leave a message for Alison Stone on 01823 491414 or coffeeshop@northcurry.com, the hours you work go towards a donation to your chosen charity. We look forward to welcoming you.

Carols in the Square on Monday 18th December at 6pm.



Start the Christmas week by gathering in Queen Square Garden and singing your favourite carols.

Come well wrapped up and bring a torch or lantern. Carol sheets provided. This is a Family affair - all ages welcome.

200 CLUB

200 Club winners

Winners on Sunday 5th November

1st Julia Rhône

2nd Sheila Billinghurst

3rd Diana Highley

The 200 Club still has room for one more! Players must be 18yrs+ to join. Only £18 per year (£1.50/month)

Prizes each month £30/ £20/ £10, plus a special Christmas bonus draw of £60. Proceeds for churchyard maintenance

To sign up, contact Sue Bethune on 01823 490179. Cheque payments to North Curry PCC, Standing Order/ BACS payments to North Curry PCC,
Account No: 00514650,
Sort Code: 30-98-45



Keep the date!

Saturday evening 2nd March 2024.
North Curry Village Quiz and Supper Night.
Details to follow in the New Year.

White Street News from North Curry Sport

200 Club: Congratulations to this month's 200 Club Winners: Congratulations to these winners: 2 Youth Football Club and N Grant. Still some openings in the 200 Club , still only £12 per year! Easy to set up: just email whitestreet@northcurry.com.

Big Bash 2024

Following the success of the 2023 Big Bash there will be a repeat performance in 2024 on the August bank holiday weekend. The organisers are keen to understand how people would like to see the event improve. Although tickets are limited to 350, we are very eager to provide the best experience possible. So, if you have ideas on how you'd like BB24 to develop please send them to whitestreet@northcurry.com.

We are thinking about how to provide food next year and a particularly interested in your opinions.

1. Do you want food to continue to be included in the ticket?
2. Would you like a broader choice of food options?
3. Would you like us to arrange several different vendors so you can choose and pay on the day?

Thanks for the first suggestion to include an ice cream van for dessert, we think that's a great idea.

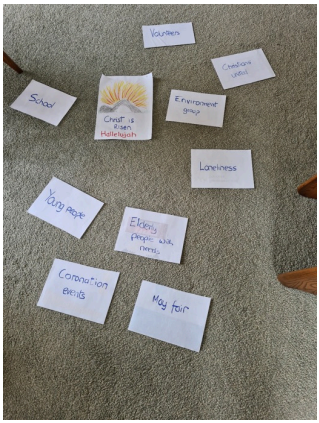
Look forward to hearing from you!

From the BB24 Organising Committee

North Curry Ecumenical Prayer Time: All Welcome!

"It helps me get my thoughts in order, look back on what's happened and look ahead", "I am pleased to get to know people in the village who go to other churches", "I have come away encouraged – it is helping my faith to grow", "I find it refreshing to be with others who want to pray"

We meet usually on the 4th Saturday of the month at 9.30 in the morning to pray together for North Curry. We follow a simple pattern of giving thanks for God's goodness, reflecting on our own lives and then praying for the village. Our longing is that God's love will be known more and more and we pray for God's blessing in many different areas of life.



None of us are 'prayer experts' some share words of prayer aloud, some like to pray silently, we believe God hears what is in our hearts and everyone who comes along is a great encouragement. See church notices for venues. Next gathering: 9th December, 9.30am, to pray for our Chrismas worship

North Curry and District Amateur Gardeners: Heaven Sent: the Scents of Christmas, Alex Dart.

Friday 1st December 7.30 for 8pm at North Curry Village Hall.

Clove, cinnamon, orange, frankincense,myrrh - the scents of Christmas…. and much more. Scents evoke memories - of childhood, the seaside, roses in an English garden or night air laden with jasmine and gardenia. Only 1% of plant species contain essential oils - learn more about who they are and what they do. Alex will talk about the history of these plants and what parts of a plant may contain oil (leaves, rind, bark, roots, flowers, needles and cones, rind, berries, resin and seeds). Taking an oil from each of those groups, she will explain the differences in composition of various oils - e.g. a flower oil such as rose and say an oil from a root (valerian) or a resin (frankincense /myrrh), or rind (orange, lemon). There will be opportunities for the audience to smell the oils.



There is no meeting in January, so our first talk in 2024 in on Friday February 2nd: Greg Morter on "From Seed to Fork". We are a lively and friendly club and guests and new members are always welcome so do come and join us for the talk and stay for coffee, a chat and biscuits afterwards. Any queries or questions, call Sue on 491658.

North Curry Village Choir

Christmas Concert

Fauré Requiem (extracts)
Soloists
Audience & Choir Carols

Thursday 7th December
7:30pm

North Curry Village Church

Tickets £10 from Village Post Office, Choir Members or online at
www.ticketsource.co.uk

www.northcurryvillagechoir.org

Wednesday 13th December: Emma, Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson

NORTH CURRY SOCIETY



By Capt. Alex Morrice RN Rtd

The Society's December talk anticipates Christmas with festive snacks, after which Alex examines a famous relationship, a sad story of wasted talent and "what might have been", set in a time of political turmoil in Europe.

Wednesday 17th January: The Evolving Parish Registers of North Curry and the Stories They Tell

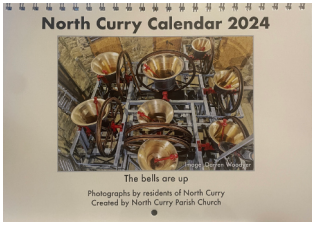
By Angela Dix

In January Local Historian Angela Dix uses the background of North Curry to explain how English Parish Registers have evolved since 1539.

With refreshments from 7.30pm, the talks will start each evening at 8pm. Both members (Annual Subscription £15) and guests (your £5 entrance fee will be credited to you if you decide to join) are assured of a warm welcome.



The North Curry Society meets in North Curry Village Hall on the third Wednesday of each month to hear talks and presentations on the environment and heritage of the village and its surrounds. (Colin Trim, Chairman)



Another Year in North Curry

Created by the Parish Church
from photographs taken by local residents

£10, including envelope

All profits go to support the Parish Church

On sale at Village Shop, Produce Market and Parish Church

Stoke St Gregory



Do you ever give a thought to the beautiful and ancient church we have in the heart of our village? Many will have attended important events there at different times – weddings, baptisms and, sadly, funerals, memorial services and Remembrance Sundays; even school leavers' services and some social events. We can all remember times of celebration and joy and others that bring each of us to reflect on our own losses and mortality. It has stood there, rock-solid, grey and steadfast for everybody, over almost a thousand years of our nation's history. Can we just assume that it will probably be there for the next thousand? Sadly, this may not be the case without some significant help from all those who have used it in the past and hope to do so in the future. We have a great deal of work looming up to maintain it in a safe condition.

The east wall of the Lady Chapel has suffered severe degradation following the erection by our Victorian predecessors of two large and very heavy stone memorials in there. These have now been removed, exposing an area of collapsed stonework requiring expert repair. The condition of the churchyard paths has long been a subject of discussion and head-scratching and will need serious investments to make good. We have just had an interim report on our latest five-yearly architect's inspection which highlights developing problems on parts of the roof. (Which church doesn't have roof problems?) And so the saga continues.

This glorious building is not there just for the vicar and a few others to gather for worship on a Sunday but for ALL OF YOU, ALL THE TIME. The regular worshippers would be sad to see it fall into disrepair but we can worship anywhere. Would you seriously like to see it abandoned and derelict? Do you have loved ones in the churchyard? Just where in your own village would you or your family like to be baptised, married or buried?

Obviously, we need to raise funds and it cannot all come out of the pockets of the few who already know and love their church. If you have never set foot inside St Gregory's then please come in and take a look around – feel the atmosphere, enjoy the peace and think your own thoughts – we're open every day during daylight hours.

If you feel moved and able to make a donation towards the monumental tasks we have ahead please contact the Vicar, Church Warden or Treasurer to find out how. Details below.

Rev Dr Simon Bale: 07970 936325, Jane White: 07799 201145 (Warden)
Steve Loveridge: 07808 656329 (Treasurer)

Christmas Services at the Parish Church in December/ January

(Full details for the whole benefice are also on the back pages)

Sunday 3rd,11.00am: Advent Sunday Eucharist

Sunday 10th, 08.30am: Communion Service

Sunday 17th, 6.30pm: Carol Service (with the Baptist Congregation)

Thursday 21st, 6.30pm: Carols in the Square with a visit from Father Christmas

Christmas Eve: 3pm: Crib Service, 10pm: First Mass of Christmas

Christmas Day,10am: United Benefice Christmas Eucharist (North Curry)

Sunday 31st, 11am: United Benefice Eucharist (Lyng)

Sunday 7th January, 08.30am: BCP Communion Service

This is a change to the usual arrangements because of the Stoke Stampede that morning.

Sunday 14th Jan, 11.00am: Eucharist

Altar Frontal

St Gregory's has received the gift of a new red altar frontal. Planned by the donors in memory of their late parents who were worshippers at St Gregory's, and designed and created beautifully by Bee Kay in North Curry, the frontal was installed for our recent period of Remembrance and blessed at the first Eucharist of the season by Rev Martin.



North Curry Mummers on Boxing Day, St Stephen's Day on 26th December



Mumming is best described as early pantomime. The plays are based loosely on the legend of St. George and the dragon. The plays are intended to show the struggle between good and evil.

Mummer's plays are often comic in tone with a formal structure but allowing for many comic asides and there is an element of community celebration and humour in the performances. Broadly comic performances, the most common type features a doctor who has a magic potion able to resuscitate the vanquished character.

Travelling players in the Middle Ages performed "Miracle" or Mystery" plays illustrating scenes from the bible such as the Fall of Lucifer, the Creation and Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, etc. but this was not mumming as we understand it.

The word 'Mummer' is derived perhaps from the old English word mum (meaning silent, i.e., miming) or the Old French word mom meaning masked or disguised. They were common in 18/19th C with numerous villages hosting a version of the standard format.

Many of the costumes for the Mummers hide their faces and this acts as both increasing the mystery and liberating the performers around those they would know. This is consistent with the concept of 'guising', going in disguise as part of festivities. So masks, streamers, hats with strips hanging down and covered faces are often used to strange and beguiling effect.

The Mummers focus is on the changing seasons with St. George as Summer and the Dark Knight as Winter and the ever-cyclical nature of… well, nature!

This ummissable free event, (although there will be a collection for our Hub project), is the ultimate feel-good event after a strenuous Christmas as it is both heartwarming and hilarious. Our Shop and Café will also be open for snacks and warm drinks.



Come and see how we go above and beyond in building a better Community in our Village!

Christmas Evening

With Kingsbury Episcopi Band

Friday 15th December ~ Stoke St Gregory

Join us at Williams Hall, Dark Lane,
Stoke St Gregory TA3 6EU
for an evening of

Christmas music, Mulled wine, Mince pies
and a raffle.

Doors open at 7pm

Cash and Card Bar will be available on the night

Tickets £8.00 including mulled wine & mince pie
Under 16s free

Available from the Village shop, Paul on 01823 490565
and available on the door

@williamshallevents

Playing Field Committee Celebrate Grant Success



The playing field are delighted to have been awarded a grant to install a youth shelter on the Playing Field from the Valencia Communities Fund.

Following discussions with some of the young people who use our playing field it became obvious that they really need somewhere safe they can hang out with their friends. Working with them the PFMC applied to the Valencia Communities Fund for a grant and have been awarded £11,442.

Neil, Chair of the Playing Field Management Committee says 'we are thrilled to able to work with some of the young people who use our playing field to install the shelter to keep them dry and safe. We will be working with them to agree to the final location and colours as well them deciding on the rules and being responsible for ensuring that everyone sticks to them'.

The PFMC are hoping that the shelter will be a great asset for other groups including the Willowset, Friends of School, the scouts, and residents of the village, helping to keep children and dog walkers dry and somewhere for everyone to take to seat and rest their legs.

The plan is to start work early next year when the weather and field aren't so wet.

CCTV installed

Due to the vandalism on the playing field in recent months CCTV has now been installed, which is covering a large area.

Valencia Communities Fund

Stoke St Gregory Flowers

The 2024 flower rota has now been circulated, if you have any queries or have swapped a duty with another arranger then do please let me know. We will decorate the Church for Christmas on Saturday 16th December.

Please note that the Christmas arrangements will be kept going until Candlemas at the beginning of February 2024. Please clear any items you wish to keep from your arrangements by Friday 2nd February otherwise I will place items for collection in the Choir Vestry.

Many thanks for all your efforts and beautiful arrangements during the past year. Wishing you a Happy Christmas.

Amelia Holt, 01823 490401

Travelling at 17 and a half miles an hour halfway round the world

A talk by John Clarke, Saturday 2nd December at 3pm in the Stoke St Gregory Church Room



In aid of St Gregory's church funds. All are welcome.

In July 1969 John left University with a law degree and worked on a merchant ship for 4 months travelling from London up the Mississippi to Port Sulphur, on through the Panama canal carrying a cargo of sulphur to New Zealand. From there he sailed to the Fiji islands taking on a cargo of sugar.



It was truly "a rite of passage" and the talk is an illustrated account with 104 slides of that voyage 54 years ago with diary readings made at the time.

Please come along and support the church and be engaged in maritime exploits!

ST GREGORY PLAYING FIELD

STOKE STAMPEDE
SUNDAY 7th JANUARY 2024

Race Starts 11am from The Old Rose & Crown in Woodhill

Please note that The Village Square will be closed for traffic between 10:30am and 1.00pm.



Thank you for your patience during the run and helping us make sure that it's a fun and safe event for everyone!

Entries are now closed as the maximum number allowed has been reached.

If you have missed out on entering then why not help out by being a marshal – if interested please contact

Tom Duxbury: 0771 4696707



Parish Council Report

The Parish Council are pleased to welcome three new Councillors who were co opted in September and October.

Mr David Cuthbertson, Mr Lawrence Bostock and Mr John Derby.

Our new Parish Clerk Sally Taylor was interviewed and appointed in October.

All enquiries to the Parish Council will now be received by Sally on the usual Parish Clerk email address: ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk

Community Plan update on progress

The Parish Council will now monitor the progression of items in the Community plan

Health and well being

The Parish Council sponsored a training session in the village hall for everyone to participate in, which covered all aspects of CPR and how to use the defibrillator in the village. The event in September was well attended and as a result the Parish Council is considering applying for funding for two further defibrillators , one at Curload and one at Meare Green so that everyone has easier access.

The Village now has a Petanque Court at the Village Hall Car Park.

Anyone can use this facility free of charge at any time. If anyone would like to set up a Petanque League in time for the Spring and Summer months next year please let us know.

Once the league is set up the Stoke St Gregory W.I will sponsor the printing costs of the League cards and the Trophy cup.

Youth Project

Plans are still in progress for new facilities on Stoke St Gregory Playing fields for the young people in the village. Grant applications and fundraising are in progress.

Anne Merritt is organizing a Christmas sing a long in the Village Hall for all on the 25th November. All proceeds will go to the Youth Project.

Village Fete Committee

We are forming a small committee to organize the annual village fetes. This was one of the items that was highlighted in the village plan. It is hoped that all the village organizations will take part in this annual event on the village playing fields. Local village arts and crafts will also be very welcome. If anyone in the village would like an opportunity to have a craft stall please let us know. The Village Fete next year is Saturday 6th July 2024.

Footpaths

We would like to thank the footpath group of Stoke St Gregory Environment group for the sterling work they have been doing clearing our footpaths, repairing and replacing stiles etc in liaison with landowners and the local authority footpath officer. Most recently a group of volunteers helped to clear the Polkesfield footpath The Parish Council support the group by providing the necessary equipment needed.

Pollution

The Parish Council are planning to set up a group to monitor pollution in the village. They will be seeking external advise from professionals in order to measure levels of pollution. We are looking for representatives from Stoke Environment group, the school and other village organizations to join the group. If you would like to be involved please contact our Parish Clerk, Sally Taylor.

Communication

vThere are plans to refurbish and strengthen our Parish Noticeboard in the village .

A monthly cafe is planned so that people have the opportunity to speak to a Councillor about any issue they may have.

Details of the times and venue will be on the Parish noticeboard, Parish website and The Stoke Villagers facebook page.

Friday 15th December is Stoke St Gregory WI's Christmas meal at The Royal Oak from 12noon for a 12:30pm lunch.

We then will meet back in the Village Hall from 7pm for the first members meeting of the New Year on Tuesday 9th January.

Jackie Jay will be demonstrating needle felting with all members receiving an individual kit so they can participate.

Vicki Fielding is to give the vote of thanks, Sandra Gleed and Lesley Dyson are on tea hostess duty and Jackie Daniels is running the trade stall.

We have an exciting agenda for the coming year so why not come along as a visitor on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. It only costs £4 as a visitor and you can visit for 3 times before joining - a warm welcome awaits.



On behalf of the whole committee we would like to wish our members a very Happy Christmas.

Amelia Holt

Proaction or Reaction?

Ian Upshall, Stoke Environment Group

Well, before you know it, Christmas is on everyone's lips and we are heading inextricably towards the end of another year! Is it an age thing, the world we live in, or are the years passing ever more rapidly?

Since our last article, we have seen quite a shift in the weather – not entirely unexpected. Storm Ciaran in late-October certainly brought with it some devastation, particularly along the south coast and the Channel Islands. Some weather events we can anticipate and prepare for – but others take us by surprise. In our area, we saw the usual increase in water levels with the consequent closure of local roads. Inconvenient but largely not life-threatening.

At the October 2023 'Somerset Prepared' workshop - run by the Somerset Civil Contingencies Unit - it was clear that the day's theme was centred on how communities can help themselves when it comes to protecting their residents, property and environment. Local emergency planning is something that all communities should be thinking about as we witness more events that impact on us. Of course, in our Parish, flooding is often cited as the principal threat to safety and wellbeing. Whilst it is a natural phenomena, the impact is made greater by those very things that we wish to protect – residents, property and the environment. A vicious circle, you might say. Many of the local threats and, indeed, incidents have been influenced by the way we live our lives, where and how we construct the built environment and how we managed and protect our environment. There is always more we can do to mitigate the unwelcome outcomes.

Stoke Environment Group is now well and truly in its winter programme of work. Cutting back the excess green growth now many species have gone into winter hibernation or made off for warmer climes, preparing for new spring growth, planting wildflowers and so on. We recently took over the management of the community orchard and thanks to a grant, we have added a new bench, raised beds, compost bins, habitats and planted fruit trees. This green space will really come into its own in the Spring of 2024 – a pleasant place to play, pick fruit and picnic.

At our AGM in October, it was unanimously agreed to start preparing for our Envirofair – which is to take place on 1 June 2024 at the Williams Hall. Envirofair23 was our best yet, attracting 30 varied organisations and around 150 local people. There was lots of support and definitely things we can build on. Our aim is to inform and inspire everyone to think about our wonderful environment and how we can all help it to help us. Our natural world gives us so many pleasures – its only fair and reasonable that we care for it. So, please make a date in the diary for 1 June 2024 as we would love to see you and hear about your inspiring stories. Further info:please contact us on envirostoke@yahoo.com or 07837 764367.

Heart of the Village News

by Mike Blair, Chairman

According to a recent report by Age Concern, thousands of villages are facing the loss of their last remaining shop or pub. Leaving communities without easy access to basic groceries, access to cash and other vital services.

We are no different from other community ventures in that we rely on our fantastic group of volunteers to provide its amazing service for the village. Our enthusiastic team has taken ownership of a number of the activities required to run the shop and pub. Our volunteers provide vital support, both customer facing and behind the scenes. Unfortunately, our volunteer pool is quite small and we struggle to cover all the necessary activities required to keep the pub and shop open. In order to make our venture financially viable and profitable, we desperately need to bolster the number of volunteers to spread the load, otherwise we may have to consider limiting the hours that the shop is open.

Contacts

General contact@hotvssg.org, Shop: shop@hotvssg.org Facebook search "Hotvshop", 07842992825

Pub: royaloakssg@gmail.com, Facebook search "Royal Oak Stoke St Gregory", 01823490602

We are in the process of upgrading our kitchen equipment, curtesy of a £16,000 grant from Valencia Waste Management. We hope to announce news of a further grant for Phase 3 changes to the Royal Oak later in December.

Christmas is fast approaching and we have already got a display of seasonal treats available in the shop. Both the shop and pub have a number of special events planned for the festive period. Our chef Jenna as well as providing her usual excellent fare is planning a one-off spectacular culinary experience; she will be producing a fantastic multi course feast. Details have not been finalised yet, but keep an eye out for further details!

Upcoming Events

Music night: 4th Thursday of the month

Christmas Fair: 4th December

Volunteer Celebration: 11th December

Traditional Mummers Play: 26th December (Boxing Day) at 12 noon

Just to remind you we are in real need of more volunteers to assist in keeping us successful and no matter how little time you can spare, there will be something you can help us with. It is a really sociable and friendly atmosphere and we would welcome you with open arms.

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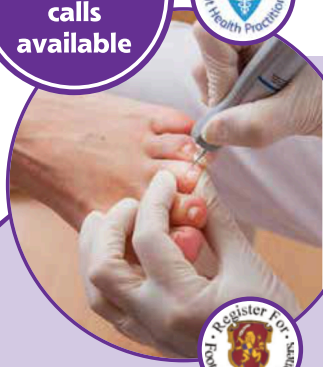
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Our meals are cooked by volunteer cooks in their own kitchens and delivered by friendly local people.
The current cost is £3.90/meal.

To learn more, whether as a potential customer or as a volunteer, please phone Carole Joll 01823 490077, or Vicki Fielding (490565) or Judy Blair (490222).





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Rotas

North Curry

	Sidespersons	Intercessors	Readers
3rd Dec	Tom & Lorraine	Jenny	David F.
10th Dec	Janet & Pam	David F.	David A.
24th Dec	Lin & Tom	Janet	Tom
25th Dec	Sally	Mary P.	Sally
7th Jan	Helen & Lorraine	David W.	Jenny
14th Jan	Lin & Pam	Jenny	Mary C.
21st Jan	Helen C.	Helen G.	Julian & David W.
4th Feb	Sally & Tom	Mary P.	Zillah



Stoke St Gregory

	Sidespersons	Readers	Cleaners	Flowers
3rd Dec	Carolyn & Will	Barbara	Dave & Janet	Amelia
17th Dec	Veronica & Annette (CS)	tbc	Penny & Simon	
24th Dec	Pat Sollis	Jane	Linda & Brett	
7th Jan			Amelia & Ade	Please see note on page 39 for further details regarding the flower rota
14th Jan	Penny & Simon	Steve	Marilyn & Terri	
21st Jan	Barbara & John	Will	Annette & Martin	
28th Jan	Alex & Sally	TBA	Dave & Janet	
4th Feb	Carolyn & Will	Carolyn	Penny & Simon	

Contact Amelia Holt if you are unable to undertake this duty. (01823 490401)

Services across the Benefice

Christmas Day

10am	Srtoke St Gregory	Christmas Day Service
10am	North Curry	United Benefice Christmas Day Eucharist

31st December, 1st Sunday of Christmas

11am	Lyng	United Benefice Eucharist
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Covenant service with communion
11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship

7th January, Epiphany

8am	North Curry	Prayer Book Eucharist
8.30am	Stoke St Gregory	Prayer Book Eucharist (no 11am service due to Stoke Stampede)
9.30am	Lyng	Eucharist
10am	North Curry	Eucharist
10am	Stoke Baptists	no service due to Stoke Stampede
11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship

14th January Second Sunday of Epiphany

8.30am	Stoke St Gregory	Prayer Book Eucharist
9.30am	Burrowbridge	Eucharist
10am	North Curry	Eucharist
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Family service
11am	Stoke St Gregory	Eucharist
11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship

21st January Third Sunday of Epiphany

8am	North Curry	Prayer Book Eucharist
9.30am	Lyng	Service of the Word
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Family service
11am	Stoke St Gregory	Joint ecumenical Eucharist with Stoke Baptists
11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship
4pm	North Curry	Evensong

28th January Presentation of Christ

9.30am	Burrowbridge	Eucharist
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Family service
11am	Stoke St Gregory	Eucharist
11am	North Curry Methodists	United Methodist Covenant Service

4th February Second Sunday before Lent

8am	North Curry	Prayer Book Eucharist
9.30am	Lyng	Eucharist
10am	North Curry	Eucharist
10am	Stoke St Gregory	Eucharist

Services across the Benefice

3rd December, Advent Sunday

8am	North Curry	Prayer Book Eucharist
9.30am	Lyng	Eucharist
10am	North Curry	Eucharist
10am	Stoke Baptist Church	Messy Church starting with breakfast
11am	Stoke St Gregory	Advent Sunday Eucharist
11am	NC Methodist Church	Morning Worship
4pm	NC Methodist Church	Village Advent Christingle (United Service)

10th December, Second Sunday of Advent

8.30am	Stoke St Gregory	Communion Service
9.30am	Burrowbridge	Eucharist
10am	North Curry	Eucharist
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Family service with communion
11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship with Holy Communion

17th December, Third Sunday of Advent

8am	North Curry	Prayer Book Eucharist
9.30am	Lyng	Service of the Word
10.30am	Stoke Baptists	Family Service
3pm	North Curry Methodists	Carol Service
4pm	North Curry	Carol Service
4.30pm	Burrowbridge	Carol Service
6.30pm	Stoke St Gregory	Carol Service with the Baptist Congregation – all welcome

Outdoor Carols

18th	6pm	North Curry (Square)
19th	6pm	Lyng
20th	6.30pm	Burrowbridge
21st	6.30pm	Stoke St Gregory

Saturday 23rd

4pm	Lyng	Carol Service

Christmas Eve

11am	North Curry Methodists	Morning Worship
3pm	Stoke St Gregory	Crib Service
5pm	North Curry	Crib Service
6pm	Stoke Baptists	Family Christingle service
6.30pm	Burrowbridge	1st Eucharist of Christmas (with Lyng)
10pm	Stoke St Gregory	1st Mass of Christmas
11.30pm	North Curry	Midnight Mass