

THE STONE & ECCLESHALL Gazette

JULY / AUGUST 2026

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September/October edition is out on September 3rd
Editorial Copy Deadline - August 21st
Advertisement Booking Deadline - August 24th

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Once you've finished enjoying your Gazette, please recycle it, by giving it to a friend!

All that and I didn't even mention the World Cup

Living in England, we should mock at the possibility of ever owning an air conditioner, yet with our summers getting hotter each year, I might have to get one, when they're back in stock that is, as it seems everyone has had the same idea, and the country has sold out completely.

Ironically, my life's dream has been to retire to Spain to avoid the never-ending English winters in my golden years, yet it's 40 degrees there and rising, too hot for me, and our winters ain't like they used to be are they? *I'm staying put!*

It's a stacked Gazette, so thank you to all those who have sent in stories and pictures for the first time, as well as many thanks to all of our regular contributors.

Stone has a new Town Mayor, Cllr Andrew Best, who takes over from former Mayor, Cllr Jason Metters. Well done Jason on a fantastic year serving Stone, and we welcome Andrew, and wish him all the best as our new Mayor.

Well done to Jamie Richards, of Stone based charity AEDdonate, who was awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours List for his services to Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness, through the tireless work they have done installing public defibrillators. Also an MBE for Lou Macari, the former professional footballer and football manager, and founder of the Macari Foundation, he was awarded for services to Association Football and to homeless people in Stoke-on-Trent.

Happy 80th Birthday to Stone Bridge Club, and thank you to Kath Adams for sending in the history of the club over all those years. Happy 20th birthday to long

time advertisers Balance & Beam who have welcomed more than 250,000 children through its doors since opening in 2006, an amazing achievement.

There are quite a few inspirational stories in this edition like; Joan Blake, Peter Longstaff and Pam Kulikovski, who have, between them, given 157 years of voluntary service to Great Bridgford Village Hall, now that's commitment.

Bert has become a published author at 101 years of age, just showing that it's never too late to follow a dream. Stone resident Mike Halliday also realised his long held dream of flying a Second World War Supermarine Spitfire fighter plane over Stone. Laura Ganderton, a deaf amateur cyclist, is set to ride every stage of the Tour de France Femmes route, covering more than 1,000 kilometers across France. Football-loving Keith, a resident from Shoemaker Place Care Home, has enjoyed a memorable behind-the-scenes experience at Stoke City Football Club.

The Salvation Army charity store in Stone are giving away free school uniform items in the lead up to the new school term, including hundreds of new items donated by a corporate donor, to help families and guardians with school age children, a thoughtful initiative in these tough times for many families.

There's tonnes of events coming up, too many to mention here, but flick through your Gazette as soon as you get it, as many events take place early July, and you don't want to miss them!

All that and I didn't even mention the World Cup - Come on England!

Dan Mitchell 29/06/26



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AEDdonate Founder and CEO Awarded MBE in The King's Birthday Honours List

Stone based AEDdonate is delighted to announce that its Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Jamie Richards, has been awarded an MBE in The King's Birthday Honours List.

The honour recognises Jamie's services to Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness through his work as Founder and Chief Executive of AEDdonate.

Through his dedication to improving access to life-saving defibrillators and emergency response education, Jamie has helped communities across the UK become better prepared to respond when every second counts.

Jamie's journey began long before AEDdonate was founded. During his career as a firefighter, he witnessed first-hand the vital role a defibrillator can play during a sudden cardiac arrest. He also recognised that access to these life-saving devices was limited in many communities.

Driven by a belief that everyone should have access to a defibrillator when they need one most, Jamie left the fire service in 2014 with a vision to help change that. That vision became AEDdonate.

Today, AEDdonate works with communities, organisations and partners across the UK to improve access to defibrillators, raise awareness and empower people with the knowledge and confidence to act in an emergency.

Commenting on the award, Jamie Richards MBE, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of AEDdonate, said:

"Receiving an MBE is an extraordinary honour and one that I never imagined I would receive. I am deeply humbled and incredibly grateful to be recognised in this way."

"Whilst this award bears my name, it is really a reflection of the remarkable people who have stood alongside AEDdonate throughout our journey. Our dedicated staff, volunteers, trustees, supporters, fundraisers, partners and donors have all played a vital role in helping us build something truly special."

"What began as a simple belief that everyone should have access to life-saving defibrillators has grown into a mission that continues to bring communities together. Time and again, we have seen the



Jamie Richards MBE

difference that people can make when they unite behind a shared purpose, supporting one another and helping to create safer, more resilient communities."

"I would like to thank everyone who has supported our mission, particularly those who have shared their personal experiences and trusted us to help make a difference where they live and work. This honour belongs to them as much as it does to me."

"I accept this recognition with immense pride on behalf of the entire AEDdonate family and with renewed determination to continue our work. There is still much more to do, and we remain committed to improving access to life-saving equipment, education and awareness for communities across the UK."

Colin Hurley, Chairman of AEDdonate, said: *"I am delighted to congratulate Jamie on being awarded an MBE, a richly deserved honour that recognises his exceptional dedication to public service and community wellbeing."*

"Through his outstanding work with AEDdonate, Jamie has made a significant and lasting contribution, helping to improve access to life-saving equipment and raising awareness of its vital importance."

"This recognition is a fitting tribute to the leadership, commitment and positive impact Jamie has demonstrated in service to others."

King's Birthday Honours for Staffordshire

A few of the other local residents who received an honour include:

- MBE for Jeremy Paul Cartwright, of Uttoxeter, Chair of the Corporation Board of Stoke-on-Trent College, for services to Further Education;
- MBE for Neil Cotterill, of Stoke-on-Trent, Community Engagement Advisor, Department for Work and Pensions, for services to the youth community of North Staffordshire;
- MBE for Anthony Hill, of Newcastle-under-Lyme, physical education officer at HMP Stafford, HM Prison and Probation Service, for public service;
- MBE for Lou Macari, of Stoke-on-Trent, former professional footballer and football manager, founder of the Macari Foundation, for services to Association Football and to homeless people in Stoke
- MBE for Nichola Twemlow, of Stoke-on-

Trent, Group Chair of Made in Stoke for services to philanthropy and to the community in Stoke-on-Trent;

- MBE for Dr Karen Jayne Weldon (Karen Juggins), of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Lead of the Keep Stoke Smiling Dental Health Campaign and Consultant Orthodontist, University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust, for services to dentistry;
- BEM for Michael John Barnard, of Stafford, President of the Mid Staffs Junior Football League, for services to grassroots football;
- BEM for David Mark Green, of Kidsgrove, duty manager at Transport for Greater Manchester, for services to diversity and inclusion in Manchester;
- BEM for Elizabeth Mary Greig, of Stoke-on-Trent, volunteer at the Royal Voluntary Service centre at Hanley, for services to the community in Stoke-on-Trent.

Stone Mum Starts National Petition To Change The Law For Organ Donors Wishes

Kirsty Sinclair, from Stone, is a mum to 5 year old Harrison who is on the waiting list for a liver transplant. He has Alagilles syndrome - a rare genetic condition that affects liver, heart, kidneys, growth, bones and more.

You may remember reading about Harrison in the March Stone Gazette. Kirsty said "I'm now trying to get the law of organ donation overruled."



"Harrison revived star of the week from school. Something that we never thought possible"

The reason is; If you sign the donor register, then you would think that if anything happened, your wish would be honoured, and life saving organs would be donated to many people.

However, there is a shortage, and this is obviously not good in a situation when your 5 year old needs one. Along with so many others. Harrison has been waiting for 15 months on the liver transplant list. I have started a petition on [Change.org](https://www.change.org) called Harrison's law.

Please visit <https://www.change.org/HarrisonsHero2> and sign the petition, it takes less than a minute, every signature counts and helps save lives."

The Issue

Every day, families across the world face agonizing waits for organ transplants, desperately hoping for a chance at life. My little boy Harrison is one of those waiting. He needs a liver transplant, but the reality is stark - there just aren't enough organs being donated to meet the demand.

In many cases, even when a patient has expressed their wish to be an organ donor, families are able to overrule this decision. This contradiction between the patient's expressed wish and family consent creates unnecessary barriers and can - and does - literally mean the difference between life and death for those on transplant waiting lists.

Statistics indicate that thousands of people die each year while waiting for an organ transplant.

This crisis is exacerbated by the chronic shortage of available organs. Moreover, donor registries often include individuals who have made their wishes clear, yet these wishes are not honoured due to family opposition.

We believe that a patient's wish to donate organs should be respected

above all, as it not only honours their autonomy and last wishes but also enhances the possibility of saving other lives. Laws need to be revisited and reformed to ensure that if a patient is a registered organ donor, their wishes are carried out regardless of family consent.

By advocating for this change, we can increase the supply of donated organs, give hope to more families, and save lives. To do this, we need action from the government to introduce legislation that prioritises the individual's consent over familial objections.



Harrison has the bravery of Three Lions. Seen here in his England Kit for the World Cup

Join us in this critical cause. Let's work together to ensure every willing organ donor can fulfill their wish and give others the invaluable gift of life.

Please sign this petition today and help us advocate for life-saving change.

<https://www.change.org/HarrisonsHero2>



"Hospital our second home"



Stone Classic Car Event

Stone Town Council will again play host to a collection of approximately 60 classic cars on **Saturday 11th July 2026**. This free event will take over the High Street and Market Square between 11:00am and 3:00pm.

A road closure will be in place for the High Street from 7:00am - 5:00pm on the day so no vehicles other than the classic cars which are part of the event will be able to access the High Street during those times.



Stone Town Council has been working with the Stone Carnival Committee to organise a collection of classic cars in Stone High Street. Most of the cars are local to Stone and represent some of the finest classic cars in the area. This year's event will showcase cars from the 1950's and 1960's in the Market Square.

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Council's Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee said "The Town Council is pleased to be able to bring a Classic Car event to Stone High Street once again.



With such a wide range of vehicles there is sure to be something for everyone!

It has been a pleasure to work alongside the Stone Carnival Committee and we are very grateful to their support in co-ordinating this event which is free to attend and is always a family favourite."

Gazette

NEWS IN BRIEF

Colwich & The Haywoods Open Gardens

Taking place 5th July 2026 from 10am until 4pm.

Programmes will be available from Great Haywood Village Hall, and all the gardens on the day, also they are available at local businesses prior to the event. For more information please contact Ann Jones on 07724 053981.

Oulton Watercolour Society Summer Exhibition

Oulton Watercolour Society have their Summer Exhibition on **Saturday the 4th of July** at Oulton Village Hall.

With Free entry, it's open from 10am till 4pm and there's a tea room with refreshments and a raffle.

If you'd like more information you can call 07751 445629. The group meet Thursday evenings from 7.30 - 9.30pm at Oulton Village Hall ST15 8UJ.



Major Ladies Wellness Event - Save the Date !

A successful bid for a grant to Staffordshire Federation of Women's Institutes has enabled them ambitious plans for a Wellness event for all women - not just WI members - to take place later this year.

The day-long event will be held at The County Showground on **Saturday 26 September** and activities will be free of charge. Experts will lead the activities - all aimed to allow women to take time to be kind to themselves.

The event's brainchild is Helen Newman, Federation Trustee and former Chair. She said, 'In these days of juggling roles and tasks, many women need to consider themselves from time to time and this event will showcase activities that can provide much needed calmness in their hectic lives'. She added, 'Some activities will be offered in timed slots but mostly they will be drop-in sessions throughout the day, allowing greater attendance and participation'.

For more information, head to the SFWI website www.sfwl.org

CU@4

Looking for a fun and engaging way to worship together as a family? Join us for our all-age worship service at St. Michael's Church, Stone.

CU@4 takes place once a month. Each session has a different theme with children's games and craft activities for all ages. Refreshments provided.

The next CU@4 is **4.00pm till 5.00pm on Sunday 26th July and 16th August**

Come along and enjoy a relaxed, welcoming environment where you can connect, learn, and grow in faith together. We can't wait to see you there!

Jelly Tots

Looking for a welcoming space where your little ones can play? Why not come along to Jelly Tots, a vibrant toddler group that meets **every Tuesday at St Michael's Church from 9.30am till around 10.45am.**

With fun games, engaging activities, and a friendly atmosphere, Jelly Tots offers a wonderful opportunity for toddlers and their parents/carers to explore, play, and make new friends. No child is too young - come along and have a coffee and a chat.

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, or carer, all are welcome at Jelly Tots. Why not come and experience a community that's as warm and joyful as its name?

Stone Heritage Centre - July Events

Practical Art Demonstration Saturday 18th July 2026

Following local artist Craig Sumner's successful exhibition of art depicting Stone and outlying areas, art lovers, beginners and experienced creatives are invited to a free practical art demonstration which will give attendees the opportunity to watch Craig at work, learn practical techniques, and gain insight into his creative decisions.

The session is designed to be engaging, offering inspiration for anyone interested in developing their own artistic practice or simply enjoying a closer look at how artwork is created.



Craig Sumner

During the event, Craig will be sketching the Town Mayor, sharing tips, methods and observations throughout the session. Attendees will be able to follow the process from initial approach through to key stages of development, with time for questions and discussion.

Free tickets should be booked in advance via Eventbrite by scanning this QR code

Date: Saturday 18 July 2026

Time: 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Admission: Free ticket via Eventbrite



Top of High Street by Craig Sumner



Chimney Field House Hilderstone by Jane Fern-Withington

Meet the Archaeologists - Saturday 25th July 2026

Ever wondered what lies beneath the fields around Hilderstone?

Since 2018, members of the Stoke on Trent Museum Archaeological Society have been uncovering the secrets of a late sixteenth-century dwelling at Chimney Field. Some of their discoveries are already on display at the Stone Heritage Centre - and now you have the chance to meet the people behind the excavation.

Join the team at the Heritage Centre as they reveal the story of this fascinating site, share some of their most exciting finds, and explain the archaeological techniques used to uncover the past. They will also discuss their wider research into the history of the Hilderstone area and bring along additional artefacts for visitors to examine up close.

Whether you're a history enthusiast, a budding archaeologist, or simply curious about your local heritage, this is a rare opportunity to discover how archaeology helps bring the past to life.

The event forms part of the Council for British Archaeology's annual Festival of Archaeology.

Date: Saturday 25 July 2026 **Time:** 11.00am - 4.00pm **Admission:** free, no need to book ahead.

Can You Help?

The team would especially love to hear from anyone who remembers the chimney that once stood in the field, or who may have photographs of it before it disappeared. Your memories and images could provide valuable clues to the site's history.

Come along, explore the finds, meet the archaeologists, and help uncover another piece of Hilderstone's past.

Stone Heritage Centre, 13 Newcastle Street, Stone, ST15 8JX

For more information about either of these events please email stoneheritagecentre@stonetowncouncil.org.uk

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Gazette Eccleshall

NEWS IN BRIEF

Eccleshall Community Library

The Eccleshall library offers history on your doorstep.

A treasure trove of local history is available at the library in the form of old books and maps, photographs and other unique resources for you to get into local history.

There are a number of regular groups who hold session at the library weekly, **Knit And Natter**, **Baby Bounce And Rhyme**, **Crochet**, **W.I. Craft Group** **Flower Arranging**, and **An Art Group**.

In the Community Lounge regular special sessions are arranged on a monthly basis with guests speakers on subjects of interest. There is an **I.T. Clinic every week** bookable at the reception desk. Further details can be obtained from the reception desk or on email at eccleshall.library@staffordshire.gov.uk or phone 01785 854180.

Farewell Party For Richard

Organisations usually bid farewell to long service colleagues with a gold watch, a clock, a set of golf clubs or fishing rods, but this long service colleagues received a sports and quiz evening from his Rotary colleagues at the Worston Mill, Eccleshall earlier this year.

Richard Soulsby moved on after having served almost 30 years with the Rotary Club of Stafford, including roles as secretary, treasurer and being awarded the prestigious Paul Harris Fellowship honour, he was moving on in his daytime role.

Richard has been the Chief Executive of the Katharine House Hospice for many years and is now moving on to the Chester Hospice of the Good Shepherd.

Richard joined with wife Alison at the special fun social evening which was filled with many of the activities which he loved during his time with Rotary, darts for those interested, a photo quiz, a beetle drive, all amidst enjoyable background music suited to Richard, including a wonderful buffet.

Sakura Trees In Jubilee Playing Field

Eccleshall Parish Council is pleased to share that two ornamental cherry trees have recently been planted on the Jubilee Playing Field as part of the Sakura Cherry Tree Project, a national initiative celebrating the enduring friendship between the United Kingdom and Japan, and already show signs of early blossom, bringing a welcome touch of seasonal colour and symbolism.

The council would like to extend thanks to Mr Andy Illiff, of the Eccleshall Allotments Association, for his assistance with the planting, and Mr Ken Langford, for his work in creating the surrounding borders, which enhance the setting of the trees.

Commemorative plaques are due to be installed shortly, marking the significance of the project and ensuring that its message of friendship, renewal and community is remembered for years to come.

Civic Amenity Visit

A refuse vehicle for the collection of excess waste will be parked on Stone Road Eccleshall (opposite the Methodist Church) from **9am to 11am on Saturday 18th July**.

The refuse collected by the lorry does not include soil, rubble, fridges, freezers. Televisions, liquid waste, paint waste and hazardous materials. The remaining 2026 visits take place on September 26th and November 21st.



All Systems Go For Eccleshall Show Eccleshall Show Returns For Its 79th Year On Saturday 5th September

With just two months to go, preparations are well underway for the much anticipated **79th Eccleshall Show**, taking place on **Saturday 5th September** at the stunning Sugnall Parks, just outside the historic Staffordshire town of Eccleshall.

Attracting around 5,000 visitors annually, the show promises a fun-filled, family-friendly day out with an impressive programme of entertainment in the Main Ring. Highlights this year include Vander Super Heroes Wheel of Death Show, high-energy Lichfield Flyball, crowd-favourite have-a-go Dog Agility, and lively Tug-of-War and Children's Sports events. Also returning is the Vintage Tractor Parade, showcasing classic machines in



motion.

The Eccleshall Show is more than a great day out – it's also about giving back. Donations from the 2025 show totalled an impressive £3,000, benefitting a wide range of local and national charities including RABI, Katharine House Hospice, Midlands Air Ambulance, Eccleshall First Responders, Gentleshaw and several local schools for outdoor learning.

In the Craft and Horticulture Marquee, visitors can explore over 130 competition classes for adults and children, covering everything from vegetable growing and cookery to wine making, floral art, handicrafts, and photography. Don't miss the ever-popular men-only Blueberry Soured Cream Cake! Entries close on Wednesday 2nd September, with schedules and forms available on the show website, at Eccleshall Library, Perrys the Butchers, and Eccleshall Animal Health from the beginning of July.

Car lovers will once again enjoy the Classic Vehicle display, featuring a huge array of vintage cars, commercial and military vehicles, motorcycles, and a static engine showcase. Some vintage tractors will also feature in a main ring parade during the afternoon.

In the Equestrian Area, now led by local horsewoman Gillian Fox, a full day of competitions awaits with three rings of judging including show jumping, in-hand, ridden, lead rein, and novelty classes.



Elsewhere around the showground, attractions include:

- **Companion Dog Show**
(enter on the day)
- **Tug-of-war**
- **Face painting**
- **Trade Stands and Shopping Mall**
- **Children's Funfair**
- **Punch and Judy shows**
- **Farriery demonstrations**



- **Live Brass Band music**

Food and drink is always a highlight at the Eccleshall Show. Enjoy refreshments by the local the WI ladies, tuck into burgers and sausages from Eccleshall Scouts, sample international flavours in the Food Arc, or treat yourself to Red Lion Farm's Jersey ice cream. There's also a licensed bar and a lunchtime hog roast.

Discounted tickets are available until 4th September via the Eccleshall Show website or can be purchased in person from James du Pavey's offices in Eccleshall and Stone or at RPH Motors in Stafford.

The Eccleshall Show is proudly supported by main sponsors James Du Pavey, RPH Motors, and Eccleshall Dental Clinic. Visit the show's website at eccleshallshow.co.uk

For all the details you need to visit the show or to take part in the many activities. Or you can contact secretary Mary Cartmail on 07702 240511.

Photos from 2025 by Martin Robinson

BAKE SALE
THE CHRISTIES CHARITY

In support of our lovely members and staff whose family members are undergoing treatment at Christies, we are holding a bake sale to raise funds for the Christies Charity

FRIDAY 10TH JULY
 9AM UNTIL CAKES RUN OUT
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Diana's Charity Bake Sale

Diana Bryce, from Stone, is holding a Charity Bake Sale at Stone Leisure Centre on **July 10th** to raise monies for Christies Hospital in Manchester.

In 2022, with what started as hiccups, Diana felt fit and well, she was eating and drinking with no problems and swimming every day. However, as the hiccups kept returning, Diana decided to speak to her doctor, who referred her to the hospital for an urgent endoscopy.

Tests showed that Diana had a tumour in her oesophagus and the growth was so large that the doctor had been unable to pass the endoscopy camera down her throat.

Diana was referred to Dougie Mac and was visited at home by a member of the care team who explained the support available to her, and helped complete some necessary paperwork.

After a suggestion from a friend, Diana requested a referral to Christies Hospital, in Manchester where she began a course of chemotherapy treatment.

Unfortunately the treatment had strong side effects which made Diana very unwell, but her first scan after the chemotherapy showed that her tumour had shrunk considerably and second scan showed that it had reduced again.

Diana's chemotherapy ended, and then for the last 4 years, she has taken medication every day, and visited Christies for two days of treatment, every three weeks.



"My personal Guardian Angel" Professor Wassat Mansoor Esophageal Cancer Oncologist at Christies.

Diana told the Gazette *"I cannot thank everyone enough for all the kindness, compassion, and absolute empathy that has been shown to me in definitely the very worst journey in my life."*

The monies collected is for the Research for all future Cancer sufferers at Christies Hospital Manchester (A specialist hospital that deals only with Cancer) They are world leaders in research, and all the employees are nothing less than Angels. It's good to have a few angels on your side!

To all of you who will come along and buy a cake on the day, to support a very worthy cause, I Thank You."

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Gazette Eccleshall NEWS IN BRIEF

Councillor Drop-In

Borough Councillor Peter Jones will be at his regular monthly drop-ins at the Eccleshall High Street library on **Saturday 4th July & 8th August between 10am and 12 noon**. Do pop in and have a chat.

Eccleshall Bell Ringers

Come and learn to ring. Curious about bell ringing?

Join our friendly local team, learn a unique skill and help to keep a wonderful village tradition alive.

Ages 11 plus welcome, no musical experience needed, supportive patient teaching, great fun and great mental exercise. Join us at Holy Trinity, come along have a go and discover the joy of ringing. Contact Rozemar Wright 079961 485232.

An Alternative Book Club

The episode, the pub and the message. Three things that go surprisingly well together.

Ever watched something on tv and thought - that actually says something about real life. Each week the group will watch a popular tv show at home then meet up at the pub to dig into what it could be saying.

Everyone welcome, no faith required, just bring yourself and get a drink. Watch out for more details of the meetings.

Contact Cassie on nextgen@eccleshall.church or 07365 190753 if it sounds like something you might be interested in!

Trinity Mens Fellowship

On the **31st July** the group have a walk planned with their partners arrangements to be announced, and then on **28th August** they will meet after a morning walk for a meal at The Cock Inn, Woodseaves.

For more information contact johnturnock12@gmail.com or visit www.tmf.epizy.com.

Sunday Night Quiz

Peter Jones still sets a tough quiz **every Sunday evening** at the Holly Bush Quiz in Seighford starting at 8.30pm £2 per person, only repeating the questions he really likes once every five years - *honest!*

New teams always welcome.

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For more details & to book: contact Ingrid on 07717036213 / ingridwagner976@gmail.com

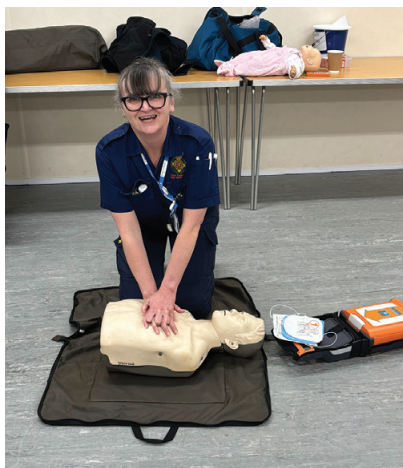


Busy Times At Stone Flower Club

We have been really busy for the first part of the year.

In April we welcomed back Jane Pugh a wonderful demonstrator and once again did some fabulous designs. Jane brings such joy when she is arranging the flowers.

We then held a CPR and Defibrillator evening run by Stone first responders. Many members had worried about how they would use the machine in the yellow box.



The evening was well received and members now feel more confident. We thoroughly recommend this training to your organisation and Stone First Responders who put the training across in a very understandable manner.

In May 2 members entered Stafford show with flower arrangements, winning a 2nd, 3 x 3rds and a Highly Commended.



At the May meeting we welcomed a new demonstrator to our club Elizabeth Bishop with a lovely presentation.

We have continued to welcome new people to the club with an overwhelming theme that they found it friendly and relaxed evening.

Coming up we have Pam Moseley on June 25th and Lorraine Simcox July 30th both local demonstrators.



We then take a well earned break in August and begin again on the **24th September where we welcome Jacquie Owen.**

We meet at Walton Community Centre, Whitemill Lane, Walton, Stone ST15 0EQ doors open 6.45 demonstration starts at 7.30pm

Visitors £8 if you enjoy the evening you can also join as a member. Also there is always a raffle to win the arrangements.

If you want a chilled night out come and join us and see what we are about.

Do you feel like you could help out?

We are still looking for people to join the committee ready for next years retirement of some of the committee.



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- Respite Care

“Thank you to all the ladies who've looked after our mum. Very caring and a great support to us as a family. They attended to all her needs and more, giving her the confidence to get back to a bit more of being herself.”

— Service user's family, Stone branch

9.5

AMG Stone
Homecare.co.uk, 2026



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157 Years Of Service At Great Bridgeford Village Hall

Joan Blake, Peter Longstaff and Pam Kulikovski have between them given 157 years of voluntary service to Great Bridgeford Village Hall.

At a special meeting held on Monday 1st June, at Great Bridgeford Village Hall, a small group of the village hall Trustees, Committee members and friends gathered together to honour three volunteers who had accumulated 157 years of service to the local community.

Joan Blake ran the Great Bridgeford Pre-school Playgroup from 1978, opening the doors on three mornings per week to youngsters aged 3 years to 5 years.

Parents would leave their little ones to enjoy a morning of singing, dancing, playing and table-top activities with Joan and the other staff. Joan loved to teach them the songs, particularly old favourites such as 'The Wheels on the Bus'.

When in 2006 the local school opened a nursery class, meaning that parents had the option of taking their pre-schoolers into a school environment, Joan responded by opening as the Parent and Toddler Group. This brought a younger group of babies and children, with their parents and sometimes grandparents, together at the village hall on a Tuesday morning for chats, toast and socialising for both parents and children.

Joan has said she will really miss the children, and their parents, some of whom had attended Playgroup themselves.

Pam Kulikovski has been involved with the Village Hall since attending the opening of the hall in 1957.

Her involvement has been as a Trustee and Committee member for that time. She and her husband Martyn have also kept the hall spick and span as caretakers for much of that time.

Pam, with her interest in the arts and her many artist friends, has organised several exhibitions of local art, collecting together and staging paintings in various different media. She is herself an accomplished artist who designed and painted a beautiful wintry watercolour of St Chad's at Seighford. This was then printed to be sold at the Christmas Fair in the village Hall to support the maintenance of the church.

Joan and Pam were each presented with a box of flowers and a thank you card, in appreciation of all their years contributing to the local community.

Peter Longstaff joined the village hall Committee in 1986, shortly after moving into Great Bridgeford in 1984.

Introduced to the village hall by Cyril Whitehouse, he has served as a Committee member and as Chairman, but also the man you turned to when there were holes in the floor from the new radiators, when the picnic tables needed fixing to the terrace floor, when the urinals malfunctioned, when the Christmas outside lights needed the bulbs replacing, when a hirer locked her keys in the cupboard, and the planters needed new compost, to name but a few.

He supported every event in the hall from being the man who blew the whistle at the Beetle Drives, to presenting the prizes at the Horticultural show. But most people in the village knew him as the man who baked delicious cakes and refused to give out his recipe for sultana cake, at the Wednesday Coffee Morning!

His contribution to the hall is recognised by a plaque on the wall of the main hall, and he was presented with a cheque by Denise Perry-Miller on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, with their thanks.

Denise Perry-Miller, rotating chair, gave a speech about Peter Longstaff, at the meeting, she said:

"They say that if you want something done properly, ask a busy person. And for the last 39 years, here in Great Bridgeford, we haven't just had a busy person - we've had the person. The legend. The one and only Peter Longstaff."

For nearly four decades, Peter hasn't just been our Chairman or a Trustee of the Village Hall - he's been its heartbeat, its backbone, and quite literally, its Mr Fix It extraordinaire!

I don't think there's a door hinge, a light switch, a leaky tap or a wobbly table in this building that hasn't felt the firm, capable touch of Peter's hands.

People say "no job is too big or too small" - but with Peter, it was more like no job was too fiddly, too awkward, or too stubborn for him to sort out. If something broke, we didn't call a contractor - we called Peter. And within



Joan Blake, Peter Longstaff and Pam Kulikovski have between them given 157 years of voluntary service to Great Bridgeford Village Hall.

no time at all, it was better than new. I'm half convinced he carries a toolbox in his car, and probably a spare screw or two in his pocket, just in case!

But Peter's talents don't end with a hammer and a screwdriver. Far from it. Alongside his incredible practical skills, he and his lovely wife Leslie gave us something that brought the whole village together week after week: the Wednesday Coffee Morning.

Let me tell you - this wasn't just tea and biscuits. Oh no. These two were up early, baking, mixing, and creating absolute delights from scratch. And while everything they made was wonderful, there was always one star of the show... Peter's Cheese Scones.

I've heard people say "to die for" about all sorts of things - but honestly? Those scones are worth risking it all for. Golden, fluffy, packed with flavour, and so good that people would plan their week around Wednesday morning just to get their hands on one. Some of us may have even arrived ten minutes early... or hung around ten minutes late... just in case there were leftovers! They are, quite simply, legendary. And I don't know how you do it, Peter - but please don't stop now that you've retired!

39 years is an extraordinary amount of time to give. It's patience, it's hard work, it's skill, and it's love for this village and this community. You've led us, you've fixed us, you've fed us, and you've made this hall feel like the heart of Great Bridgeford.

On behalf of the Village Hall Committee, and everyone who has ever walked through these doors - thank you. Thank you for every repair, every meeting, every cake, every smile, and every single one of those famous cheese scones. You've set a standard that will be almost impossible to follow.

So today, we say a huge, heartfelt thank you, and we wish you the very happiest, well-earned retirement. You've more than earned the chance to put down the tools, put your feet up, and enjoy doing exactly what you want to do.

Without further ado, on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, we would like to present you with this wall plaque - to hang here at the hall, so that future generations will always know just how much you gave, and what you achieved for us all.

Cheers to you, Peter and Leslie - enjoy every minute!"



Salt Watercolour Group's – 'A Hole Lot of Trouble' Exhibition Proves a Hit with Visitors

Historically art has been a way in which the people could protest about issues that concerned them and affected their day to day life. This exhibition was planned to mimic this historic manner of protest.

What began as a tongue-in-cheek artistic look at Staffordshire's cratered roads turned into a thoughtful, entertaining, community event on Saturday, 6th June as visitors flocked to **"A Hole Lot of Trouble"**, a watercolour exhibition held at Salt Village Hall.

The exhibition, created by members of Sue Chatterton's Watercolour Classes, drew a steady stream of visitors who came to admire a collection of paintings inspired by that most British of subjects - potholes!

From dramatic sinkholes worthy of a disaster movie, to charming watercolour interpretations of roadworks, cones and crumbling carriageways, the exhibition transformed everyday frustrations into works of art.



Visitors were quick to appreciate both the humour and the underlying social commentary, with many observing that the paintings highlighted the increasingly poor state of local roads in a way that was both engaging and memorable.

Adding to the day's entertainment was the **Paintathon**, where 8 artists raced against the clock to create 2 original paintings before the eyes of the public.

Several prominent members of the local community rolled up their sleeves and joined in the fun, proving that artistic talent can sometimes emerge from the most unexpected places. While not every



Sir Gavin Williamson, MP for Stone, Great Wyrley and Penkridge was keen to try



mas-terpiece may find its way into a national gallery, plenty of laughter and good-natured competition certainly filled the hall.

The exhibition demonstrated that art can do more than decorate walls - it can start conversations. Visitors left amused, thoughtful and perhaps slightly more aware of the hazards lurking beneath their car tyres.

Due to the overwhelmingly positive response, **a selection of the pothole-themed paintings will remain on display in the gallery area at Salt Village Hall, ST18 0BW, until at least the end of July**, giving those who missed the exhibition an opportunity to view the collection.



Whether seen as satire, social commentary, or simply a celebration of British resilience in the face of endless road repairs, **A Hole Lot of Trouble** has shown that when life gives you potholes, Staffordshire artists can turn them into art.



For more information about the exhibition or Watercolour Classes you can contact Sue Chatterton on 07714 100921.



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A beautiful blooming planter on Crown Street

Keeping Stone In Bloom

Stone in Bloom's newly formed working group met for the first time on 28th June, equipped with litter pickers, bags, and tools kindly supplied by Stafford Borough's Streetscene team.

Our volunteers will be focusing on several areas in the community that are in urgent need of tidying, weeding, and planting. As we continue our work, volunteers are encouraged to suggest locations they feel would benefit from future clean-up efforts.

We are a welcoming local community group dedicated to nurturing not only flower beds, but also community spirit and enthusiasm.

If you would like to become a volunteer, or would like to suggest an area that could benefit from our help please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Contact Details Chairman: Jill Hood 07736 413097, Secretary: Tracey Stone 07545 780935



Adbaston Community Concert Society

We have just had the first of our four concerts for 2026, and what a resounding success it was, from both the audience and performers' view.

We had a near capacity audience, to hear seven Manchester Camerata principals play a mainly Beethoven programme, see photo above. It sounded wonderful, such an intimate space with a great acoustic.

Our next concert will be on Sunday 5th July, 5.30 pm at Adbaston Church, as always. Contra Guitar Duo, two classical guitarists will play a varied programme.

More concert and programme details will be available nearer the time on our website; www.adbastonccs.org.uk so please save the date(s) to your diaries. Hope to see many of you there!



The stunning walk through the Dorothy Clive Gardens

Action Packed Adventures at Stone and District Probus Club

The last couple of months have been action packed. Starting with a visit by Members and Friends to the renowned Dorothy Clive Gardens in Shropshire on the 18th of May, where the gardens were at their best, with the famous Laburnum walk in full bloom.

At the May luncheon meeting at The Upper House the speaker was Air Vice Marshall Ray Pentland CB.

Ray gave an inspirational illustrated presentation - titled 'My time with the



Air Vice-Marshall Ray Pentland



St Giles RC Church, Cheadle - Pugin's Gem

Battle of Britain Aircrew' in which he shared his experiences meeting some of these veteran air men in their later years, when he was Chaplain in Chief of the Royal Airforce.

On the 12th of June Members and Friends were privileged to visit St Giles RC Church at Cheadle for a conducted tour led by Father Eric Kemball. St Giles is world renowned for its ornate style and history and is known affectionately as 'Pugin's Gem.'

The next luncheon meeting at The Upper House, Barlaston will be on **Monday the 6th of July** when Robin Mathams will be giving a talk- titled 'The Quest for speed on Britain's Railways.'

To find out more about visiting or joining Stone and District Probus Club, please contact our secretary Simon Cornes on 07960 811637 or visit their website at www.stoneprobus.org.uk

Photos by Martin Robinson



Stone Probus inside St Giles RC Church

The joy of a garden without the graft



For many of us, a garden becomes part of the story of a home. It's where children once played for hours, where dogs wore their paths across the lawn, and where summer evenings drifted by over a family barbeque or a glass of wine.

Stepping away from a garden like that is rarely a purely practical decision. What surprises many people, though, is that the pleasure of being surrounded by greenery and planting doesn't disappear just because the responsibility for maintaining it has gone. In fact, once the constant list of jobs is removed, it can sometimes become easier to appreciate the outside space even more.

Homeowner Sue echoes that sentiment: "The grounds here are lovely and so well kept. Having the gardeners is a huge benefit, the fact that somebody else is doing it for me is brilliant."

For others, the pleasure comes from being able to take part on their own terms. Homeowner Joan shares: "We haven't got that major responsibility anymore. You can back off if you don't

feel like it today, you haven't got to do it and that's lovely!"

There's also a social side to outdoor spaces that many homeowners say they hadn't anticipated. Homeowner Cath observes: "There are some keen gardeners among the homeowners, and when the weather's nice I love sitting outside, chatting and watching them working in the raised beds. As a retired GP, I can really see how important it is; being outside, socialising and staying connected to nature makes a real difference."

A garden without the graft still offers birdsong in the morning, blossom in spring, and the satisfaction of watching something grow. What changes is the obligation. When the responsibility lifts, appreciation can return. The garden is still there, offering a sanctuary to enjoy, but it no longer asks quite so much in return.

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Staffordshire Garden Wins Prestigious Topiary Award At RHS Chelsea Flower Show

The gardening team at Biddulph Grange Garden, which is cared for by the National Trust, is celebrating after receiving a prestigious topiary award at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show. The award recognises the remarkable restoration and maintenance of the historic Dahlia Walk hedges.

The Henschman Topiary award, presented by Henschman, honours excellence in topiary and skilled hedge management. Head Gardener Paul Walton submitted the entry after previously purchasing equipment from the company and learning about the competition.

Paul's application showcased the story behind the iconic yew hedges lining the Dahlia Walk at Biddulph Grange. Alongside contemporary photographs of the carefully maintained hedges, he included a historic image from the late 1800s and another from the 1980s, when the original hedges had been removed during the site's time as an orthopaedic hospital.



The Henschman Topiary award prize giving at Chelsea Flower Show 2026

Jo Stewart, Marketing Manager, Henschman said: "The Henschman Topiary Awards were created to showcase the extraordinary stories behind topiary, and Paul and Jonathan's work at Biddulph Grange is a perfect reflection of that. Their commitment and precision demonstrate exceptional skill, alongside the care and vision needed to preserve historic landscapes for future generations."

The award highlights the dedication, craftsmanship and long-term vision involved in preserving one of the garden's most striking historic features for future generations to enjoy.



Hedges removed early 1900's

As part of the restoration project, archaeological investigations were carried out to uncover the buried stone edging of the original Dahlia Walk. Measurements taken from the site enabled the National Trust gardening team to calculate the precise positioning, height and depth of the replacement yew hedges.



*The stunning Dahlia Walk and House at Biddulph Grange Garden
National Trust Images by Robert Morris*

Detailed blueprints were then created, with each section of hedge designed to slightly different dimensions in order to recreate the distinctive buttress effect and the illusion of symmetry along the stepped walk.

Today, the restored hedges are one of the garden's defining features - and maintaining them is no small task. With so many hedges throughout the garden, it takes the staff team around 10 weeks to cut and prune them all.

Paul Walton and gardener Jonathan Duncan, who plays a key role in maintaining the hedges, were invited to attend RHS Chelsea Flower Show to receive the award on behalf of the team.

Paul Walton, Head Gardener at Biddulph Grange, said: "We only decided to give the competition a go this year, having never entered before, so it was a real surprise and an honour to be recognised by Henschman at RHS Chelsea. The gardening team are incredibly proud of all the work that has gone into the restoration and maintenance of the Dahlia Walk hedges over the years."



Biddulph Grange Garden Dahlia Walk and parterres 2026

At Biddulph Grange Garden visitors can take a journey around the world, from Egyptian pyramids and a Himalayan Glen to an Italian Garden and a Victorian vision of China.

Created by James Bateman in the 19th century, the garden is renowned for its extraordinary planting and imaginative design. The garden is open daily from 10am. Admission applies, free entry for National Trust members.

For more information visit <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/shropshire-staffordshire/biddulph-grange-garden>



A golden water buffalo hiding in the Chinese area at Biddulph Grange



Stone Food & Drink Festival Celebrates Record-Breaking 21st Anniversary Event

More than 8,000 visitors flocked to Westbridge Park across the three days of this year's Stone Food & Drink Festival, with organisers celebrating a record-breaking Saturday gate as the much-loved event marked its 21st anniversary.

The hugely popular Staffordshire foodie festival returned from 8-10 May with celebrity chefs, live music, artisan producers, street food, family entertainment and new attractions helping to draw crowds from across the region and beyond.

Among the biggest successes of the weekend were the festival's brand-new VIP tickets, which proved a real hit with visitors looking to enjoy an upgraded festival experience.



Celebrity chef appearances also attracted packed crowds throughout the weekend, with award-winning chocolatier Paul A Young, Great British Bake Off star Nelly Ghaffar and baking expert Juliet Sear all proving hugely popular in the Culinary Showcase and around the festival site.

Festivalgoers also praised the event's refreshed layout, vibrant atmosphere and packed live music programme, alongside the wide variety of street food available throughout the weekend.



Ed Stant, organiser of the festival, said: "We're absolutely delighted with how this year's festival went and the feedback we've received has been fantastic.

Huge thanks to all the businesses who support the event – from our sponsors,

especially lead sponsor Brown Recycling, to all the traders who joined us over the big weekend, with some travelling more than three hours to showcase their products. It was also brilliant to see so many local food



and drink businesses getting involved too. We'd also like to say a massive thank you to all the volunteers who gave up their time to help make the event happen. We're already planning the 2027 festival and have lots of feedback to take on board as we continue to grow and improve the event year on year."



Alongside the celebrity chefs and foodie experiences, visitors enjoyed live music performances across the weekend, family entertainment, shopping stalls, talks and tastings, cookery demonstrations and the festival's brand-new silent disco.

The Stone Food & Drink Festival has grown into one of Staffordshire's



best-loved annual events, attracting thousands of visitors each year while championing independent businesses, regional produce and the local hospitality sector.

Visit www.stonefooddrink.org.uk

Photos by Martin Robinson

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"Finally, a book that talks to men, not at them."
- Greg R ★★★★★

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The Menopause Survival Guide (For Men)

A Stone resident and Stafford-born author is turning heads with a bold message: "Menopause doesn't just affect women. It affects entire families."

International barber educator, and author, Mark D Sproston is breaking the silence around one of the most misunderstood issues affecting modern relationships with the launch of his brand-new book, **The Menopause Survival Guide (For Men)**.

Drawing from real-life experiences, honest conversations, emotional struggles and relationship challenges faced behind closed doors, the book offers men a brutally honest, relatable and often humorous insight into what menopause really does to couples, families and everyday life.

Mark, known internationally for his work within the barbering and education industry, says the book was written after witnessing first-hand how many men feel confused, helpless and isolated while trying to support their partners through menopause.

"Menopause doesn't just affect women - it affects entire households," says Mark. "Relationships are being tested every single day because people simply don't know how to communicate about it."

Men are often terrified of saying the wrong thing, while women can feel completely misunderstood and unsupported. This book is about helping couples survive it together instead of drifting apart."

Unlike clinical medical guides, The Menopause Survival Guide (For Men) speaks directly to ordinary men in plain English, tackling the emotional realities many families face, including:

- Mood swings and emotional disconnect
- Relationship strain and communication breakdown
- Loss of intimacy and affection
- Anxiety, confusion and helplessness for partners
- Parenting pressures and modern family stress
- How men can better support their partners without "trying to fix everything".

The book combines honesty, humour, real-world survival advice and emotional understanding, making it one of the few menopause books written specifically from a male perspective.

Early readers have already praised the book as:

"This book should be given to every man whose partner is going through menopause." - James B

"Honest, raw and very relatable."

"It changed the way I show up." - Gary H

"Finally, a book that talks to men, not at them." - Greg R

Mark hopes the book will encourage more open conversations around menopause and help remove the stigma and silence that still surrounds the subject.

The Menopause Survival Guide (For Men) is available now in hardcover, paperback or Kindle at Amazon.co.uk



Dark Art (after Claudia Hahn) - by John Jeggo

Staffordshire Marquetry Group Success

Staffordshire Marquetry Group is celebrating considerable success at the Marquetry Society's recent annual exhibition which was held at the De Havilland Aircraft Museum in Hertfordshire. Whilst billed as an exhibition, the show has a competitive side with members competing in various classes.

Highlights of the Group's achievements were wins for David Waldron in the secondary class with "Fishing Village" and John Jeggo in the 3-veneer class with "Dark Art (after Claudia Hahn)".

John Jeggo and Phil Green both received awards in the tough premier class, Jerry Leach received two awards in the intermediate class and Lynn and Brett Osborne each received an award in the beginners' applied class. In total the group received 21 points, placing it third behind the St Albans and Sutton Coldfield groups.



Fishing Village - by David Waldron

The Group meets **from 2-4 pm on the first and third Wednesday of each month**, at the Methodist Church hall in Stone Road, Eccleshall.

If you would like to find out more about the fascinating and absorbing art and craft of marquetry please contact the Group Secretary, Quentin Smith, on 01785 850614 or qjsmarquetry@gmail.com – or just come along to a meeting!

Sale Day At New Pottery Studio In Stone

If you'd like to take a look around a new pottery studio in Stone, now's your perfect chance as they are holding an **Open Studio Pottery Sale On Saturday 18th July** between 11am and 4pm, and all are welcome to visit.

Established in 2025, Stone's Throw Pottery is a vibrant teaching and members' studio founded by Kaye Lavender.

After three decades of living and working in London, Kaye returned to her hometown of Stone, to bring her passion for clay to life.

She uncovered a converted Coopers Building tucked just behind the High Street in a courtyard, (next door to Panda Press Printers) and dedicated six months to lovingly transforming it into a beautifully designed, fully equipped creative hub. Today, it stands as a warm, welcoming space where people come together to learn, socialise, and grow as makers.



The studio embraces potters of all experience levels. Beginners are introduced to the joy of clay, whether they are eager to try wheel throwing or explore hand-building techniques. From fun taster sessions to comprehensive, structured courses, the bright and friendly environment opens up endless creative possibilities.

Beyond regular classes, the studio plays host to specialised masterclasses led by talented guest artisans.

Following a highly successful inaugural slip-trailing workshop with local ceramicist Mark Dally, the studio now offers regular sculpting classes with local artist Grant Palmer.

For those who already work independently, Stone's Throw Pottery provides flexible membership packages and drop-in sessions, offering the freedom to refine skills and pursue personal projects at your own pace.



The bright, airy facility is excellently provisioned to support your pottery journey, featuring:

- 6 dedicated potter's wheels
- A large hand-building communal table
- A fully stocked glazing room
- An on-site kiln, slab roller, and extruder
- A display area showcasing Kaye's functional kitchen and tableware for purchase.

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Anyone interested in seeing the studio please feel free to contact Kaye, who will be more than happy to show you around. Or keep an eye on the website for course information and news on Open Studio events.



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Stone Bridge Club 80th Anniversary Dinner

On Friday the 24th April Stone Bridge Club held their 80th anniversary dinner at Stone Golf Club. 51 people attended and enjoyed a glass of wine courtesy of two members celebrating their birthdays - Henry Hutsby, our auditor, and Anne Hilderley. We were welcomed by our president, Aadam Aryan, followed by a wonderful 3 course meal with coffee and tea.

Kath Adams was asked to propose a toast to the health of the club and chose as her subject the history of the club. Kath had trawled through the early minute books and, together with one or two anecdotes, reported on the last 80 years. Much of this report follows:

The club was the inspiration of Mrs Dorothy Bingham and the launch took place on the 9th November 1946 with the first annual dinner held in March 1947. Subscription was set at 5 shillings or 25p.

In March 47 the first annual dinner was held at The Unicorn Hotel (roughly in the place now occupied by Superdrug in the High St) where in Sept the same year the first AGM was also held. Subs went up 50% to 7/6. The accounts showed a balance in hand of just £1.19.

By December 48 it was decided that Christ Church Parish room was suitable and they settled on the smaller room at 5/- per night. The larger room was turned down at 15/- per night. Three ladies were elected onto the committee for the sole purpose of facilitating refreshments. A situation that seems prevalent to this day!

Only two meetings were held in the small room before they decided on the larger room and to meet on Wednesday nights. This room remained the home of SBC for the next 23 years.

In April 49 subs were 15/- and it cost 1/- per night for visitors to play. Rationing was still in place and the club made an application to the food office for tea, sugar etc. It was thought worthy of note that Mrs Carr gave half a pound of tea.

By Nov 49 we had 56 members and it was agreed that it should be limited to 60. This was increased to 70 only 9 months later. Refreshments were reduced in price to 3d.

Sept 50 saw subs increase to 1 guinea and refreshments at 6d. We had been playing duplicate bridge for 2 years but now it was decided to set aside 3 to 4 tables for rubber bridge to be played alongside the duplicate session.



Gwynyth Hart and Maureen Finlay winners of the ladies pairs

A silver bowl to be called the Festival Bowl was presented anonymously in Sept 51. Should the club be disbanded it is to be sold and the proceeds given to St Dunstan's. Room hire was ramped up to 23/6d per night.

Feb 52 a 2 minute silence was held on the death of King George VI.

In March 52 we were affiliated to the English Bridge

Union and to Staffordshire Contract Bridge association.

We have always been a club contributing to charity and in Sept 52 we donated 3 guineas to the East Coast Flood disaster fund.

Sept 53 saw the start of giving 2 packs of cards for the highest aggregate plus score each month. A second set of duplicate boards was purchased.

In Mar 54 the first competition for married couples was held. This was known as The Fitch. Its hard to think of one married couple playing together today. Those eligible have probably heard it isn't always a good idea.

The annual dinner was stopped after the 1948 dinner and was restarted for the 10th anniversary on 9th November 1956. It was held at The Filleybrooks and dinner was followed by friendly bridge.

Just 1 year later National Savings Stamps began to be given to weekly handicap prize winners. Remarkably this did not end until Oct 1976. By 1965 a bridge drive was organised and a donation of 21 guineas was given to Stone swimming bath fund. This was refunded only five months later as the scheme was disbanded.

In 1966 a ladies pairs competition was decided upon and it was agreed that honours should no longer count.

In May 1972 it was resolved to move to Christ Church School in Old Road and in Sept that year Mrs Bingham died. In the minutes it said, "to her vision and drive the club owes its being and she played an immeasurable part in its continued development". We all raised a glass in thanks to Mrs Dorothy Bingham on this our 80th anniversary.

The club finally moved to the Frank Jordan Centre on 19th Jan 1981 and table money was increased to 50p. May 84 saw a bridge drive and raffle raise £602.48 for multiple Sclerosis. Given table money was only one sixth of the rate today I suggest that is the equivalent of around

£3600. They were obviously extremely generous. Charity nights are still regularly played and sometimes on a national basis through the ability to have pre-dealt hands which are duplicated in all other clubs taking part.

In the 1983/4 season it was decided to present the ladies pairs winners with a small cup. This is the report in the minutes: Much to the horror of one of the winning ladies this cup was unfortunately lost at pre-dinner drinks and to this day still remains an unsolved mystery as to its disappearance.

Some names from the past, familiar to some here tonight,

start to be mentioned: The Higgins family, Richard Hocknell, Jean and Jim Brandon, Bill Taylor (who I worked with at Wedgwood), Fred Parrott, Jose Cheshire (who is still with us but in a nursing home), Gill Ronayne, Brenda Leadbetter, David Hadley, Peggy Mountford, Beryl Wise, Eileen Osbourne, Warren Pacey (treasurer for many years), Gordon Baldwin and our very own Dot Palmer still playing with us today. Dot's Name and photograph appear numerous times as she obviously played several important roles in the club.

The first time I have found Geoff Losh mentioned was in Jan 1988 when he asked the committee a question regarding the form of Monday night competitions. It took only a further 8 months and he, along with a Mr Fox, was given the job of score recorder for Monday nights. Six months later he was on the committee and in no time was captain. Two things to observe I think: 1. Don't raise your head above the parapet and 2. Some things never change much. May I record thanks to Geoff for all the hard work he has done and still does for the club.

At a committee meeting held on 24th Jan 1989 it was agreed to admit Mike Beach and Ian Peace to the club. Both were tremendous assets to the club and Mike continues to this day working so hard behind the scenes preparing boards for us all to play and turning up every Friday afternoon to organise the newcomers and improvers and get them to a level where they can move on to play on the main club nights. His commitment to this is truly wonderful and we thank him wholeheartedly. The success of his efforts can be seen here in the large number of Friday people here tonight.

On the 16th Jan 1990 Geoff Neal, Ann Berrisford, Jane Reeves and Brigid Middleton all had membership accepted. A little later Jane Reeves, by then on committee, suggested "The etiquette point for the month" to tighten standards without being too authoritarian.

By Jan 1991 Gordon Baldwin made the very sensible suggestion that each officer of the club write a brief summary of their duties. He felt it would help the person taking the job in the future. May I commend this suggestion to the present committee. It is one that Stafford bridge club have done rather thoroughly and it does mean that things don't get overlooked on account of no one knowing who the job should get done by.

July 92 saw Eileen Chambers and Anne Webb-Bowen join the club and the following year came Neville Winnet and Mike and Muriel Kenny. One more year and we accepted a junior member, Derek Hartley aged 14. Does anyone know what happened to him? In 93 along came Vera Ferrie, Judy Emery, Kay Pritchard and Sylvia Tams.

On 25th Jan 1994 my late husband, Bert, and I together with Jim Hawkins and a Mrs Dickens became members. In the same meeting it was proposed that smoking be banned within the club. My mother, Bessie Lord, joined the following year. She loved playing with Nell Rhead, mother in law to Andrew Adams who plays with us today.

Maureen Finlay was asked to join the committee on the 25th Jan 1994. Sadly I haven't been able to find out when she joined the club but it was possibly in Oct 88 when 7 people were admitted but not named in the minutes. Maureen has gone on to serve the club well in many capacities including captain and president and is a stalwart of the club today. (Maureen told me later that it was very early in the 80's when she joined). It's possible it was when Carolyn Parnell also joined. She was to serve on the committee for many years doing a wonderful job as secretary.

In Nov 1994 and after many and varied propositions about limiting smoking to a particular room and to limited time, smoking within the club was finally banned. It took 11 months of heated discussions from the first proposal of a ban to come to this conclusion!



Anne Seymour and Aadam Aryan winners of the mixed pairs



Iain Dawson and Nick Lloyd winners of the most improved players

How many of you remember Mrs Betteley? She made tea for the club for 15 years and in 95 was given a bouquet of flowers and a cheque as she moved on to another job. Two girls were elected members of the club so they would be covered by our insurance and then given the job of being our tea girls. *Where there is a will....*

By 1996 Sharon Johnston, Roma Welch and Peter Bucknall all get mentions followed by Martha Lee and Peter and Anne Collier. On 30th April 1997 we held our 50th anniversary dinner at the Stone House Hotel where a talk by the eminent bridge player, Tony Forrester, was given. The observant and still awake amongst you will notice that it was a year late. That same year Bert and Joke Spiekman and Sheila Ferneyhough joined the club.

In Sept 1997 and after much opposition, bidding boxes were purchased. Who can remember Mavis Ward? She was given the job of being in charge of the card shuffler and heaven help anyone who touched it. Each break time she took a flask into the ladies toilets. Nobody ever discovered what was in it but she always appeared a little flushed in the face after the break.

I want to move quickly but feel there are so many people I haven't mentioned but who deserve to be mentioned. Can I give a quick shout out for Geoff Wardill (*property management*), Anne Seymour (*For tuition and ongoing encouragement*), Henry Hutsby (*Auditor and wonderful contributor to the Christmas party*), Scott Drummond, Nick and Amanda Weaver, Liz Young (*secretary and much missed*), Richard Adams (*our treasurer and always working hard in front and behind the scenes*). All have played an enormous part in the club. I thank today's committee who have made this evening most enjoyable.

We moved from the Frank Jordan Centre to St Dominic's where putting up and taking down tables soon got too much and our present site was found in early 2000's. We benefitted from a grant from the Lottery and this enabled us to carpet and redecorate and buy tables and chairs.

A very fast forward to March 2020 and Covid struck. Whitebridge were very understanding and considerate landlords. Covid had a devastating effect on this and all clubs and pushed many players online. We attempted to keep things going by forming an online competition for members. Some have continued to play online on our club nights which is a great pity for the club. Despite best efforts our table numbers will never again reach the dizzy heights of 16 when we began to discuss using the upstairs room on a regular basis. Nevertheless we hope that more Friday afternoon players will venture to join us in the evenings and the stalwarts amongst you will make them very welcome when they do so.

I leave you with the words of a founder of Stone Bridge Club, E C Parr, written in 1958:

"The Club itself is a vitally living and sentient thing; its members over the years have been abundantly enriched by a host of friendships first formed here. Many of those friends, sadly, are no longer with us but they are still very real to us and we remember them with affection and pride."

Everyone stood to toast the health of Stone Bridge Club. There followed the presentation of prizes, the winners announced by Aadam and trophies given out by our secretary, Adrian Cartwright. We had a rousing rendition of Happy Birthday before Aadam thanked the golf club for a splendid meal and wished everyone a safe journey home.

From Kath Adams



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Trentham Live Returns For It's 5th Year

The Trentham Estate are delighted with the return and complete line-up to their 4-day event TRENTHAM LIVE 2026 taking place at the stunning surroundings at Trentham Gardens in Staffordshire taking place from **Thursday 20th August through to Sunday 23rd August**.

Over four days at the historic gardens and lakeside setting, the event will showcase a strong live music line-up. **The Fratellis will open the event on Thursday 20th August, supported by The Subways.**



On Friday 21st August, 80's legends Madness will headline, joined by The Coral. Saturday 22nd August sees 90's boyband Five headlining the stage with support from The Wanted 2.0 and to complete the line-up on the final day sees legendary icons The Human League with support from the fabulous Blancmange & Altered Images on Sunday 23rd August.

Kerrie Pope, Head of Events at Trentham said, "Following on from 2024's successful event, we are really excited about 2026! What an incredible line up we have coming to Trentham consisting of different music genres this Summer.

We know that people will really enjoy an exciting weekend of live music, in our unique historic setting at affordable prices.

There's an electric and special atmosphere at Trentham Live and it's amazing to see the festival get bigger and bigger each year as friends and families come together to party.

We are delighted to have confirmed the line-up that we have, starting off with The Fratellis, Madness and boyband Five and to complete the Trentham Live event finishing off with The Human League ending the weekend in style."

Senior Director Alastair Budd added, 'We're delighted to bring these wonderful acts to our Trentham Estate here in Staffordshire. Trentham is a must-see venue, not only in Staffordshire and the Midlands, but nationally as well! We can't wait to welcome thousands more visitors back again in 2026!'

Tickets for the Trentham Live 2026 are available from - <https://trentham.co.uk/events/trentham-live/>

101 Year Old Care Home Resident Becomes Published Author

Staff and residents at Barchester's Hilderstone Hall care home in Stone have been celebrating one of their much-loved and very talented residents, Herbert Helmut Benneman, who has published his autobiography entitled 'My Story, 100 Years in the Making' which celebrates his amazing life.



Berts Book (English & German Version)

Born in Eisenberg in Germany in December 1924, Herbert, known as Bert, has lived a long and remarkable life. His daughters begged him to write down his stories so Bert obliged and wrote his memoirs for his friends and family.

Bert became a soldier in December 1942 when he turned 18 and served in the German Army. He was wounded in Sicily with a piece of Shrapnel in the leg. He was captured in France and taken to New Mexico cotton picking and then worked in Memphis, Tennessee in a large hospital for wounded soldiers.



1960 Arriving in Stoke-on-Trent

At the end of the war, Bert was sent to the UK via Liverpool, he worked on a farm in Cropredy in Oxfordshire with the Land Girls. In 1950 he was released from POW status but decided to stay in the UK because his mother and brother had sadly passed away during the war and his home town was now in the Russian sector behind the iron curtain.

Bert became a British citizen in March 1956. He moved to Draycott in Stoke-on-Trent and became a Design Engineer working for Simplex GE in Blythe Bridge.

Through chatting to Bert and reminiscing about his life, the team at Hilderstone Hall were delighted to discover that he had written a book called 'My Story, 100 Years in the Making.' Bert was so thrilled when some of the staff said that they would love to hear the stories of his long and varied life.

Bert said: "I enjoyed writing my memoirs, I am so thankful that I can still remember so

many memories – some good, some not so good. I lived independently at home till just after my 100th birthday.

I've always been busy and active, I taught myself to paint in water colour and oils, I also taught myself to play an electric keyboard and even wrote a couple of songs. I enjoyed panning for gold in Scotland and Wales.

For my 99th birthday I fulfilled a wish of mine and flew a small aircraft over my house which was wonderful experience. I have had a great life here in the UK and feel very lucky I ended up in Liverpool on that boat from America all those years ago."



Flying at 99 - Go Bert!

Charlotte Lownds, General Manager at Hilderstone Hall, commented: "We are all so very proud of our lovely Bert, to become an author aged 100 is amazing! He has led such a fascinating life, we all love hearing about his adventures and it is wonderful that he has written down all his stories for prosperity.



Bert celebrating 100th Birthday 4-12-2024



Bert in his room at Hilderstone

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A Look At What Stone Trefoil Have Been Up To

Stone Trefoil Guild have been having a busy, interesting and fun time for the last few months.

We went for a beautiful circular bluebell walk in the Spring, starting at Great Haywood, through Shugborough, and through a lovely woodland area and then back to the Farm shop at Great Haywood for tea and cake.



Several of us enjoyed a Caribbean Day which was the County's AGM and held at Walton Community Centre, we had a wonderful day and the highlight was that everyone had chance to play in the Calypso Band.



Sir Gavin Williamson kindly invited us for a tour around the Houses of Parliament. He was waiting for us when we arrived and he welcomed us very warmly.

He took us around the beautiful building and then we all relaxed in his office along with his little dog. We all felt very at ease in his company so we were able to chat to him and ask him questions.



Whilst in London we had booked into PAX Lodge which is a Girlguiding World Centre, for a tour around and we were invited to a Pinning Ceremony around the flag pole. We all repeated some very special words after a lovely young leader from Canada read it first, then we received our pin. This is very unique as you can only get them from a world centre, and it is yours for ever as you can't give it away or sell it.

Alan from Oak Tree Farm came to talk to us at our last meeting. He told us all about the history of how Oak Tree Farm started and all about the day to day running of the farm, and cafe. Oak Tree Farm is a wonderful place which provides a unique working environment where people with learning disabilities gain skills, independence and confidence to take them towards an active role in society. It's fantastic.



Last week was delivery week! Baby hats and blankets to Royal Stoke Neonatal Unit, and knitted squared blankets to the Hamlin Fistula office in Birmingham, which will be shipped to Ethiopia very soon to comfort the poorly ladies when they leave hospital. Bereavement bags also to Royal Stoke. Many of our ladies enjoy knitting and sewing for the various charities.



As you can see from above here at Trefoil Guild we have interesting speakers, go on good trips and walks, and generally have a lot of fun, as we are a very friendly bunch of ladies.

Our doors are always open to welcome guests, if you would like to pop in and say hello on the **1st Thursday of the month**, at the Girl Guide Head Quarters Westbridge Park, or you can ring Helen Whetnall on 01785 819752 and I will have a chat with you and explain anything you would like to know.



Father and daughter Paul and Lucy Wheeler

Lucy's Run for Douglas MacMillan

Father and daughter Paul and Lucy Wheeler, from Walton, Stone, completed the 10k run at Trentham on 15th May, in aid of Douglas MacMillan.

Paul was not sponsored, however Lucy raised an amazing £1800 for the charity. They did the run in memory of Paul's wife, and Lucy's mum, Julie Wheeler, who died from cancer, aged 50, in March 2024.

Lucy's grandmother, Maureen Wheeler, told the Gazette "The Dougie Mac nurses were amazing and came every day to care for Julie, we are so proud of Lucy and would like to thank everyone who sponsored her, and a big thank you to all of the Dougie Mac team for their wonderful care and support."



Age Concern Stone & District - Here To Help

Age Concern Stone & District is a local volunteer led charity that supports people over the age of 50. We help those who are lonely and isolated, help you fill in complicated forms and paperwork and provide transport to hospital appointments.

All our services are free but we do charge a fee (*less than a taxi*) for hospital transport, with that comes a volunteer driver who will pick you up from your door.

Our trained volunteers are very experienced in giving free confidential advice for a long list of complex forms such as Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Blue Badge applications and most importantly we can signpost you to other services and agencies. It may be that you have a family member who needs help and for that you can come into our office and we will sit and chat over a cuppa.

For everything we do, **we desperately need volunteers to continue the amazing free service we give.** (Please consider us) we give training and though I say it myself our small team oozes friendliness, smiles and understanding.

Pop in and see us if you're interested, we are located in the Old Rent offices 15 Station Road Stone opposite Wetherspoon's, or call us on 01785 817906.

It is helpful if you can call us, as we are always so busy, and we don't want you to have to wait.

From Chairman Jill Hood



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Elaine Robinson (left) hands over to the new President Megan Finney.

New President For The Inner Wheel Club of Stone

At our meeting on June 16th Elaine Robinson ended her year as The President of the Inner Wheel Club of Stone and was delighted to place the chain of office around the neck of one of our younger members, Megan Finney for 2026 to 2027.

During Elaine's year there have been fun times such as helping the Stone and District Rotary Club at the Santa Sleigh collections and dancing to the local band The Blarney Stone at the St Patrick's day Ceilidh. Whilst enjoying themselves, they have raised £1,350 to donate to several local charities.

Our club has celebrated its 80th birthday this year and some members have been involved for many years, but being progressive we welcome new members. There were two new members at the beginning of this year and we welcomed two further members at the year end.

Each person brings new ideas and this helps the club members to continue to look outward and support some of the organisations within our community with practical or financial help.

If you are interested in meeting others in our friendly club, please contact Elaine Robinson on 01785 812438.

Photo by Martin Robinson



Another Successful Event for Stone Lions (CIO)

The members of Stone Lions Club are very pleased to report another successful Prostate Awareness Event on 28th April, when 498 men attended the Stone House Hotel for a routine blood test for PSA levels, with most receiving their results by e-mail the following day.

Lion President Dave was very happy with the success of the evening.

"Our annual PSA Testing Event is always really well attended, with many local men taking advantage of this service project which commenced in 2015."

"We have raised the awareness of prostate cancer in our community and have received testament from a number of men who have received effective treatment for issues raised over the years after attending one of our previous events."



"It was heartening to receive so many compliments on our efficiency and organisation on the night, especially as we are all volunteers! Our thanks, as ever, go to the staff at the Stone House Hotel for their help and support and the nurses and phlebotomists who worked so hard on the night."

If you have seen Stone Lions in action, either at a Prostate Awareness event, or in one of their other activities, and would like to know more about what makes them tick, please contact Dave on 0345 8338478 for an informal chat.



Heckled By A Hen! At Aston-by-Stone W.I.

At the June meeting of Aston-by-Stone W.I., strange noises were heard at intervals while President Pam Lowe and Secretary Nikki Walker were going through the business. Just soft noises at first, then more insistent and more frequently.

It turned out to be a hen called Diva – always wants the limelight – which had been brought by Member Chris Payne, to illustrate her talk on hen-keeping. Chris stepped in at the eleventh hour to replace the advertised Speaker, who had unfortunately been taken ill. So instead of hearing about a flying ambulance we heard about non-flying hens: they have a wing clipped to discourage them from taking to the skies.

Chris's affection for her hens was obvious, and she spoke entertainingly and knowledgeably about them. We met Millicent, a well-behaved Mille Fleur gold bantam, and Diva, who gradually became more and more vocal and had to be put back into her cage to discourage further remarks!

We learned a great deal about keeping hens. They need a certain amount of light in order to start producing eggs, for example. Chicks, when newly hatched, will imprint on the first living being they see, so that's why some hens follow their keeper around.

It had been a very busy week for Aston-by-Stone W.I., with several activities which will appear in a separate report, and now we look forward to our next meeting.

On 8th July, SOS Fashion will present a Fashion Show, when our members will be the models. It is an Open meeting: all are welcome, so do please come to see us.

We meet in Aston-by-Stone Village Hall at 7.30, and after the Show there will be tea and home-made cakes.

Visitors are welcome at all our meetings. To find out more, please email secretary.astonbystonewi@gmail.com





Warriors At Westbridge – A Viking Invasion!

Stone Town Council's Warriors at Westbridge event brings a thrilling Viking invasion to Westbridge Park on **Saturday 25 July 2026**.

Prepare for an unforgettable day of Viking adventure! This free family event promises a full day of entertainment, history, and hands-on activities for visitors of all ages.

The Viking invasion begins at 10.30am from the Stone Town Council Building car park on Station Road, where members of the public are invited to join the crew of a Viking longship as they march through the High Street and onward to their encampment at Westbridge Park.

children to transform into fearless Viking fighters. This activity will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and is expected to be extremely popular.

Visitors are welcome to bring their own picnics but there will also be a selection of food and drink vendors available on site.

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Council's Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee, said:

"Get ready to witness the fury, hear the clash, and live the legend! Stone Town Council know that keeping children entertained during the summer holidays can be a challenge, and finding fun,



Once at the park, visitors will be transported back in time with an immersive Viking experience, featuring dramatic battle displays, living history demonstrations, and authentic encampment activities. Guests will have the chance to meet the warriors, try on armour and helmets, and even handle Viking weapons under supervision.

Throughout the day, visitors can watch the warriors repairing and maintaining their equipment and undertaking traditional crafting activities that showcase life in the Viking Age.

Younger visitors can enjoy the popular **'Kiddie Vike'** experience, where they can safely take part in mock battles alongside the warriors.

The Council will also be offering **free special-effects 'battle scar' make-up** from 12 noon until 4pm, allowing

interesting and free activities is not always easy. We are delighted to be bringing this exciting new event to Stone and giving local families the opportunity to experience Viking life first-hand."

She added:

"Bring the whole family along and discover what life was really like for Viking warriors of the 10th and 11th centuries."



LOUISE CURLEY
MCFHP MAFHP

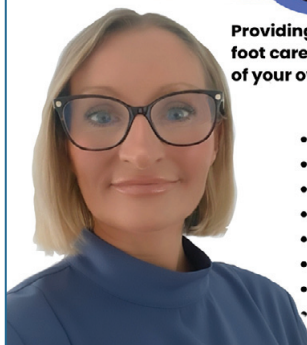
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Some recent examples of the groups work

Summer Crochet In Eccleshall

There will be a Beginners class at Eagle House, Eccleshall, on **Monday 27 July at 12.30pm**.

As it is in the school summer holiday, **accompanied juniors are very welcome to join us to learn to crochet.**

Improvers also meet at Eccleshall Library on the **second Friday of the month at 12.30pm**. We work on our own projects and receive tuition from the tutor.

There are also various **Crochet & Chat Sessions Every Month** so there is something crochet for everyone in Eccleshall and surroundings.

If you would like to learn or improve your crochet skills, please contact Christine Smith on 07946 535035 or christines1386@gmail.com for more information and to book a place in a class. Also see our Crochet in Eccleshall Facebook page.



Garden Planting By Aston & Little Stoke Beavers

Aston & Little Stoke Beavers spent the evening of 12th May weeding and planting their garden at St Saviour's Church, Aston. They originally planted the garden in June 2021, and come back each year to tidy it up.

The results should be very colourful when the begonias and busy lizzies come to full life.

CANTIAMO CHAMBER CHOIR | SUMMER CONCERT

Beautiful music to brighten a summer evening.

WEDNESDAY 8TH JULY 7.30 PM ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, ASTON-BY-STONE, ST15 0BJ

Chamber Choir Concert

The Cantiamo Chamber Choir Concert conducted by Harriet Atherton will perform on **Wednesday 8th July at 7.30pm** at St Saviour's Church, Aston-by-Stone.

Cantiamo sing a wide variety of music to a very high standard and their concerts are always most enjoyable. A mixed selection of intimate, expressive, and vibrant choral music.

Tickets: £10 per person (includes drinks) You can reserve your spot in advance through <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/114574>



Stone And District Stroke Club – Can You Help?

For 40 years, Stone and District Stroke Club has been providing those recovering from the effect of a stroke with an opportunity to meet, socialise and have fun together and the club has gone from strength to strength over the years. We rely on a key team of volunteers, many of whom have been with us for years, who are committed to ensuring that this is possible.

Our members are all individuals with one shared aim – to enjoy life and have fun, which is evident during our very lively weekly meetings!

Over the years there has been a huge improvement in recovery rates following a stroke, with fewer long-term after-effects being experienced and many returning to a very good level of speech and mobility.

Volunteers see the club as primarily a support group for members, who also provide the chance of a welcome break to their carers. There is no requirement for us to provide any form of individual

personal care to members.

We currently have seventeen members who attend the club regularly with a waiting list for those who wish to attend once a vacancy occurs. We are keen to guarantee that the club can continue for many years and are offering the chance to join our group of volunteers. No qualifications are needed, although a degree of patience and sense of humour is always useful, and we welcome both male and female volunteers.

If you are happy to play cards, help with quizzes and simple craft work, serve refreshments or just generally socialise and chat with members, we'd love to meet you. Our gentlemen would especially appreciate meeting someone interested in football and cricket!

We meet **every Wednesday from 10.00am – 12.15pm** at Little Stoke Cricket Club, Uttoxeter Road and would love to meet anyone interested in joining us. Please call or message Jan on 07790 078627 for an informal chat.



Lions Rebecca and Tracey with Lion President Dave and their Sponsor, Lion Glenys.

New Members For Stone Lions (CIO)

There was cause for celebration for Stone Lions at their June meeting, when they welcomed two new members to the Pride – Lions Rebecca and Tracey.

Over the last few months, Rebecca and Tracey have been regularly attending meetings and helping out at various and were both delighted when they were invited to join the Club as full members, accepting without hesitation!

All members of the Club wish them both a very happy and fulfilling time as members of Stone Lions, part of the world's largest service organisation, and hope they will enjoy the experience of making a difference in our community and Rebecca has already offered her knowledge of IT and Social Media to help promote the Club's activities in the future.



Mayor Mark and Mayoress Rosie Winnington in the garden of Wendy Baskerville

Eccleshall Open Gardens Weekend

Eccleshall hosting its annual Open Gardens event on Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st June, from 10am-4pm both days.

For a programme costing only £5.00 visitors admired and were inspired by 10+ stunning gardens lovingly created by their owners. Refreshments were enjoyed in the gardens at 'Ashcroft'.

On Saturday 20th June the Mayor and Mayoress of Stafford, Councillor Mark Winnington and Mrs Rosie Winnington, were guest of honour accompanied by Councillor Peter Jones.

This is an Ecclesian Society event, and all funds go toward the enhancement of Eccleshall.

For local gardener wishing to participate in next years event visit eccleshallopengardens@gmail.com



Anne and Luke Sergeant, coordinators of the event.



The Mayor and Mayoress in a local garden

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Crown Meadow Spotlight

Crown Meadow in Bloom:

Progress Highlights and Summer Expectations

*Councillor Robert Townsend, Chairman of Stone Town Council's
Environment Sub-Committee*



Meadowsweet



Mute Swan



Purple Loosestrife



Tansy

MANAGING THE WETLAND SCRAPES

The two wetland scrapes, an important feature of Crown Meadow, underwent extensive management work last year to address the build-up of willow saplings, dominant grasses and accumulated silt.

Although these interventions appeared dramatic and destructive at the time, the work was essential and the benefits are now clearly visible. The scrapes are again supporting a vibrant range of plant life, including species that had previously been suppressed by overgrowth.

If you have visited Crown Meadow recently you may have seen that Mute swans have returned to nest in the scrape and have successfully hatched seven cygnets.

The work has also restored the capacity of the scrapes to store floodwater, helping the meadow continue to perform its valuable role in natural flood management.

FOOTPATH IMPROVEMENTS

The diagonal path that crosses the meadow is frequently submerged during periods of flooding, forcing walkers to divert across muddy ground. This damages the meadow and creates difficult conditions for visitors.

To address the problem, the path will be raised slightly, helping it stay drier for longer and improving drainage. These works form part of Stone Town Council's ongoing programme of maintenance and enhancement, ensuring Crown Meadow remains both a valuable wildlife habitat and an attractive place for people to enjoy.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The meadow supports a wide range of flora and fauna and is an important part of the Trent Valley wildlife corridor.

A pair of Dippers have successfully nested – an amazing event that would have been unthinkable just 10 years ago and is a good indication of the health of the Trent and Scotch Brook

The species found here are largely influenced by the presence of water. During Summer and Autumn there are many plants associated with damp habitats for visitors to look out for on Crown Meadow, such as Meadowsweet, Purple Loosestrife, Tansy and Great Willowherb.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM – TAKING ACTION AT CROWN MEADOW

Rivers, streams and valleys across England are experiencing a rapid spread of Himalayan Balsam, and Crown Meadow is no exception. The invasive plant has become established along the banks of the River Trent and Scotch Brook in Crown Meadow, and the affected areas have been expanding year on year.

Originally introduced to Britain as a garden plant in 1839, Himalayan Balsam quickly escaped cultivation and became widespread along riverbanks, ditches and wetlands. Its fast growth allows it to form dense stands that crowd out native plants by competing for light, water and nutrients and reducing the diversity of other species that are vital for a healthy ecosystem.

In response to the growing problem, Stone Town Council established a volunteer group in 2025 to tackle Himalayan Balsam across Crown Meadow. Their efforts have already delivered encouraging results. Areas cleared last year are now largely free of the plant, with a range of native species beginning to recover and flourish once again.

The work has continued in 2026 and will remain an important part of the meadow's management in the years ahead. Although complete eradication is unlikely, sustained annual action can significantly reduce its impact and help limit the spread of seeds downstream through the Trent Valley.



Himalayan Balsam



Great Willowherb



Dipper

For more information on Crown Meadow

Visit www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk/about

Crown Meadow – Anglers Car Park

What 3 Words - resembles.goggle.originate

Sat Nav - ST15 0GY

There is other parking available in the town, details can be found www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk/car-parking

Crown Meadow can be accessed from the locations marked with a ★ on the map below.





The whole 'Hour Shakespeare' cast of five

'Hour Shakespeare' Perform At Stone Library

In June this year Stone Library were pleased to welcome again the talented local group of actors by the name of 'Hour Shakespeare'.

A small but appreciative audience enjoyed just one hour of entertainment at no charge, other than a small voluntary donation.

The cast of five took turns to perform excerpts from Shakespeare's best known and lesser known plays, Macbeth, Hamlet, Henry the Fifth, Henry the Fourth part 1, Richard the Third, and King John.

We watched Lady Macbeth, wringing her bloodstained hands in desperation as she declined into madness; "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand".

We eavesdropped on Hamlet's stepfather Claudius at prayer, confessing his guilt of murder; "Oh my offence is rank, it smells to high heaven".

We marvelled at Henry the Fifth's patriotic call to his "happy band of brothers" to fight on St. Crispin's Day.

We listened to a father's wise advice, Polonius to son Laertes, "neither a borrower nor a lender be".

We shivered with foreboding as the misshapen Richard the Third uttered the famous lines, "Now is the winter of our discontent", threatening horrors to come.

We shared a mother's grief with Lady Constance as she bemoaned the murder of her son Arthur at the hand of cruel King John. "Grief fills the room up of my absent child".

These powerful enactments were interspersed with readings from the Sonnets:

Sonnet 116,
"Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments"
138, "When my love swears she is made of truth I do believe her though I know she lies"
18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

27, "Weary with toil I haste me to my bed"
30, "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought I summon up remembrance of things past"

'Hour Shakespeare' perform regularly in various local venues.



The actor depicting the hunchbacked King Richard III

From Bel Crawford

32 Stone & Eccleshall's Favourite Read



Curborough Charity Day Returns for 2026

Motorsport enthusiasts, classic vehicle lovers and families alike can look forward to another unforgettable day at the renowned Curborough Sprint Course when Curborough Charity Day returns on **Monday, 31 August 2026**.

Now in its seventh consecutive year, this much-loved event continues to grow in popularity thanks to the ongoing support of Shenstone & District Car Club and the generosity of participants, volunteers and visitors. Following the tremendous success of previous years, organisers are hoping to surpass last year's impressive fundraising total of more than £16,500.

The event promises a spectacular showcase of up to 100 classic and vintage cars and motorcycles, with demonstration runs taking place throughout the day on Curborough's challenging figure-of-eight sprint course – affectionately known by enthusiasts as the "Cürburgring".



Alongside the on-track action, visitors can enjoy getting up close to the vehicles and chatting to the drivers and riders. The Sprinters Rest Café will be open all day, and the Brickmakers Arms will once again be providing a bar.

Among the many exciting entries expected this year are some familiar crowd favourites. Organisers hope to welcome back Nigel Blandin and his 1976 "Catering Meats Special", a fire-breathing, 5,700cc Ford Capri, and Judy Scott-Moncrieff will once again be demonstrating her gorgeous 1935 T35 Bugatti, featured on this year's flyer.

One of the most appealing aspects of Curborough Charity Day is its relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Visitors are encouraged not only to enjoy the excellent spectator viewing areas and expert commentary throughout the day, but also to wander freely around the paddock, meeting owners and getting up close to some truly remarkable machinery.

Beyond the motorsport spectacle, the event serves an important charitable purpose. Funds raised support Staffordshire Clubs for Young People, a registered charity working with young people aged 5 to 18 across some of Staffordshire's most disadvantaged communities.

Through subsidised youth clubs, sports projects, holiday activities and personal

developmental programmes, the charity provides valuable opportunities that help young people build confidence, develop life skills and enjoy positive experiences in a safe and supportive environment. For any more information go to www.staffscyp.org.uk or @staffscyp.



Spectator admission is £10 per adult, with free entry for children under 16. Members of Shenstone & District Car Club can attend free of charge upon presentation of a valid membership card.

Online entries are open for both demonstration runs (vehicles eligible from 1900–1986) and static displays. To register, visit <https://staffscyp.org.uk/curborough-charity-day/>. Sponsorship packages are also available for businesses wishing to support the event while gaining valuable local exposure.

Whether you're a lifelong motorsport enthusiast, a classic car admirer, or simply looking for an enjoyable family day out, Curborough Charity Day offers the perfect combination of thrilling action, fascinating vehicles and community spirit - all while raising vital funds for a worthy local cause.

Don't miss this exciting event – save the date for Monday, 31 August.

Photographs taken by, and with kind permission of Peter de Rousset-Hall





The Parking Machine has Landed in the Station drive!

Updates From Stone Station - Will It Cost You To Park At The Station?

A storm broke out when the A little bit of Stone website reported the appearance in Stone Station Approach Road of a parking meter, wrapped up in black plastic, on June 5th this year.

There had been rumours about parking charges being introduced for a long time, but this at last drew out of the train company who run the London Northwestern services an admission that they intended to do this. On the other hand, their brief statement said that no date was set for the black plastic to be removed or even what the charge would be.

The road is actually Network Rail land, but while the road was mostly potholes, charges were unlikely. The resurfacing of the road last year did suggest that something was planned. In fact, the train company that runs our stopping service, now known as WM Trains Ltd, wished to take over the lease for the road and ask their contractors to run the road as a car park for profit.

North Staffs Rail Promotion Group Chair, Jon Heal, explains, "if this was simply a plot of land attached to the station, it would be a lot simpler, and maybe there would be less argument about charging train users a small amount for the benefit of leaving their cars at the station. However, the station building is leased from Network Rail by Stone Town council, and so people who hire the venue for events would not be happy if all their guests had to pay for parking to attend. The worst case scenario is that the Station Community Centre is turned into a white elephant as a consequence."

People who have blamed the council for the charges are entirely wrong. The town council have argued that some of the spaces should be free for people attending events at the station. The group most affected there are Stone Quakers who have hired the station for their meeting every Sunday morning for 22 years.

Jon Heal continues, "But the group most affected by the plan is The Church at The Crossing who run the former youth centre as a Baptist church on Sunday, and a whole range of community activities take place during the week. The Futures2gether Group is based there, and sports events on the field can attract dozens in attendance. Obviously most cars have to be parked in the drive outside."

At the moment, nothing is confirmed. Local people think that there has been no conversation about the impact on the community. Cars displaced from the station drive might try to park for free in the already crowded side streets. Customers at *The Butcher's Block*, the popular steak house across the road, might be annoyed to find their easy parking is no longer available.

Issues have already been raised with NSRPG's contact in the train company and a large number of points from rail users and councillors were noted and taken away. The initial rumour was that charges could start in July, but WM Trains will not say. It would help if all stakeholders and users made their views known to the Managing Director at Ian.McConnell@wmtrains.co.uk

NSRPG hold their next meeting at Stone Station on Thursday July 30th at 7 pm. All are welcome. They hope to have WMT Stakeholder manager Geoff Grant again, to update us about all aspects of London Northwestern services. So far, we don't know how far the car parking decisions will have developed by then.

To find out more, you can email NSRPG at [jnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jnnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk)

**From Jon Heal
North Staffs Rail Promotion Group Chair**

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Stone Ramblers Walk of the Month

Barlaston - Trent & Mersey Canal - Outlanes

Distance: 4½ miles **Time:** 2 hours

Refreshments: Barlaston Village: the Plume of Feathers next to the canal and the Duke of York, both just off the route.

Terrain: The going is level, with the exception of one steep up section as you climb out of Downs Banks. Certain sections of this walk including the canal towpath can be muddy! There are five stiles to cross.

1. Turn immediately left out of the Downs Banks National Trust car park past the notice describing the history and wildlife of the area. Pass through the gate, following the track as it gently rises through the wooded area in the valley of Downs Banks. The track is broad and worn gravel. Ignore smaller tracks to the left and the right. There are a number of very pleasant picnic spots on the right. Continue straight ahead. This is a pleasant area to walk through at any season of the year and particularly attractive in winter sunshine.

2. Passing through a National Trust gate and after about 15 minutes from the car park you will come to a major junction of tracks, 2 broad grassy tracks to the right, one going up a steep hill, the main track going straight on. Ignore all of these and turn diagonally left down through the trees and steps to a footbridge over the stream.

The footbridge may be indistinct in the summer until you are about 10 yards from the main track. Cross this footbridge and turn left along the side of the stream for about 50 yards. Before the track bears left take a right hand turn, beginning the climb to the top of the hill. The track bears left following the NY signs up the hill. As you climb the hill the view opens up on the right looking towards Moddershall. At the top turn right.

3. Cross the stile out of Downs Banks following the track downhill. To your left in front you will see Barlaston village. Follow the path downhill, passing the stile to the right of the gate. Carry straight on, ignoring the gravel track to the left, eventually passing through a kissing gate and into a field below the grounds of The Upper House to a swing gate on to the drive to the house.

4. Turn left and after a small car park turn left over The Green. Note the War Memorial and the attractive, but controversial, Barlaston village sign on the right. Note also the County Library building; this is the former village school. It dates from the end of the 18th century and operated as school until 1963. Continue left down the road, passing Barlaston Church on your left and immediately turn left on to a public footpath. This is a new church built in 1984 to replace the former 16th century church at the north end of the village, which was declared unsafe.

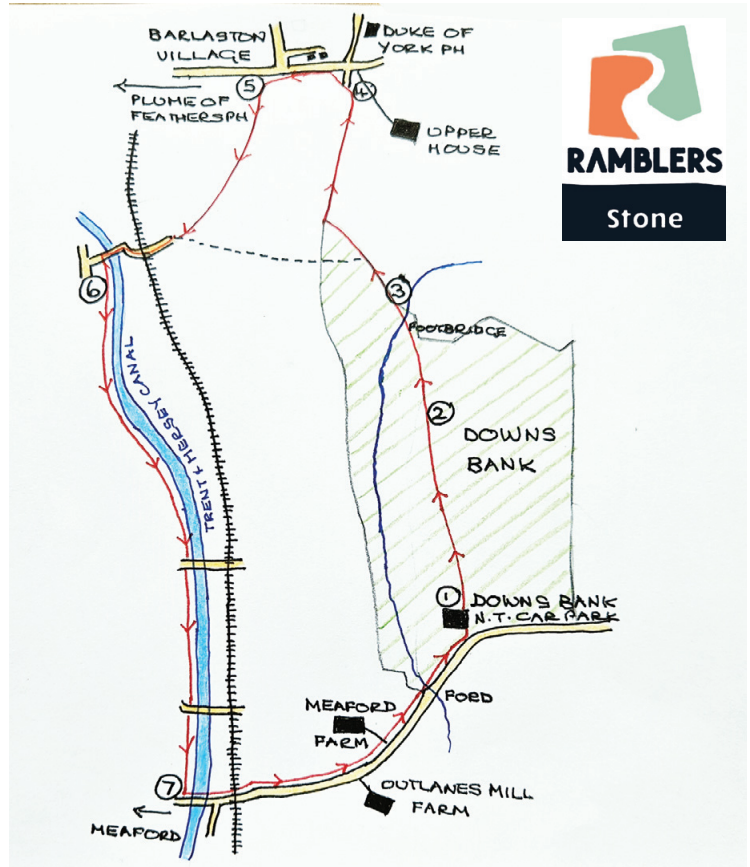
5. The track passes along the side of the church to a gate and stile. Cross the stile and turn right, keeping the hedge close on your right. At the end of this field cross the stile in the corner and follow the track and signs, turning right at a gate, crossing a small ditch, turning sharp left and then keeping the hedge and ditch close on your left. Continue to a stile in the hedge on the left. Cross this and turn right on to a track that leads down through a gate and under the railway bridge.

6. Proceed ahead to the canal bridge. Cross this and turn immediately left on to the towpath. Turn right, leaving Barlaston behind you. Continue on this path passing under bridges 101A and 101. At bridge 100 cross to the towpath on the other side of the canal and continue along the towpath, under bridge 99, until you reach Meaford Top Lock.

This stretch of the canal is surprisingly attractive, considering you are passing industrial sites and are alongside the railway. The canal was opened in 1771 although the whole navigation of 93 miles from the Trent to Preston Brook was not complete until 1777. This was from a start in 1758 when Earl Gower and Lord Anson asked James Brindley to survey a route from the Potteries to the Trent. The final route connected the Trent to the Mersey at Runcorn.

7. Here, at Bridge 98 leave the canal and turn left over the railway bridge. Continue on the road, ignoring all turnings until you reach the ford at Downs Banks. This road can be busy, please take care. Cross the ford, proceeding up the road to the National Trust car park.

Have a look at our website, www.stoneramblers.org.uk and perhaps join us on one of our many walks!



I'm writing this on the hottest day of the year so far. It's ridiculously hot and probably not ideal conditions to walk in! Sunhats, suncream and lots of water will be the order of the day.

As usual, we have been walking all over the place.

We had a wonderful week in Northumberland and the weather was perfect. We've been to Tissington to see the Well Dressings and we are currently planning our annual **'Summer Social and Stroll' in August** and our next outings to Wales and Shropshire.

Our 'Walk of the Month' is a shorter walk of 4½ miles, with the opportunity to stop for refreshments at the Plume of Feathers or Duke of York. We hope that you enjoy it.

Have a look at our Facebook page, Stone Ramblers and website www.stoneramblers.org, where you will find lots of information, including our forthcoming walks. We welcome new members to join us as guests for 2 to 3 walks and only ask that you wear strong footwear, that you don't mind getting muddy, bring some wet weather gear and that you bring something to eat and drink. If you wish to walk with us regularly and we really hope that you do, you will be expected to become a member of the Ramblers, which opens so many new opportunities.

Meanwhile, stay cool and hydrated and happy walking!

Penny Meakin Chair, Stone Ramblers



Aldi Shoppers In Staffordshire Help Raise £13 Million For Teenage Cancer Trust

Aldi is thanking shoppers in Staffordshire for helping the supermarket raise £13 million for Teenage Cancer Trust through their nine-year partnership.

Since 2017, Aldi colleagues in Staffordshire have organised a range of fundraising activities – from sky dives and cake sales to marathon challenges – with generous donations from shoppers in the region further boosting the total.

In celebration of the milestone, Aldi colleagues in Staffordshire and across the UK are taking part in the 'Walk With Us' challenge, to mark International Nurses Day, walking 13,000 steps a day over two weeks – the approximate distance a nurse covers during each shift.

The money raised will help Teenage Cancer Trust continue to provide specialised nursing care and expert youth support for young people with cancer across the UK.

Having set a target of £10 million by 2027, Britain's biggest discounter reached this milestone early in 2024 and has since extended its commitment to raise £20 million by 2031.

Aldi is also making an additional £13,000 donation to support the charity's ongoing work this year.

Liz Fox, National Sustainability Director at Aldi UK, said: "Reaching £13 million is a fantastic achievement and shows what can be accomplished when colleagues and customers come together for a cause that truly matters."

The work Teenage Cancer Trust does is invaluable, and we're determined to go even further – that's why we've set ourselves the ambitious target of £20 million by 2031."

Hannah Lloyd, Head of High Value Partnerships at Teenage Cancer Trust said: "This milestone represents a significant commitment from Aldi, their colleagues and customers, and we're enormously grateful for their ongoing support."

Every pound raised helps us fund specialist nurses, youth workers and hospital wards that make such a difference to young people facing cancer. This partnership is changing lives, and we're excited to build on this success together."



The former Stone Town Mayor, Cllr Jason Metters, presents the new Town Mayor Cllr Andrew Best with his chain of office. **Photo by Martin Robinson**

A New Mayor For Stone

Andrew Best has lived in Stone all of his life. Attending Christchurch First School, Christchurch Middle school and Alleynes High School. He then went on to Liverpool Hope University studying a BA hon's degree in IT and Education Studies. Andrew has a wife and three children who all work or study in Stone. Andrew's hobbies include Table Tennis and retro computer games.

Andrew has recently been on the governing board for one of his daughters' schools and he is the chair of Pubwatch in Stone.

Andrew joined the council in 2019 and before becoming the mayor for this year was the Estates Sub-Committee Chairman and he was also the Deputy Mayor in 2022 and 2025.

Andrew said "I joined the Town Council with the intention of representing constituents and serving the community I have called home my entire life."



Eccleshall Community Showcase

The Eccleshall Parish Community Showcase ran again on Tuesday 9th June, between 6.30 and 8pm, once again proving to be a great success, bringing together a wide variety of local groups, clubs and organisations in the beautiful surroundings of Holy Trinity Church.

The event gave residents of all ages the chance to explore the many activities, support services, volunteering opportunities and community organisations available throughout the parish.

From sports clubs and youth groups, to environmental initiatives, wellbeing services and community support

networks, the showcase celebrated the vibrancy, diversity and community spirit that make Eccleshall such a special place.

A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to the event, whether by running a stand, helping with the organisation, or volunteering on the day. Particular thanks go to Eccleshall Scouts (photograph above) for providing refreshments and to Holy Trinity Church for generously hosting the event.

We look forward to seeing everyone again when the Community Showcase returns in 2027.

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By Stone Scribblers Creative Writing Group

Those were the days

At the end of Bence Road, where it turns the corner into the cobbles of Ruskin Street, the 'Open all Hours' corner shop is about to close it's doors for the last time..

Manageress Jenny sighs as she looks at the piles of boxes which she has spent most of the day filling with unsold stock - thinking back to the many happy years that she has spent behind that counter, slicing and chopping, weighing and wrapping, counting and chatting - the memories alone are enough to bring a tear to her eye.....

"I've 'erd they've got sausages at corner shop Florrie - get your coat on and run round for me - don't forget ration books! - and tek our Guinness with yer for a run - do 'im good!"

It was a rainy day in the school holidays and eleven year old Florrie had been helping big brother George as he built some contraption with his meccano set.

'Alright Gran' she said, jumping up and reaching for her raincoat and hat. She loved her gran but sometimes couldn't help thinking that it was always she and never George who was given such tasks.

Collie dog Guinness, long wavy tail flapping furiously, jumped up from his favourite position in front of the coal fire - always ready for the attachment of his lead, signalling a walk and many sniffs ahead.

Florrie picked up the shopping basket and collected gran's purse and the ration books, and with Guinness by her side she skipped off to Bence Road and the corner shop.

Word had got round about the expected sausages and already a queue was forming in readiness for opening time. At 9am sharp the 'Closed' sign revolved and the key turned!

Young Jenny fastened back the door and slipped around the counter to join shopkeeper Mr Ferry.

She was quickly learning how to weigh the sugar, loose tea, flour and dried fruit and other foods according to the strict rationing limits - and could wrap neatly and tie with string where required - but had not yet been let loose on anything involving slicing, cutting or the handling of meat products.

"Hello Florrie" said Mr Ferry - bending over the counter to check Guinness hadn't sneaked inside, *"How's yer gran these days - it's a while since I saw her in't shop."*

"She's alright thank you" said Florrie shyly - *"she's sent me for the rations and wants some sausages!"*

"Already weighed for you lass! Mind Guinness doesn't get a whiff of 'em!" he chuckled. *"Young Jenny here's doing the wrapping. She'll mark off the books as well"*

"Now" said Mr Ferry, reaching below the counter - *"somat for the dog to chew on - off the ration!"* he whispered while passing it over to Jenny for wrapping.

"Thank you Mr Ferry" Florrie said as she left the shop with her basket, collecting Guinness fastened to a nearby post...

.....Jenny smiles quietly to herself as she hangs up her overall and takes the key from the drawer for the last time. She's been thinking of when she first worked at the shop - just left school and learning as she went. That time when she mixed up the labels on two parcels! Sausages and a bone for a dog! Funny name it had - sounded like guineas. She got told off by old Mr Ferry good and proper! But Florrie's gran made a very tasty soup from the meaty bone while the dog had a pleasant surprise once he'd torn the paper off the sausages!

Happy days!! She shuts the door with a clang and posts the key through the letter box - time to move on.

by Sylvia Williams

Stone Scribblers meet at the **Borehole Pub on Mount Road**, Stone on the **second and fourth Tuesday of each month between 11am and 1pm**, you can also find them at www.facebook.com/StoneScribblers or you can email them at stonescribblers@yahoo.com



Recorder Concert at St Saviour's Aston by Stone

Saturday 'Coffee Concerts' at St Saviour's

As one of a series of Coffee Concerts, St Saviour's Church at Aston-by-Stone hosted a concert on the 30th May by the **'I Soffiatori Recorder Consort'**, a group of 9 musicians who play a variety of different recorders ranging from a descant recorder to a large bass recorder.

The group played a programme of Tudor music and dances and members of the audience were encouraged to join in with the dancing, ably led by one of the members of the group.

The music and dancing were most enjoyable and it was a wonderful way to spend a morning.

The following concert was on Saturday 20th June where the audience enjoyed a performance by the recently named **'Potteries Band'**.

A particular highlight of the event came at the end, when two very young enthusiasts in the audience were invited up on stage to join the percussion section for a final number.



The Potteries Band



Rotary Restaurant Visit

Members and guests of the Stafford Rotary Club enjoyed a fundraising evening meal at the Riverside Restaurant where the student staff were left in charge in the kitchen, and with serving the meal.

The club have been guests at the

College restaurant in the past which has proved to be popular, and useful for the students.

It raised funds for the Rotary charities, and the club President, Eccleshall's Peter Jones, (seen above) thanked the students and presented them.

Learn Laugh Live with Stone and District u3a

The u3a movement founded in 1982 is one of the largest membership organisations in the UK. It was formed to promote a positive later life with a collaborative approach to learning with peers leaning from each other, and not in the pursuit of qualifications and awards. u3a believes that fun and socialising at any age improves the quality of life.



You can easily find a group close to you by looking on our website <https://stone.u3asite.uk/groups/> or use the filters on the website to choose your location, the day each group is held or search through the list of activities for one that interests you. If you would like to live for the moment, make new friends and have a laugh come and join us.



We have over 50 different activity groups ranging from Art Appreciation to Walking and almost everything in between.

Stone and District u3a is a registered charity offering a community for those who have stepped away from full time work, whatever the reason.

There is no upper age limit, but members must be 18 years old or over. Membership currently costs just £50 per year and this allows you to attend as many groups as you like, 1st September to 31st August. A concessionary fee for first time members only is available from 1st March each year. (£25). **WHY NOT JOIN US?**





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Scribblers Travel Back In Time

Stone Scribblers writing group recently enjoyed a visit to the new Staffordshire History Centre, in Stafford.

The day began with a Crime and Punishment Walking Tour, led by Lizzie: a wonderfully knowledgeable and entertaining guide. She took us into the streets and squares of Stafford, and regaled us with stories of the grim and gruesome historical events which took place on our very doorsteps.

We learned about the often brutal justice system, the prisons, past and present, and some of the unfortunate inmates. Many of them were parents, simply trying to put food on the table and coal on the fire. Some paid the ultimate price for crimes that today we would find petty.

We also heard of the grisly connection between Stafford Market Square and the Gunpowder Plot and even followed in the footsteps of the notorious poisoner William Palmer. And did you know that, bizarrely, Stafford has a link to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln? The English actor Junius Brutus Booth acted here before becoming a huge star of the stage in the United States. His son, John Wilkes Booth, lives in infamy as the man who shot Abraham Lincoln.

The walking tours are very popular, at a cost of £5, and must be booked beforehand.

After the walk we were ready for a breather so stepped into the Gatehouse Theatre coffee shop for lunch and chat.

We continued our visit by returning to the History Centre for an excellent Spotlight Talk by Engagement and Access Manager Sarah, who taught us all about Staffordshire's own Suffragette:

Alice Hawkins.

We heard how this remarkable working class woman, a machinist in a shoe factory, fought to improve pay and conditions and then became a leading figure in the campaign for female suffrage. Alice spoke at rallies attended by hundreds of thousands of people, was jailed five times and even underwent the horrific ordeal of being force-fed.

We learnt that her husband was also passionate about the cause and how, on being ejected from a meeting where Winston Churchill was speaking, was thrown down the stairs with such force that he suffered broken bones and sued (*successfully too!*) Happily, Alice lived to see the battle won and cast her first vote at the age of sixty-five.

Our enthusiastic speaker, Sarah, managed to pack so much information into this short talk and left us all wanting to find out more for ourselves. The Spotlight talks are free to attend and there is no need to book ahead.

Finally we had a wander through the exhibition gallery at the History Centre itself, which opened at the end of 2024 and has proved a fantastic resource for the county. It is free to visit, can be found on Eastgate Street, Stafford, and is open Tuesday - Saturday, 10.00 - 16.00.

Visit their page at www.staffordshirehistory.org.uk/

Stone Scribblers meet at the Borehole Pub on Mount Road, Stone on the **second and fourth Tuesday of each month, between 11 am and 1pm.** You can also find them at www.facebook.com/StoneScribblers



Stone Choral Society

On Saturday 25th April Stone Choral Society gave a superb performance of Brahms' German Requiem, at Trinity Church in Eccleshall.

This is a beautiful and seminal Requiem. It is one of the first requiems to not include the set pieces of the Mass of the Dead. The text is religious and involves passages set to music for a full choir, baritone and soprano.

The orchestral parts were reduced to a piano duet; four hands belting out the accompaniment where appropriate and gentle and quiet in calmer numbers. The Requiem is in German too; the vernacular being a departure from the usual sacred music the choir perform.



Peter Taylor and Harriet Hunter joined as the baritone and soprano soloists. This is not the first time either artist has collaborated with Stone Choral Society. The whole performance was an uplifting experience for singers and audience alike as the evening sun streamed through the church's stained-glass windows.

As always the choir was conducted by Harriet Johnson and Mark Goodhew joined Jenny Hames; the regular accompanist.



On **Saturday 4th July 2026**; the choir hold their Summer Concert in Priory Hall, St Dominic's Priory School. The concert will also feature The Daleian Singers; Harriet is also their musical director. The night promises to bring a wide range of songs including numbers from musicals; films and the world of popular music. Tickets are available at www.trybooking.com/uk/GHZW and the evening starts at 7pm and includes the crowd-pleasing wine and strawberries and cream.

Looking forward a choral workshop and concert are taking place on **Saturday 26th September**; it is also in Priory Hall. It will be an afternoon of rehearsal with a concert in the evening. Look out for this information shortly.

Alternatively, if you would just like to join us, please email info@stonechoral.org.uk; **we meet on Thursday evenings from 7.30pm to 9.30pm** in Walton First School, Walton, Stone.

With thanks to Martin Robinson for his photographs and commitment to our Choral Society.



Mike Reaches For The Sky

Stone resident Mike Halliday recently had the opportunity to realise a long held dream of flying a Second World War Supermarine Spitfire fighter plane from Tattenhill Airfield near Burton upon Trent which was an RAF airfield during the war.

The Spitfire that Mike flew was Spitfire MJ627, built at Castle Bromwich in 1943 as an LF MK IXc and entered service with 441 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1944.

MJ627's first operational sortie was flown on the 25th September 1944 from a forward base in Belgium carrying the Squadron code letters 9G and wearing black and white invasion stripes. Two days later, the 27th September 1944, whilst being flown by Pilot Officer Sidney Bregman MJ627 shot down and destroyed a Messerschmitt Me 109 over Arnhem. The aircraft survived the war with only 245 airframe hours was placed in store.

In July 1950 MJ627 was sold to Vickers Armstrong Ltd and converted to two seat MKIX(T) configuration for the Irish Air Force where she served until April 1960. After passing through several private owners MJ627 joined Warbird Experiences who continue to operate her today, based at Biggin Hill, Kent.

Mike told The Gazette that "It had been a long held ambition to fly in a Spitfire over Stone," he continued, "I spotted an advert one Thursday evening offering flights from Tattenhill the coming weekend so I phoned up the following morning and booked and paid for a flight on the Sunday afternoon."



Spitfire pilot Jon Cooke hands Mike his Spitfire flight certificate after the flight.

After meeting the ground crew and my pilot/instructor Jon Cooke and going through a safety briefing and getting into my flying suit it was time to climb into the rear cockpit and get strapped in. After preflight checks Jon started the powerful Rolls Royce Merlin engine, got permission for take off and we were away.

By the time we were over JCB World Headquarters it was my turn to take control of the aircraft under Jon's guidance.



That "Spitfire" smile



Up, up and away.

I was pleasantly surprised how little control input was needed compared to the Cessna aircraft I had flown out of Tattenhill during previous flying lessons. After passing over Alton Towers it was time to head towards Stone, I felt very privileged to see Stone passing below the famous elliptical wings of the Spitfire as I flew overhead, waving as I did so knowing that the staff and many friends from my local pub, The Bridge Inn, were watching from below.

After Stone we flew down the Trent Valley, over Hixon airfield and Shugborough Hall before doing a steep turn as we flew past my parents home in Little Hatwood, where I grew up. We continued over Rugeley and the National Memorial Arboretum where Jon re-took control of the aircraft as we headed back to Tattenhill. On this last leg of the flight was the highlight for me as Jon performed not one but two "Victory Rolls" before he landed us gently back on terra firma and the short taxi back to the hangar and photographs with Jon and my friends Keri-Jayne McKie and David Du Mont whom I must thank for taking all the photos for me, a fantastic experience, would I do it again, you bet I will!"



It was estimated that upwards of 400 people attended the walk.

Save Eccleshall Walk

The campaign to Save Eccleshall from 'Over-Development' continued at a pace on April 18th when residents and campaigners gathered at the Eccleshall crossroads on the Little George car park at 10am in readiness for a 'walking the six sites' mentioned in the planning applications.

For months now the campaign has been encouraging residents to submit objections to the Stafford Borough Council Planning Department, over the six applications, which in their own words

were simply 'over development' of our small country town.

Hundreds had responded to each of the applications.

A large number of the residents, children, pets and all walked through all six sites which were included in the planning applications.

For more information search Facebook for save Eccleshall or go direct <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1084939621871868/>

Collage Café

The theme for the May session was Pentecost. Group members created collages inspired by the 'violent wind' and 'tongues of fire' referenced in Acts 2:1-12. The June session was based on Jesus' words in Matthew 6:28-30: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Group members used a wide selection of fresh flowers and foliage to create floral arrangements which when photographed can be transformed into greetings cards.

Collage Café usually meets on the **second Thursday of each month at Stone Library from 10.00am to 12.00 noon**. For more information and to check dates please contact Jill on 07491 311832



Line Dancing Classes in Stafford & Stone...!



Monday

1.30-3 Beginners+Social Stafford

Tuesday

11-12 Improvers Stone
5.45-7.15 Beginners+Social Stafford
7.30-9 Absolute Beginners Stone

Wednesday

12.15-1.15 Absolute Beginners Stone
13.30-3 Beginners+Social Stone
5:30-7 Beginners+Social Stafford

Coming in September - Wednesday

7.30-9.30pm All levels Social Stone

Thursday

10-11 Absolute Beginners Stafford
11.15-12.15 Improvers Stafford
7.30-9 Absolute Beginners Stafford

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Ben Adams, Amy Nolan the National Champion in Women's Boxing and Coach Andy Whitehall MBE

Countdown to Staffordshire Space programme 2026...

Plans are underway for the Staffordshire Commissioner's Space summer programme 2026, which last year saw over 9,000 young people across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent taking part in a range of fun activities.

The programme, for young people aged 8 to 17, brings together public, voluntary and private sector organisations to provide positive activities for young people during the school holidays.

Partially funded by proceeds of crime, Space aims to help increase young people's skills, improve their health and wellbeing and create opportunities, while also aiming to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB).



During summer 2025:

9,219 young people took part in the Space programme
2,429 activities were provided including sports, arts, crafts, and youth activities
23,480 attendances were made in total, equating to 46,988 hours of engagement

As well as activities that are open for all to enjoy, Space also funds targeted activities for young people who are vulnerable or live in an area subject to high levels of ASB.

Since its re-launch in 2015, the Space initiative has contributed to a sustained reduction in youth-related ASB during the school summer holidays. Reports to Staffordshire Police have fallen by 81.9% since 2016, from 1,310 incidents in 2016 to 237 in 2025. 2025 saw a 4.4% reduction, with 248 incidents recorded in 2024.



Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Ben Adams said: "Work is well underway for this year's Space programme, which promises a diverse range of activities for young people to get stuck into over the summer, meeting new friends and trying something new. The programme simply wouldn't be possible without all the partners who come together to facilitate the Space activities, which also help to reduce anti-social behaviour and make a positive difference in our communities."

Last year's programme was a huge success, and I look forward to seeing just as many young people enjoying Space this summer."

Activities will be uploaded in the coming weeks. Sign up for all the latest event and activity updates: <https://staffordshirespace.uk>



Stone Scribblers Recommend Gladstone Pottery Museum

Some members of Stone Scribblers writing group recently visited Gladstone Pottery Museum in Longton, Stoke on Trent.

Gladstone is unique, as it's the only complete Victorian pottery factory that can be visited today, showing visitors a time when coal burning ovens were making the finest bone china.

Carrie Veltom from the group, said "We walked across cobbled yards, we stepped inside huge bottle ovens and were able to access old workshops all taking us back in time to over one hundred years ago guided by our very knowledgeable volunteer Paul Niblett.

Paul was able to explain how the kilns worked and the importance of all the different kiln "furniture."

We watched a demonstration by a skilled expert on throwing a pot on the wheel, we absorbed the atmosphere of the ancient building and appreciated the working conditions for people at that time. We then climbed the old, creaky stairs to the café for a welcome light lunch.

Now familiar to the many who watch The Great Pottery Throw Down but we also agreed it's somewhere that would be appreciated by all age groups to visit and it might even inspire some creative writing!"



Eccleshall Cancer Warriors Donation

On Thursday 5th June, members of Eccleshall Lodge - WBros. Mike, Pete and Rob were delighted to present a cheque for £350 to Eccleshall Cancer Warriors. With a further donation of £350 from WBros. Dave and Pete representing Eccleshall Chapter.

Eccleshall Cancer Warriors are a fantastic local support group offering peer-to-peer support to people living with cancer, helping them navigate their journey every step of the way.

Lodge member David Spencer told the Gazette "The members of Eccleshall Lodge are proud to support such a wonderful group like Eccleshall Cancer Warriors.

They do such incredible work in our community, and members of our own lodge have benefitted from their incredible support, which makes this donation especially close to our hearts.

We hope this donation helps them to continue doing such an amazing job."

If you or someone you know has been affected by cancer, please do reach out to them - the peer to peer support they offer is remarkable. You can find out more on their facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/335916135183931/> or just search for Eccleshall Cancer warriors.



Freedom Leisure colleagues with students from Windesheim University

Freedom Leisure Partners with Dutch University to Explore Green Travel in Stafford and Stone

Freedom Leisure, which operates leisure centres in partnership with Stafford Borough Council, has announced a new topic with Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands to deliver a research project exploring sustainable travel across Stafford and Stone.

The project forms part of a wider long-term partnership between Freedom Leisure and Windesheim University, delivered through an annual international programme supporting research, innovation and sustainability initiatives.

Previous collaborations have explored a range of environmental issues, with this year's Stafford based project focussing specifically on green and active travel. This research aims to understand how customers travel to Freedom Leisure sites, the reasons behind their travel choices, and how more sustainable and active travel options can be encouraged.

With thousands of journeys made to leisure centres every week, travel represents an important part of the wider environmental impact and net zero ambitions. The findings will help inform future initiatives designed to reduce environmental impact while supporting healthier lifestyles.

This 19-week research project began at the start of February 2026 and is structured in three phases. The initial eight weeks are being conducted in the Netherlands, where students are working virtually with Freedom Leisure to

define and plan the project, alongside completing desk-based research.

The next eight weeks take place in the UK, where students are collecting data across leisure and cultural facilities in Stafford and developing potential solutions. The final three weeks will return to the Netherlands, where the team will complete analysis and produce a final advisory report.

The students arrived in the UK at the end of March and will remain until late May, with their final presentation and report due in early June. While the research is locally focussed in Stafford and Stone, the project will contribute to Freedom Leisure's wider sustainability strategy and ongoing commitment to evidence led environmental improvements across its portfolio.

By building long-term academic partnerships, the organisation aims to develop practical, scalable solutions that respond to both environmental priorities and customer needs.

Alistair Gould, Area Manager at Freedom Leisure, said: "We are delighted to be working with Windesheim University of Applied Sciences on this important project.

Understanding how our customers travel to our facilities is a key step in helping us reduce our environmental impact and support more sustainable choices. This collaboration gives us valuable insight that will shape how we develop greener, more active travel options for our communities moving forward."



The NHS stand at the event

Eccleshall Health And Well Being Event

The Eccleshall Community Library, in conjunction with the Crown Surgery, held a successful drop-in event at Eccleshall Library on 4th June between 4pm and 7pm.

The event was supported by stands from local health groups showing what they did to support the community. Crown Surgery had pieces of equipment on display, and members of staff on hand to talk to visitors.



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Major (retired) Dougie Craig, Branch Chair and Tracy Hall Branch Secretary at Stone Carnival

Great progress being made by the Stone Branch of RBL

The Stone Branch of the Royal British Legion has been in existence since 1929 and our local historian, Mr Philip Leason, is well acquainted with our story. Our Secretary, Ms Tracy Hall, moved to Stone in 2013 and, having regularly attended Stone's Service of Remembrance, became increasingly aware that there was now here within Stone where members of the public could purchase poppies!

Despite having never done anything like this before she took up the challenge of becoming the Poppy Appeal Organiser in 2024, supported by Ms Pat Gates and Ms Pat Saul, who have for years sustained the appeal by selling wreaths.

Tracy's interest in the Royal British Legion is not as a direct result of military service; she is not a veteran nor are any of her immediate family. Her grandfather served in the major conflicts of WW2 but, probably because of the trauma he suffered, turned to alcohol as a support which then impacted considerably on his and his family's life. He died aged 50 as a result of his lifestyle choices. In today's world he would have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and offered support; hence Tracy's desire to help support other families who may be in a similar position within our local and the wider community.

Tracy's professional career as a nurse has spanned over 40 years with the vast majority spent within various roles in the local community. She also volunteers for West Midlands Ambulance Service as a Community First Responder so you may see her out and about in Stone in either capacity.

Twenty-twenty four and 2025 were a steep learning curve for Tracy but she has been overwhelmed by the level of support from the residents of Stone. In 2025 the Stone Poppy Appeal doubled the amount raised on the previous year, which is an incredible achievement and demonstrates the level of commitment shown by the people of Stone to honour our armed forces, both past and present.

You may not know that there is a lot of work involved in running the Stone Poppy Appeal, and whilst Tracy has the support of other dedicated volunteers, there is always more to do and so new volunteers are always welcome. With your support the Branch will continue to thrive and raise even more this year!

The picture above shows our most recent fundraising event at Stone Carnival where some of our members were able to meet local carnival revellers. A big thank you is due to them for their financial contributions.

It is important to note that to be a member of the Royal British Legion you do not have to have served in the military. If you are interested in supporting the veteran community, please reach out to one of the committee members or contact the RBL directly.

As stated, we are hoping to expand our branch membership. It costs just £22 a year to be a member of the Royal British Legion, although if you are currently serving in the military, it is free. As a member of the RBL you receive information, access to local clubs, the ability to access tickets for the Festival of Remembrance, access to purchase members only products from the Poppy Shop and a 15% discount on other products. If you are interested, please ring 0800 307 7773.

Please note that our next branch meeting will take place on Monday 13 July 2026 at The Star in Stone, 21 Stafford Street, Stone ST15 8QW at 7pm if you wish to join us.



All Saints' Conservation Project Reveals Hidden Secrets

Spring has been a busy time at All Saints' Church Sandon with much needed conservation work nearing completion inside the church as well as activities going on outside as part of The National Lottery Heritage Fund project.

The grade I listed church has some rare and important features that are being conserved as part of the project including the family tombs of the Erdeswicke family, Tudor wall paintings, Charles II coat of arms and stained glass windows. Since October, conservators from Calibre Conservation have been painstakingly removing the dust and dirt by hand and then lightly retouching damaged areas.



foliage and some text in the painted window have been revealed for the first time in hundreds of years.

Further intriguing discoveries made by the conservators included musket shot and broken fragments of the Erdeswicke family tomb, including the nose of Sampson Erdeswicke!

The stained glass, which had been removed over the winter is due to be returned to the church in June, along with the Royal Coat of Arms, which has been painstakingly cleaned, removing 350 years of dirt and dust.

On Tuesday 26th May, All Saints' welcomed the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust for a Bioblitz day.

Families had great fun bug hunting in the long grass and searching for different plants and animal species to add to our biodiversity list. Visitors also enjoyed our brand new Butterfly and Moth trail around the grounds of the church, which will be **up until September** for anyone to come and enjoy. A goody bag will be available for those who visit when the church is open. The wooden butterflies and moths were designed and beautifully painted by members of Oak Tree Farm Rural Project.

Completed trail sheets can be posted in the post box in the church porch for a chance to win a bird box! Coming up we have an exciting **Sandon Time Travellers reenactment event on 1st August**.

For further details and opening times please visit our website at www.sandonallsaints.com



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Murder Mystery Evening

Weekly Timetable of Events

Mon	STRONG Fitness - Beginners welcome Gentle Exercise U3A Talking Books U3A Sweaty Mama (fitness class - mums & babies) Craft U3A (monthly 2nd Mon) U3A Meeting (monthly 1st Mon) Prayer Meeting St John's Church (bi-monthly) Pilates Beginners - new class starts September Slimming World Clubbercise Dance Fitness - Beginners welcome	9.30-10.15am 10-11am 10.30-12.30pm 1-1.45pm 2-4pm 1.30-4pm 2.30-4pm 5.20-6.10pm 6-7.30pm 6.30-7.20pm
Tues	Pilates Beginners Family History U3A (fortnightly) Disco Line Dancing: High Beginners & Improvers Gentle Seated Exercise to Music & Social Sequence Dancing Cryptic Crosswords U3A (1st & 3rd Tues) back Sept Papercraft U3A (fortnightly 2nd & 4th Tues) Weight Watchers Fitness Pilates Beginners Disco Line Dancing: Absolute Beginners & Social Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) Rock Choir	9.30-10.30am 10.30-12.30pm 11-12 noon 1.30-2.45pm 2-4pm 2-4pm 2-4pm 6-7pm 6.20-7.10pm 7.30-9pm 6.30-8.30pm 8-9.30pm
Weds	Guitar U3A Knit, Crochet & Chat Disco Line Dancing: Absolute Beginners Diabetes Path to Remission (NHS referrals) Disco Line Dancing: Beginners & Social Conexus Tuition Stafford & Stone Combat Assassin Fitness - Beginners welcome Yoga: All Abilities Disco Line Dancing: All Levels - Social (September)	10.30-12.30pm 10.30-12.30pm 12.15-1.15pm 1-3pm 1.30-3pm 4-6pm 6.20-7.05pm 6.30-7.30pm 7.30-9.30pm
Thurs	Happy Feet Italian Beginners U3A - (back in September) Private Booking Relaxation Session U3A Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) Sound Bath: Deep Relaxation Session (Monthly 2nd Thur) GPC Meeting (3rd Thurs monthly) Pilates 'Men on Mats' - Beginners Flower Club (last Thurs monthly)	10-11am 10-11.30am 10.15-11.45am 2.30-3.30pm 6.30-8.30pm 7-8pm 7-8pm 7.30-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm
Fri	STRONG Fitness - Beginners welcome Singing for Fun U3A (fortnightly) Dressmaking & Needlecraft U3A (fortnightly) Taekwondo BINGO - Community & Social Group	9.30-10.15am 1.30-3pm 2-4pm 7-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm
Sat	Slimming World Overeaters Anonymous Fitness Pilates Beginners Community Sewing Circle (monthly 2nd Sat) Child of Mine Playgroup (last Sat monthly) Line Dancing Tutorials, Courses & Socials	8.30-10am 9.15-10.15am 10.30-11.20am 12-3pm 2-4pm Various
Sun	Table Top Sale/Car Boot (fortnightly Sept-April) St John's Church - Weekly Service St John's Church - Monthly Service (last Sun)	8.30-11.30am 10.30-11.30am 6.30-7.30pm



Beginner Pilates

There's been a lot going on at Walton Community Centre in the last couple of months!

The **SOS charity fashion show** was a hit & the **Murder Mystery Evening** with **Stafford Players & George's Pies** was a **FABULOUS** evening and one that will definitely be repeated!

Looking to the summer ahead the community centre's **FUN FAMILY Beetle Drive GAMES** night will be running again & the **QUIZ** will also take place for those wanting to get a team together and have a good laugh!

For upcoming events see their Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/WaltonCommunityCentreStone

FASHION SHOW..!



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SCAN TO BOOK Visit our website www.crownwharftheatre.org.uk for tickets and further listings

JULY

 THE NOTEBOOK WEDNESDAY 1 ST JULY 14:30	 LAURA LEXX FRIDAY 3 RD JULY 2026 Live At The Apollo, Mock the Week FELICITY WARD, SILKY, PAUL SAVAGE
 IF/THEN WED 8 TH TO SAT 11 TH JULY (14+)	 HUGO SUNDAY 12 TH JULY 14:30
 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN SUNDAY 12 TH JULY 19:00	 Disney's The Jungle Book SUNDAY 26 TH JULY 14:30
 1917 SUNDAY 26 TH JULY 19:00 (15)	 THE STING WEDNESDAY 29 TH JULY 14:30

July is set to be a vibrant month at Crown Wharf Theatre, with a fantastic mix of cinema classics, family favourites, stand-out comedy, and contemporary musical theatre. Here's what audiences can look forward to.

Cinema Screenings

The Notebook - Wednesday 1st July - 2:30pm.

A beloved romantic drama that continues to move audiences.

Hugo Sunday 12th July - 2:30pm. A magical, visually rich family adventure from Martin Scorsese.

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl Sunday 12th July - 7:00pm. Join Captain Jack Sparrow for swashbuckling fun in this iconic blockbuster.

Disney's The Jungle Book Sunday 26th July - 2:30pm A perfect family afternoon with this much-loved Disney classic.

1917 (15) Sunday 26th July - 7:00pm. A gripping, immersive war epic from the director of Skyfall.

The Sting Wednesday 29th July - 2:30pm A stylish, clever caper starring Paul Newman and Robert Redford.

Live Comedy & Theatre

Live Comedy: Laura Lexx & Guests Friday 3rd July Featuring Laura Lexx (*Live at the Apollo, Mock the Week*), Felicity Ward, Silky, and MC Paul Savage - a brilliant night of stand-up.

IF/THEN - From Here to Something Extraordinary (14+) Wednesday 8th - Saturday 11th July.

A contemporary musical exploring the choices that shape our lives, and how one moment can change everything.

Coming This Christmas - Dear Santa

Looking ahead to the festive season, Crown Wharf Theatre is delighted to present *Dear Santa*, the heart-warming live show from the creator of *Dear Zoo*. Running from **3rd-5th December**, this magical production is perfect for younger audiences and families.

Every child gets to meet Santa and receives a special gift, making it a truly memorable Christmas outing. With limited performances, early booking is strongly recommended.

Tickets for all events are available from the Crown Wharf Theatre website:
www.crownwharftheatre.org.uk

CROWN WHARF THEATRE STONE
WHAT'S ON
Visit our website www.crownwharftheatre.org.uk for tickets and further listings

LIVE ON STAGE
Dear Santa
 From Santa
 MEET SANTA
 EVERY CHILD GETS A GIFT
 BOOK NOW!
 3RD TO 5TH DECEMBER



The Walking Men Of Eccleshall

The Eccleshall Trinity Men's Fellowship gather once a month to enjoy the countryside its beauty, and its foods across our wild and rugged fields and pathways, culminating with a hot lunch at a rural hostelry.

The club membership includes members who map out a long, and a shorter route for the less agile, and spend much time and effort sampling the bills of fayre at many a local eating house so that the members are not disappointed after a long (or short) walk!

On the occasion of the photograph above, the group came complete with their own spiritual support.

New members are always welcome and a call to secretary John Turnock on 01785 302541 will get you the details of fees and dates of next meetings etc.

The indoor meeting in February was on subject of "A history of Printing", given by society treasurer Bob Marsh, who was able to open up to us the world of printing, going back decades with his time spent in the industry.

A Good Start To The Year For Butterflies

Here in Eccleshall this year there have been remarkable numbers of Holly Blue - nearly three times more than the best year in the previous 20.

Other butterflies have only been moderate - Orange Tips and Peacocks being the most frequently noted along with a few Red Admirals and some Speckled Woods. Sadly low in numbers have been the Whites of which Green Veined White has been seen the most.

Yesterday there were more Small Whites than seen previously which for the start of the year I thought was rather late. Other species seen include the odd Small Tortoiseshell and on two occasions a Painted Lady.

For those interested in moths, there have been (and still are) goodly numbers of Scarlet Tiger caterpillars mostly

feeding on borage.

Yesterday, 24th March, evening at dusk, there was a Humming Bird Hawk Moth in our garden in Eccleshall (SJ836289).

Having already noted the large number of Holly Blue butterflies in the area this year - there are still a few around - but it now seems that the Painted Lady butterfly is off to a good start and it may be one of those prolific years for the species. At least eight have been noted in Eccleshall today - I have seen 3 and at least five were reported as being on Hesperia flowers in Warren Griffith's garden, adjacent to Holy Trinity Church Eccleshall.

An interesting start to the year.

Thomas W. W. Knowles.
 Butterfly Conservation member 130049

St Michael's Stall At Stone Carnival 2026



REVIEWS MOVIE

by Joe Jenkinson



Obsession

Director: Curry Barker

Starring: Michael Johnston & Inde Navarett

Obsession delivers a tense and engaging thriller that keeps the suspense building throughout.

The performances are convincing, and the story balances mystery with emotional drama effectively.

While a few plot developments feel predictable, the strong atmosphere and well-paced narrative make it an enjoyable watch.

A gripping film that remains entertaining from start to finish.

Rating: JJ Rating 4/5

Backrooms

Director: Kane Parsons

Starring: Renate Rensive & Chiwetel Ejiofor

Backrooms captures the unsettling feeling of the internet phenomenon with some genuinely creepy visuals and an eerie sense of isolation.

The atmosphere is easily the film's strongest asset, though the story sometimes struggles to maintain momentum.

While it offers a few memorable moments for horror fans, the overall experience feels uneven and doesn't fully reach its potential.

JJ Rating 3/5



Masters of the Universe

Director: Travis Knight

Starring: Nicholas Galitzine & Idris Elba

Masters of the Universe has moments of fun and nostalgia, particularly for longtime fans of the franchise, but it falls short in several areas.

The story lacks depth, and the pacing often feels inconsistent. Although some action sequences are entertaining, the film never fully captures the epic scope of its source material, resulting in a largely forgettable adventure.

JJ Rating 2/5

Salvation Army Stone Charity Store Giving Away Free School Uniform Items

The Salvation Army charity store in Stone are giving away free school uniform items to help families and guardians with school age children.

The store has been collecting hundreds of school uniform items, including tops, jumpers, skirts and trousers. The items are made up of good quality second-hand items donated by members of the local community, as well as hundreds of new items donated by a corporate donor.

Debs Homer, manager at the store, told the Gazette: "It's really important that we support families and help lower the cost for those that feel the pressure of having to buy

a large number of school uniform items.

We are in a fortunate position that we receive lots of generous donations, so can create a great shopping experience for families and guardians, and their children."

Items available for free include blazers, trousers, skirts, sweatshirts, pinafores, shirts and polos, P.E. kit and ties and are subject to availability.

Families and guardians are encouraged to visit the shop as soon as possible.

You can follow The Salvation Army location shop on social media: Salvation Army Charity Shop Stone.



This Rolex Submariner sold for £6,000

Timeless Appeal

Ben Gamble, Managing Director & Head Auctioneer at Penkridge's Cuttlestones Auctioneers looks at the enduring appeal of watches...

In an age where most of us check the time on our phones, you might expect traditional watches and timepieces to have fallen out of favour. Yet from what I see in the auction room, watches remain one of the most enduringly popular collecting categories, attracting interest from seasoned enthusiasts, investors and first-time buyers alike.

Part of the appeal lies in the incredible variety available. Antique pocket watches attract collectors who appreciate traditional craftsmanship and engineering, while iconic 20th Century wristwatches have a loyal following of their own. At recent auctions we've seen everything from an 18-carat gold pocket watch by renowned maker Sir John Bennett sell for £2,000 through to highly sought-after Rolex sports models achieving £6,000-£7,500 under the hammer.

The fascination isn't limited to luxury brands. Military-issued watches, specialist diving watches and models with historical significance can all generate strong bidding – with a Royal Navy divers' watch by Precista recently selling for £1,400.

Whether you're drawn to the elegance of a Victorian pocket watch, the heritage of a military timepiece or the prestige of a modern luxury wristwatch, watches offer collectors a unique combination of craftsmanship, history and practicality.

If you'd like to discover some exceptional examples for yourself, keep an eye on the catalogues for our fortnightly Home & Antiques Auctions and quarterly Antiques Auctions. Visit www.cuttlestones.co.uk for upcoming sales, or contact the team for a free, no-obligation valuation of any watches or timepieces you may own.

Eccleshall Community Band

Everyone is welcome to join us at 7.30pm on Friday 10th July at Holy Trinity Church, Eccleshall for our

Summer Concert



Not ticketed and free admission Doors open at 7.15pm

Wine and fruit juice will be served during the interval Donations welcome and will be shared between the Band and Holy Trinity Church eccleshallcommunityband@gmail.com Find us on Facebook



Edie Burgess earns her place in Swan Lake

Edie Shines In Prestigious Ballet Production

In March, Edie Burgess successfully earned a place in the prestigious English Youth Ballet (EYB) production of Swan Lake, where she joined an elite cast of 97 dancers after some highly competitive auditions.

Edie, aged 10 from Yarnfield, and trains at Helena Cox Dance, was selected from over 230 young dancers who auditioned at Palace Theatre Manchester.

The 97 selected dancers then underwent an intensive rehearsal period, training for 60 hours across 10 rehearsal days. Rehearsals were structured to mirror the professional dance environment, including daily company warm-up classes and a dynamic, rotating schedule across three large studios. Each rehearsal day culminated in a full company run-through to consolidate learning and performance skills.

Edie was totally immersed in her rehearsals, refining her skills, and preparing for her unforgettable performances when she took to the stage from Friday 5th to Saturday 6th June, for three spellbinding performances of the dramatic ballet.

EYB Principal – Ann Wall who starred as Odette (*The White Swan*) in the production, said “Being part of EYB is an amazing experience for any young dancer. I feel privileged to be a principal dancer with the company.

I enjoy teaching and coaching all the young dancers and I see some of the most talented young dancers in the country. I feel honoured to be a role model to the dancers and help give them an insight into the world of professional ballet. Dancing with EYB is an experience that will stay with the young dancers forever.”

Edie said “This is the third time I’ve performed with English Youth Ballet - they have been some of the best experiences of my life! experience I hope will support me in my dream to become a professional ballet dancer myself one day.

I just love the feeling of dancing on stage, and opportunities at EYB have allowed me to do this in a professional setting. I have trained with my ballet teacher Helena Cox in Meir Park since the age of 2.

Over the past year I’ve had the opportunity to do additional training as a scholar of the British Ballet Organisation and as an associate of Staffordshire Youth Ballet.

I had some exciting news recently that I made it onto a short waitlist for the Royal Ballet Mid Associate programme for 2026/7 after an extremely competitive audition process. Performing in Swan Lake as a cygnet has been one of my dreams for a while, I’m really thankful to EYB for this opportunity, which has further broadened my experience, technique and repertoire.

Deaf Cyclist Takes On Entire Tour De France Femmes Route After Mum's Blood Cancer Diagnosis

A Stafford woman is preparing to take on one of the toughest amateur cycling challenges in Europe, all while raising vital funds for children with blood cancer. In August 2026, Laura Ganderton, a deaf amateur cyclist from Stafford, will ride every stage of the Tour de France Femmes route, cycling one day ahead of the professional race as part of The Route 2026 challenge.

The challenge will see Laura cover more than 1,000 kilometres across France, tackling the same mountains, climbs and demanding stages as the world's best female cyclists. Alongside 15 other inspiring amateur female riders from around the world, she will complete the entire route before the professionals arrive, raising money for the blood cancer charity Cure Leukaemia.

The route Laura will tackle is far from an ordinary cycling event. Starting in Lausanne in Switzerland and finishing in Nice, France, the 2026 Tour de France Femmes route is the longest and hardest Tour to date and includes some of the toughest climbs in professional cycling, including the legendary Mont Ventoux, known as the “Giant of Provence.”

Often regarded as one of the most challenging mountains in world cycling, Mont Ventoux rises to 1,909 metres and has tested generations of the men's Tour de France riders. In the 2026 race, it will see the women's peloton climb it for the first time as it forms the Queen Stage – traditionally the hardest and most decisive stage of the entire Tour.

For Laura, this challenge is about far more than cycling.

The cause became deeply personal when her mum was diagnosed with blood cancer last year.

“Watching someone you love go through cancer changes your perspective on life,” Laura said. *“You see first-hand the fear, uncertainty and emotional impact it has on patients and their families. Thankfully, because of advances in treatment and care, my mum received the support she needed. I know not every family is as fortunate, which is why I wanted to do something meaningful to help.”*

Cure Leukaemia funds specialist research nurses and clinical trials across the UK, helping patients gain access to potentially life-saving treatments that might otherwise not be available.

Laura hopes to raise £10,000 to support the charity's work, specifically to help children with blood cancer by raising funds for the ATICUS Network.

What makes the challenge even more remarkable is that Laura is not a professional athlete.

“I am just an ordinary woman taking on an extraordinary challenge,” she said. *“The Tour de France Femmes route is one of the hardest cycling events in the world and there will be moments when it feels*



incredibly tough (part way up Ventoux!).

But when I think about what blood cancer patients and their families face every day, my challenge feels small in comparison. If cycling across France can help make a difference, then every mile will be worth it.”

As a deaf cyclist and hearing aid wearer, Laura has faced challenges throughout her life and sporting journey. However, she believes those experiences have helped shape the resilience needed to take on such an ambitious goal. *“Being deaf has taught me that obstacles don't have to define what you can achieve,”* she said. *“I've learned the importance of determination, adaptability and asking for support when needed. I hope this challenge shows that whatever barriers people face, incredible things are possible when you believe in yourself and keep moving forward.”*

Training for the event has already involved countless hours in the saddle, early mornings, long rides and pushing beyond her comfort zone. Over the coming months, Laura will continue preparing for what will be one of the biggest challenges of her life. Laura explains that she would not be able to commit to training for this challenge without the unwavering support and belief of her partner Chris.

Laura visited Birmingham's Children's Hospital and saw first hand the work of the doctors and nurses treating children with blood cancer. *“It was a very humbling experience and being able to fundraise to help these children is an honour,”* Laura said.

How You Can Support Laura?

Laura is aiming to raise £10,000 for Cure Leukaemia ahead of her Tour de France Femmes challenge. Donations can be made via her JustGiving page:

justgiving.com/page/laura-ganderton

You can also follow Laura's training journey and challenge updates on Instagram: @lganderton

New Home Manager At Shoemaker Place

Claire has dedicated four decades to the care sector, beginning her journey as a Support Worker in 1986 and her passion for delivering exceptional care remains as strong as ever.

Throughout her career, Claire has seen the care profession evolve, but her priorities have never changed: ensuring every resident feels safe, happy, valued and truly at home. She believes that outstanding care starts with outstanding people, recognising that staff are the heart of any successful home.

Claire is committed to creating a supportive and positive environment where colleagues and residents feel respected, valued and empowered to thrive. Leading with compassion, respect and unwavering dedication, she is proud to be Home Manager at Shoemaker Place care home in Stone.





Club Fun, Memories And The Carnival

The members of Stone Alzheimer's Club really enjoy their music and entertainment. Regular entertainer Debbie Miles now brings musical instruments along when she comes to the Club. The impact has been immediate and brought even more fun to Club meetings. Members join in the entertainment with sleigh bells, maracas and other percussion instruments.

Participating in creating music is very beneficial for those with Alzheimer's so this is a great addition for the Club's activities. Debbie also brings along some costumes to go with the instruments that have a distinctly Brazilian flavour and these have proved to be a source of great fun for all. Members dancing and entertainment has been transformed and it's great to see.

Memory Walks are organised to support and fundraise for the Alzheimer's Society. Every year, thousands of people throughout the country come together to walk and this year, Sandie McQueen, Lead Volunteer, at the club encouraged members to join a Stone Memory Walk that took place over the Stone Carnival weekend. Lead by MP Sir Gavin Williamson and Stone Town Mayor Andrew Best, the walk was well supported by the local community.

Stone Alzheimer's Club also had a stand at the Stone Carnival and volunteers and members ran a tombola to raise funds for the club. Having grown considerably over the last couple of years under Sandie McQueen's guidance, the Club now costs over three hundred Pounds a week just to open the doors...the Club could be one of the largest single purchasers of



biscuits in the town! As the club receives no grant support, it is totally reliant on donations and fundraising so events like the Carnival are really important as it provides an opportunity to meet the public and promote what the Club does. The tombola this year was a great success and over nine hundred and fifty pounds was raised.

Sandie McQueen said: "Our stand at the Carnival this year was a great success and I extend my thanks to everyone in the Club for all their help and contributions and to the people of Stone for supporting us so well."

Sandie went on to say: "We had some great prizes on offer for the tombola so it proved to be very popular to the extent that we nearly ran out of prizes!"

If you would like to support the Club or just come along and say hello, please get in touch. The club meets at Christ Church Centre, Christ Church Way, Stone ST15 8ZB every Thursday for fifty weeks a year and is open between 10 and 12.

You can contact the club by telephone on: 07375 748733 or by email on: stone_alzheimersclub@btinternet.com



Photograph L to R - Sue Zurawiel Immediate Past President Soroptimist Club of Stafford with Michelle Daws the New President Soroptimist Club of Stafford

New President for Soroptimist International of Stafford

Soroptimist International is a global voice for women, with 80,000 members in 3,000 clubs in over 100 countries around the world. Soroptimists make a positive difference to the lives of more than half a million women and girls in the world every year.

During the past year, with Sue Zurawiel as their President, members of Soroptimist International of Stafford raised a fantastic £6,667 for charity.

The Charities to benefit are: • Peaches Womb Cancer Trust - The charity aims to help and improve the health of women with or at risk of Womb Cancer. • Toilet Twinning - A project that invites people to "Twin" their Toilet with a Latrine in poor communities, by purchasing a Toilet for disadvantaged people. Toilet Twinning is a really positive and excellent way to tackle a serious global issue. Toilet Twinning is helping to Flush Away Poverty. • Angel Tree - The charity provides Christmas Presents for the children whose Mothers are in prison • Soroptimist International Foundation - This charity is all about educating girls around the world.

Events too raise money for the charities included: Motown Night, Garden Party, Sponsored Walk, Plant Sale, Ceilidh Evening. Well done Sue on a fantastic year!

Sue has now handed over The Badge of Office to Michelle Daws, and welcomed her as the New President of Soroptimist International of Stafford.

For more information about the Soroptimist Organisation sigbi.org. For the Stafford Club sigbi.org/stafford



JULY 12TH This month's **How To:**
Learn how to darn

AUG 9TH This month's **How To:**
Learn how to dispose of electrical waste safely
(incl rechargeable batteries)

Special offer July: Do you have any clothes which need altering? Drop them off to us and pick up again at the August Repair Café. Pay at drop off.

+ Hand Made Crafts by Judi Bee

We look forward to seeing you at our summer Repair

Cafes Colwich & Little Haywood Village Hall, Chilwell

Ave, ST18 0QZ *****

ALTERATIONS AVAILABLE
Clothing Alterations in Stafford Area
Quick - Affordable - Reliable

PRICE LIST

Trousers	Dresses & Shirts
Shorten plain trousers - £8	Shorten unlined dress/shirt - £8
Take in waist - £8	
Let out waist - £8	
Narrow leg trousers - £10	
New zip (Trousers & dresses) - £12-£15	
	Stitching Services
	Blouse stitching - £20
	Churchill suit stitching - £25
	(Price may vary depending on style)

Any alterations - call: 07915 457180
Affordable and fast service available

Local Service - Stafford



Football Fan Keith Scores A Dream Day Out Thanks To Stoke City FC

A football-loving resident from Shoemaker Place Care Home in Stone enjoyed a memorable behind-the-scenes experience at Stoke City Football Club, as part of the home's Residents' Wish Initiative.

Keith, a lifelong football fan, was treated to an exclusive tour of the stadium, including access to the changing rooms and players' interview area. Despite the wet weather, Keith and the team accompanying him had a fantastic day exploring areas usually only seen by players and staff.

The visit was made even more special when Stoke City generously offered Keith tickets to a game of his choice for the up and coming season, giving him something exciting to look forward to.

The Residents' Wish Initiative at Shoemaker Place aims to help residents achieve

personal goals, revisit cherished memories and enjoy meaningful experiences that enhance wellbeing and quality of life.

Keith attended the League Cup Final at Wembley in 1972 when City beat Chelsea 2-1. He still has the ticket counterfoil for that game. At one time Keith lived next door to the great Alan Hudson!

Sharon Parkes, Customer Relationship Manager at Shoemaker Place, said: "At Shoemaker Place, person-centred care is at the heart of everything we do. Our Residents' Wish Initiative is all about making meaningful moments happen and helping residents continue to enjoy the hobbies, interests and experiences that are important to them.

Seeing Keith's smile throughout the experience was truly wonderful, and we are incredibly grateful to Anthony Emerson and Courtney Allerton at Stoke City Football Club for helping us make his wish come true. Moments like these create lasting memories and have a positive impact on wellbeing, confidence and happiness."

The team at Shoemaker Place would like to thank everyone at Stoke City Football Club for their generosity, hospitality and kindness in making Keith's special trip possible.



Captain Cromie lays a wreath at the bust of Earl St. Vincent



From right to left, Stone Town Mayor Cllr Andrew Best, Rev Robert Icke, Captain Cromie and his wife Nicky stand in front of the marble plaque behind which is the Earl is buried

Visit of the Commanding Officer from HMS Collingwood

On Sunday 17th May, the new Commanding Officer of HMS Collingwood, Captain John Cromie and his wife Nicky, together with the Commanding Officer of the Stafford and Rugeley Sea Cadets and the new Town Mayor, Cllr Andrew Best all attended the morning service at St Michael & St

Wulfad's Church.

During the course of the service the Captain laid a wreath by the bust of Earl St. Vincent and rang the St. Vincent bell. After the service the party visited the Jervis Mausoleum.

Photos by Martin Robinson



Left:
Captain Cromie rings the HMS St. Vincent ships bell

Right:
Captain Cromie and Stone Town Mayor, Cllr Andrew Best, with the Collingwood Mace.

The mace was presented to Stafford Borough in 1979 following the Royal Naval establishment receiving the Freedom of the Stafford Borough.





Children's Gym Balance & Beam Celebrate Their 20th Birthday

Balance & Beam, a children's educational gym based in Stoke-on-Trent are celebrating 20 years of supporting positive child development after welcoming more than 250,000 children through its doors since opening in 2006.

Founded by Yvonne Shuttleworth, the educational gym has spent the last two decades helping children build confidence, co-ordination, social skills and healthy habits through movement, learning and structured play, while continually evolving to meet the changing needs of children and parents alike.

Balance & Beam has become a familiar part of childhood for generations of Staffordshire families, with former members now bringing their own children to classes.

One of those former members is Stephen Clarkson, who now brings his own children, Finley and Oscar, to sessions at Balance & Beam.

Stephen said: "Gymnastics at Balance & Beam was a pivotal part of my childhood, teaching me discipline, confidence and resilience all whilst having fun. The thrill of perfecting new skills whilst being in a class full of my friends created memories I've kept to this day."

Now, as a parent myself, I decided to bring my own children to Balance & Beam because I wanted them to experience the same joy and growth that I did.

It's a place where they can develop strength, coordination and self-esteem in a supportive environment, whilst learning important life lessons and having fun."

The lasting impact of Balance & Beam can also be seen within its own team, with five current staff members first attending sessions there as children themselves, including Bella, Macy, Bekah, Freya and Libbie.

Assistant Coach Libbie first attended Balance & Beam when she was four years old and now helps inspire the next generation of children in the gym.

She said: "When I first started at Balance & Beam, I was so shy that I had to be carried into my first session. Coming to classes helped me build confidence, develop physical skills and make friendships that stayed with me as I grew up."

Years later, I came back to volunteer before becoming part of the coaching team because I wanted to help inspire children in the same way the coaches inspired me."

Founder Yvonne Shuttleworth said she has seen huge changes in children over the last 20 years, particularly around

attention spans, confidence and screen use.

She told the Gazette: "What a difference 20 years makes. Many children today are surrounded by constant digital distraction and we're seeing the impact that can have on focus, confidence and social development."

When we talk about paying attention, what we're really talking about is the ability to sit, focus and listen, skills that are essential for children to be able to learn and develop throughout their lives."

With many parents increasingly concerned about screen time, focus and confidence in young children, Balance & Beam believes its classes are more important than ever. Through structured, coach-led activities, the team helps children develop essential life skills including listening, concentration, co-ordination, confidence and social interaction, all within a fun, active and supportive environment.

Twenty years after opening its doors, Balance & Beam continues to welcome hundreds of children every week and is currently at its highest-ever membership levels, reflecting growing demand from Staffordshire families for structured, active and educational children's activities.

Recently, the team has expanded its offering to support more local families, including growing demand for SEN sessions and newer programmes such as Baby Yoga & Massage.

Founder Yvonne said: "We are constantly evolving our sessions to meet the changing needs of children today and ensure every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, develop and most importantly have fun."

Over the last 20 years, we've seen hundreds of thousands of children grow in confidence, build friendships and achieve things they never thought possible. That's what makes Balance & Beam so special."

As part of their anniversary celebrations, the team is also raising money for Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital through a special anniversary charity t-shirt initiative, with 50% of sales donated to the charity.

To donate to Balance & Beam's fundraiser for Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/balance-and-beam-bch>

To find out more about Balance and Beam please visit www.balanceandbeam.co.uk/



Stone's Will Storms To Porsche Carrera Cup GB Victory

Stone's Will Jenkins enjoyed his best ever weekend in the Porsche Carwow Carrera Cup GB at Snetterton this past weekend (23-24 May), converting pole position into a perfect maiden overall victory in the championship as part of a podium double.

Will's heroics in Norfolk continues his phenomenal start to the 2026 season. After securing his third pole position in three meetings, the second and first place race results ensures the Wera Alliance Academy driver continues his 100% podium record in the PRO class.

In a spring heatwave in Norfolk, Will got off to a positive start in testing on Friday with promising pace on used tyres. Qualifying followed the next day, with separate 15-minute sessions around the 2.97-mile Snetterton 300 circuit setting the grid for Sunday's two races.

After a high-speed trip across the grass in the opening session, the Staffordshire-based talent dug deep to post a lap good enough for third overall. There was no drama in session two though, with a brilliant performance seeing him charge to the top of the timesheets by almost two tenths of a second.

The 21-year-old, from Stone, led comfortably through the first half of the race, before responding to a challenge from behind by posting the fastest lap of the race. While lead battle intensified in the closing laps, Jenkins kept calm and soaked up the pressure to complete a superb lights-to-flag victory.



Those results mean he is just six points shy of the championship lead heading into the next round at Thruxton (25-26 July). He races thanks to the crucial support of his loyal personal partners Asset Alliance Group, The Reefer Trailer Centre, Hopkins Race Transporters, Barkers Finance, SAF Holland, The Green Group and WS Transportation.

Will Jenkins said: "It's been an unbelievable weekend. To get my first overall race victory in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB was a special moment, and to add a second-place finish and a pole position to that, it's without a doubt my best weekend in the championship so far."

The heatwave made the weekend a real challenge with high temperatures in the car, but Team Parker Racing did a phenomenal job with the car and it was perfect every session. After a bit of a moment in the first qualifying, to bounce back and take pole in the second session was great. I really enjoyed the move to grab second in race one and that filled me with confidence for race two. That was arguably the toughest race of my life, trying to soak up the pressure, manage the tyres and not make any mistakes. I'm super proud to have brought it home."

Thank you to Alliance Racing, Wera Tools and all of my personal partners for making this possible. It's been a great start to the season and we're not taking our foot off the pedal now. We need to take this momentum into Thruxton and keep picking up big points."

Images used are with kind permission of Porsche GB.

National Trust Centre Talks

The Staffordshire Centre's programme of talks at Walton Village Hall in Stafford continues on **July 14th**.

There is no need to book in advance, just turn up at the door and pay as you go in. However, it would help the organisers if you book your place(s) on our website <https://www.ntstafford.org.uk/> go to Events-Talks - Book a Talk.

All talks start at 2.30 pm and you do not have to be a member of the Centre to attend. Admission is £4.50 for non-members of the Centre and talks are followed by tea and biscuits.



Bravo November aka The Survivor.

Bravo November – 14th July A talk by Jess Boyson-Jukes

Bravo November is one of the original 30 Chinooks ordered by the RAF for its heavy lifting capability.

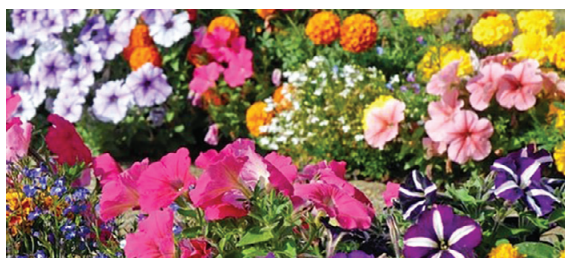
In 1982, it was enroute to the Falklands on the Atlantic Conveyor container ship which was struck by Exocet missiles, destroying the vessel along with its cargo.

Bravo November was on an airborne task at the time and managed to land on HMS Hermes, gaining the nickname The Survivor.

It was the only serviceable heavy lift helicopter available to British forces involved in the hostilities and remained in service for the rest of the campaign, helping deliver victory through carrying out essential tasks, moving troops, supplies, casualties, and prisoners of war. Its significant contribution was a testament to the skill of the aircrew.

It was in service until 2022, was upgraded several times and saw action in every major operation involving the RAF in the helicopter's 39-year service life. Since 1982 it served in the Falkland Islands, Lebanon, Germany, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jess will tell us about the history of this aircraft and the exploits of its aircrew – three of its pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions whilst in command of Bravo November.



The English & Gardening – 11th August A talk by Danny Wells

Danny qualified as a history teacher and spent many years working in community development and education for local authorities, Oxfam, Save the Children Fund and other smaller community organisations.

His talks are an eclectic mix of social and cultural history, with Victorian and early 20th century British history taking precedence. Art history and gardens feature strongly as do personal places of interest - the Derbyshire Dales, Staffordshire Moorlands, the East End of London and Norway.

Gardening continues to be hugely popular in modern day Britain. This talk – sub titled A social history of an English obsession – explores the development of gardening and the meanings and symbolism invested in gardens. The focus is Georgian and Victorian England and the first half of the 20th century.

To keep up with our future events, watch out for us in these pages or check out our Events page at <https://www.ntstafford.org.uk/>



The stunning walk through the Dorothy Clive Gardens

Learning about Aquabox with Barlaston Brownies and Guides

On May 20th, Barlaston Brownies and Guides had some very interesting visitors. Wonderful Ray and Sylvia Spare, from Aquabox were invited to show and demonstrate their mobile Water Filtration Unit, which Ray has developed. They are both members of the Rotary Club and Sylvia has been involved with Guiding for many years.

They first spoke at the Brownie meeting, then the Guides, as they pitched it appropriately to the different age groups. They gave really interesting talks which included a lot of educational things about the importance of access to water. They brought one of their hand pump filters, explaining really clearly how it works and demonstrated filtering muddy water, turning it into clear, safe, drinkable, water, which tasted good. It can be used to transform puddles, river water, any water supply.



Ray demonstrates the Aquabox



was unpacked to explain to us why these items are all important for the people trying to survive. It was amazing how it all fitted into the box!

Lots of these boxes have already been sent out to countries where they are needed.

The girls then had a chance to play challenges with things that Sylvia and Ray had brought with them. It really made us all realise how lucky we are to live in this country, where we can just turn on a tap.

At previous Guiding meetings, the Brownies and Guides have completed quizzes and challenges about water saving, climate change and recycling, which are compatible with the Guiding Eco badges.

At the end of the evening, Sylvia presented everyone with lovely Aquabox badges.

They are being sent out to areas in the world where there are natural disasters such as earthquakes, or war, and drinking water is scarce. A soldier in Ukraine has been seen on Youtube using one while patrolling.

The couple showed pictures of the kind of conditions that people would need to have a water filter. They made the girls and Leaders appreciate that a person can only last three days without water. It was a good interactive evening, with the girls asking questions and the one and a half hours wasn't long enough.

The charity also create Emergency Aid boxes containing 63 survival items such as ground sheets, cooking pots, buckets, sanitary items, tools, and a family sized water filter. One





Oulton Joins In Village Hall Week

Oulton Village Hall Committee recently organised a conducted tour of Kibblestone Scout and Activity Centre.

This tour was organised as part of 'Village Hall Week' activities to engender community involvement, along with a separate fund-raising coffee morning supporting urgent repairs and renovations for the Village Church of St. John.

The extensive tour of the Kibblestone site was led by Clive Leader, the volunteer coordinator for the facility.

This hidden delight is only a short distance from Stone and is not generally accessible to the public.

Kibblestone has served the Scouting community for almost 100 years, many people throughout North Staffordshire and across the world have happy memories of attending camps and Jamborees there.

To keep up with modern times the camp is now also an 'activity centre' catering for an even wider range of people and activities.



Kibblestone Camp - the old plunge pool! Anybody fancy a dip?



Vicky Pulman - Needlessly Felted and Class Attendees

Needlessly Felted Brings Creative Workshops to Historic Spode Museum

Needlessly Felted is launching a new series of creative textile workshops at the iconic Spode Museum in Stoke-on-Trent, celebrating craft, creativity and the rich heritage of The Potteries.

The first workshops will take place on:

- Friday 31 July, 12pm-2pm
- Bottle Oven Skyline Needle Felting
- Saturday 1 August, 11am-3pm
- Wet Felted Staffordshire Landscapes

Set on the original Spode factory site, the museum is one of the most significant heritage locations in British ceramics. Once home to the world-famous Spode pottery works, it now stands as a vibrant cultural space preserving over 200 years of industrial and creative history.

The new workshops will bring a different kind of making into this historic setting, with participants exploring wool as a creative medium to produce their own textile artwork inspired by Stoke-on-Trent's iconic bottle ovens and the landscapes of Staffordshire.

For Needlessly Felted founder Vicky Pulman, the connection to The Potteries is deeply personal. With a family background in the ceramics industry, including a ceramics business run by her parents, working at Spode represents a meaningful link between traditional craft heritage and contemporary creative practice.

Vicky said:

"It feels incredibly special to be running workshops at Spode. The pottery industry has always been part of my family story, so being able to deliver creative workshops in such an iconic setting is really meaningful."

"Spode is such an important part of The Potteries, and it's wonderful to be bringing a different kind of making into a place so rooted in art and design."

Needlessly Felted workshops are known for being accessible, relaxed and hands-on, giving beginners and improvers the chance to learn new skills and create finished textile artworks in a supportive environment.

All materials and equipment are included, and full step-by-step tuition is provided.

Participants will also be able to enjoy exceptionally good coffee available throughout the session, alongside a slice of homemade cake from The Little Vintage Tea Room, adding a warm and welcoming hospitality experience to the creative day.

The partnership marks an exciting addition to Spode Museum's growing creative programme, bringing contemporary fibre art into one of Stoke-on-Trent's most historic craft settings.

For more information please visit
<https://needlessly-felted.square.site>

Gazette Motoring

Syd Taylor Puts The Cheekily Chunky, Yet Suavely Slick And Racy Skoda Fabia 130 Through Its Paces

Spring is a young-at-heart season packed full of zesty promise. Gloomy souls perk up. Success is just around the corner. And if that's expecting too much, well - there's always the next bend.

If ever a car distilled and conveyed such stimulating sentiments it has to be the Fabia 130. With Skoda's history stretching back over 130 years and a distinguished motor sport tradition, it's fitting that this fastest, sportiest, zoomiest mark 4 Fabia should bear that nomenclature. Don't be misled though. 130 has nothing to do with bhp because the 1.5 litre turbo 4 cylinder petrol engine gives 177bhp - which is enough to shoot you to over 140mph. However, with this Fabia the real fun is not all about reaching Warp Speed.. It's about selecting 'sport' mode and using the paddles to manually play tunes and override the 7speed DSG automatic gearbox. In today's 'real world' where you are not able to extend to a Lambugaratti, this Fabia is far more fun. And in super comfort too...and four doors...and plenty of room for passengers...and plenty of luggage space: not to mention the excellent economy (*I got over 50mpg overall*) in these straitened times.



"So tell me" people would say, "What's it like? What does it come with? How much does it cost to buy and run?"

"Well" I replied, "These are indeed important questions. But when the apple tree blossoms, isn't it better to simply relish the moment rather than estimate the weight of the apples in Autumn? The moment is now. And right now I'm off for a drive". So I took to the road. Later I learnt that it was rumoured that I had swallowed a book on Zen as words reflecting my enthusiasm flowed.



It costs £29,995, looks wonderful with a black roof, other black bits and pieces, black alloys, and red brake calipers. It's a superb distillation of design parameters pitched at the small car configuration beloved by those who believe that the better things in life are better still when packaged to please as well as to perform.



Like the very breath of the sweet season itself, the Skoda Fabia 130 lightens the heart through its transformative appeal. Its looks beguile while its functional merits recommend to good sense a rich harvest of motoring pleasures. But there's more. This is a fiery fabia. A Q car with zip-zoom performance of the first order.

Every passerby who clocked the Fabia parked outside my Gothic manor house stopped and remarked at its charming yet purposeful appearance: truly here's a clever piece of practical styling. By some miracle it manages to appear sleek as well as commodious - cheekily chunky yet at the same time suavely slick and racy. You can tell at a glance it's safe as houses too - designed to muscle its way through crowded carriageways with the confidence of a prop forward. But instead of cauliflower ears you get sculpted contours that play with the eye like coloured candy in the sweetshop window.

And indeed there might well be something in that if you drive to enjoy it - and who wouldn't? Perfectly weighted steering, well controlled suspension and for reasons known only unto The Great Artificer - an ability to make hairs on the back of your neck bristle.

It's not just that this is a well appointed comfortable and rewarding livewire to drive. No. For me it's more like that sense of piloting a machine that achieves completeness only through connectivity with the driver. The Fabia felt right: right shape, right size, the right fit in all regards (amongst best in class for leg, shoulder and headroom), plus it drives as a proper car should. Road manners are firm, smooth and precise.

Of course, there are ascending levels of technology on board. These depend on the micro process wizardry characteristic of our modern age. For those who need 'the mostest of the latest' there's plenty to serve you well. Refreshingly though there is a manual handbrake - ideal - they tell me - for performing ridiculous tyre smoking feats should you be insane!

As my acquaintance with it grew I realised Skoda has created a car for the driver in a hurry that matches its environment perfectly. Whether on city streets, on challenging B roads or on motorways it's equally at home. In town it's compact enough to cope with tight squeezes.

It's a car that has a wonderful spirited demeanour and lots of fun inducing attributes, generating in motoring terms, that elusive quality called jollity. There's no bland anodyne nonsense here: just zip, zoom and liveliness of the first order. As a 'sixties' super spy might say 'It's truly a fab car baby!'

By Syd Taylor



Duster retains its 'Best Value Car' Crown at Autocar Awards

The Dacia Duster has done it again, retaining its title as 'Best Value Car' at the 2026 Autocar Awards and proving that real value doesn't mean having to go without.

In a market where new cars continue to become more complex and more expensive, Duster has once again been recognised for doing what it has always done best: giving drivers the essentials they need, the toughness they can use and the affordability they demand.

The annual Autocar Awards celebrate the best cars available in the UK, with the Duster standing out for its blend of robust design, everyday usability, practical equipment and accessible pricing. The repeat win also reflects how the latest Duster has evolved without losing the qualities that have made it one of Dacia's best-known and best-loved models.

On naming the Dacia Duster its 'Best Value Car' for the second year running, Mark Tisshaw, Editor, Autocar, said: "One of the cleverest things about the latest Dacia Duster is that its creators avoided messing it up. Better than that, they refined and improved it while maintaining its very attractive price and its singular character – a real feat in a car market stuffed with me-too affordable crossovers."

The Duster's enticements to buyers will be seen as its low prices, decent standard equipment, practicality and economy. Yet, as with the previous models, Dacia has managed to maintain its singular, almost mystical persona as an interesting and slightly offbeat machine, the 'interesting' choice of someone who knows what matters in cars and what doesn't. To have maintained such a subtle and elusive quality while changing so much on and under the skin is a mighty achievement."



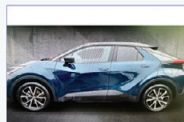
Lina Ribeiro, Dacia Brand Director for the UK, added: "Winning a value award once is a great result. Keeping hold of it is even better, because it shows Duster is still delivering where it really counts for drivers. Value has always been about more than price for Dacia."

It's about giving people a car that is useful, robust, well equipped and ready for real life, without asking them to pay for things they don't need. Duster does exactly that, and this award from Autocar is a brilliant reminder that simple, clever thinking still matters."

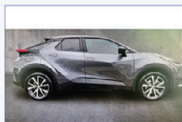
Available in Expression, Journey and Extreme trims, the Dacia Duster offers a strong mix of standard equipment, safety and driver assistance systems, practical cabin technology and everyday comfort. The range is priced from £21,845 on-the-road for the Duster Expression mild hybrid 140, with Hybrid 155 versions also available for drivers looking for an efficient full hybrid option.



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Mini Introduces Petrol Paul Smith Editions

Building on the success of the MINI Cooper Electric Paul Smith Edition, the portfolio now expands to include petrol powered models, marking the next step of the celebrated partnership.

The petrol-powered models include the MINI Cooper 3-door, MINI Cooper 5-door & MINI Cooper Convertible. Mirroring the electric model offerings, the Paul Smith Edition will be available for both C and S models.

The petrol Paul Smith Edition is available in three exterior paint choices; Edition-exclusive colours of Statement Grey and Inspired White, or in Midnight Black which can already be found in the MINI family. The MINI Cooper 3-door & 5-door models are available with the contrast Nottingham Green roof colour, meanwhile the MINI Cooper Convertible receives the optional Union Jack soft-top roof. Nottingham Green mirror caps and detailing continue to provide a subtle nod to Sir Paul Smith's heritage.

The interior highlights include a Paul Smith striped knitted dashboard, door panels and seats. The iconic Paul Smith signature stripe is found on the steering wheel, and Paul Smith handwritten motto 'Everyday is a new beginning' on the door sills. A graphic of a hand-drawn rabbit by Paul Smith is found on the front floor mat.

Inside and out, the MINI Paul Smith Edition continues to embody Sir Paul Smith's 'classic with a twist' design philosophy. Unique colour combinations, thoughtful detailing and playful signature elements bring together MINI's design language with Paul Smith's unmistakable style, celebrating individuality and creativity across both electric and petrol variants of the MINI Cooper.

UK pricing for the petrol MINI Paul Smith Edition starts from £31,285 OTR for the C & from £32,335 OTR for S engine models. First customer deliveries are expected in Q3 2026.



A Past Link With The Brewing Industry

By Philip Leason MBE

A reader told me that while they were watching this year's Festival Parade they remarked about how they had taken part on a float on the back of a Bass trailer. The person they were with didn't know that Bass once had a distribution depot which had followed the closure of Joules brewery. So she suggested that I should write about it. So here goes.

On 17th April, 1970 the Chairman of Joules Brewery, Geoffrey V. Churton wrote the following letter to the Staff of Joules and its Licensees:

"An announcement will be made late this afternoon that Bass Charrington Limited will make an offer to acquire the balance of the Ordinary Stock in John Joule and Sons Limited which they do not already own.

I fully realise that this announcement will give rise to some concern to all members of the staff of the Company and to its licensees. As you know, Bass Charrington have had a controlling interest in this Company for over twelve months, and I do not foresee that, in the immediate future, we may expect any change in our operations."

On the 3rd August, 1970 Mr Churton wrote again to the staff and Licensees stating:

"I wrote to you on 17th April to advise you that Bass Charrington had made an offer for the outstanding shares in or Company. As you will now be aware this offer was accepted and as from 1st August 1970 we have become part of the Bass Charrington Group.

A long term plan for production and distribution within the Group is in cause of preparation but I can inform you that it has already been determined that Stone will be a major distribution centre within the plan."



The Bass Distribution Depot opened 1974 closed 1996

The old Joules transport department was located in Newcastle Street and totally inadequate for the enlarged operation which was envisaged and so it was decided that a new depot needed to be built. A 4.5 acre site was purchased on the Stafford Road between The Brooms Hotel (now the Stonehouse Hotel) and Corning's factory, on which to build the new premises.

The company reported that the reason why Stone was chosen for the new distribution depot was because of *"its ready and convenient access to the motorway and trunk road network, combined with the operating skills possessed by the existing employees in Stone."*

The depot consisted of a specially designed warehouse occupying 2,990 square yards, an office block approximately 705 square yards in floor area, and a vehicle maintenance building which occupied 359 square yards. The design of the depot would allow for a 50% expansion when needed.

The main warehouse was divided into three areas of an air-conditioned ale store, a wine and spirit store and general warehousing.

As part of the office block there was a room laid out as a pub cellar where new publicans went to learn about cellaring skills and how to maintain the quality of their beer.

Particular attention was paid to environmental consideration of the site. Mature trees were retained especially those which have been part of the tree lined drive to the Brooms when it was a private house. In addition 70 trees together with bushes and shrubs were planted on the site. There was a car park for 50 cars at the front of the depot (which has



Town Mayor of Stone Cllr. Margaret Kennedy at the depot opening

since been grassed over).

The staff moved from their old transport department in Newcastle Street, Stone to the new depot in June 1974 and had been employed by Bass for a number of years. The depot was officially opened by Mr T. B. Bourdillon, Chairman of Bass Worthington on 11th October, 1974 among the guests were the Worshipful Mayor of Stafford Cllr. Ruth Dickson and the Stone Town Mayor Cllr. Margaret Kennedy.

The keg and bottled beers was transported to the depot in bulk by Bass trucks. On one occasion after a load of keg beer had been delivered over night the depot was broken into a complete trailer of kegs were stolen. The wine and spirits were packed in Burton on Trent and sent to the depot. The loads for the pubs and clubs were then packed in the warehouse and transported by the retail transport fleet.



Guests and staff raising a glass at the Depot opening



The interior of the main warehouse

These drivers were members of ROSPA and received awards for safe driving and many of them took part in the local "Lorry Driver of the Year Competition" and some went on to compete in the regional competition.

The depot had an active Social Committee who organised various events including children's Christmas parties and dances etc. In addition in conjunction with the Bass Welfare Department in Burton on Trent they organised social events for both Joules and Bass retired employees.

The company were also supportive of local events and as stated earlier each year a number of drivers volunteered to drive Lorries in the Stone Festival Parade as floats for various organisations in the town including Girl Guide and Scouting units. The company also had a link with Manor Hill School at Walton and the pupils visited the depot and undertook art work such as a drawing a map and items of interest in the depot's distribution area and designing modern pub signs. One year the school were asked to design the Christmas menu cover for "The Wayfarer."

In 1983 a new Technical Services Store was opened on the site. This team installed beer dispense equipment and many other works in the various pubs and clubs in the area. The new store held a stock of components and also had a workshop where repairs were carried out. The stores were officially opened by retired employee Stan Skellern who had been a long serving members of the Technical Service team.

Towards then of the life of the depot both the Tied Trade and Free Trade representatives for the area were based there and they had a store for advertising material on the site.

In October 1995 Bass transferred its retail distribution to Trade Team. This was a joint venture between Bass and Excel Logistics (which later became DHL). Consequently the depot was renamed Trade Team

In January 1996 Trade Team announced that it was going to close the Stone Depot and its warehousing work would be transferred to a new £6.9 million regional distribution depot being built on the old Power Station site at Hams Hall. The deliver operation would be transferred to the Excel Logistics site in Stoke-on-Trent. Here pre-packed trailers would be sent from Hams Hall for delivery mainly in North Staffordshire and South Cheshire.

The Stone Depot closed on 2nd August 1996 and was followed by "A Wake" at the "Wayfarer." The site was put up for sale I was purchased by Dattel Electronics, a leading developer and manufacture of video game enhancement products.

So, although the Bass Depot has gone it is still remembered particularly with the involvement it had with the Stone Festival Parade.

I hope that the above will be back memories to some readers and will be of interest to others.

Please help us to keep the heritage of Stone alive for generations to come. If you have any photographs relating to the anything mentioned here please contact Staffordshire Past Track. All photographs will be treated with the utmost care and returned safely to their owner after they have made digital copies.

Philip Leason



The Lord Lieutenant with Police Cadet (Ellie) and Army Cadet (Anna)

Formal Presentation For Volunteers

In November 2025 Stafford & District Bereavement & Loss Support Service (SDBLSS) was successful in achieving the King's Award for Voluntary Service in recognition of their charity work in the community. They were just one of five charities in the whole of Staffordshire to be given this prestigious award. It is seen as the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary organisations.

Two volunteers, Angela Blanchard and Lesley Bailey, were honoured to be invited to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 8th June 2026.

On Monday 15th June 2026 a formal presentation took place at the Civic Offices in Stafford with His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Professor Elizabeth Barnes CBE and High Sherriff, Pritpal Singh Nagi MBE DL. Over 60 people attended the event including members of the charity (past and present), groups and organisations that the charity support as well as those that support the charity.



Presentation of the certificate signed by His majesty King Charles III and Lesley Bailey (Company Secretary & Fundraiser for SDBLSS)

by King Charles III was presented to Lesley Bailey, the Company Secretary and Fundraiser for the charity. Volunteers were also presented with their King's Award badges which will be worn with pride when representing SDBLSS.

A beautiful cake was very kindly made and donated by local baker, Emily from 'Emmies Buttercream Beauties' in Stafford displaying the King's Award Crown logo.

Everyone at SDBLSS is extremely proud to receive this accolade in recognition of the service which has been provided to adults experiencing bereavement or loss in the Stafford, Stone and the surrounding district for the last 42 years.



Shyamali Fenton (Chair of SDBLSS) with the High Sherriff, Pritpal Singh Nagi and his wife, Ruby



His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Professor Elizabeth Barnes CBE presenting the crystal trophy to Shyamali Fenton, Chair of SDBLSS

The Lord Lieutenant presented the Crystal Trophy to Shyamali Fenton, Chair/Trustee and the Certificate, signed



The cake made by Emmies Buttercream Beauties in Stafford

Huge thanks goes out to everyone who joined us for such a special event, all volunteers, support staff and associated organisations for everything they do which enables the charity to continue its work in offering free support to local people going through bereavement or loss.

If you are struggling with bereavement and loss, or would like to know more please visit their website at www.staffordbereavementsupport.org.uk

The Hamlet Of Millmeece (or Mill Meece)

By Chris Copp of Staffordshire Archives & Heritage

For this issue's selection from the Staffordshire Past Track website we are taking a look at the hamlet of Millmeece (or Mill Meece).

Situated between Slindon and Cotes Heath in the valley of the Meece Brook, Millmeece is best known for the impressive Pumping Station. Historically it is a farming community but was also home to HMS Fledgling, a Women's Royal Naval Service training station in the years during and shortly after World War II.

There are now over 52,000 photographs, documents, maps, paintings and other images relating to Staffordshire's history and heritage on the Staffordshire Past Track website www.staffspasttrack.org.uk and more are being added all the time by staff and volunteers at Staffordshire Archives & Heritage.

If you have any photographs you'd like to contribute, or any information about the images already on the website, please contact the team at: Staffordshire Archives & Heritage, Staffordshire History Centre, Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ.

Telephone: 01785 278379, email past.track@staffordshire.gov.uk.

You can also keep up to date with what's new on the **Staffordshire Past Track** facebook page.



Aircraft incident at Mill Meece, September 1956

A De Havilland Rapide aircraft is pictured after making a forced landing at Mill Meece. The eight-seater aircraft was on the way from Elmdon Airport, Birmingham to Squires Gate, Blackpool. The pilot Captain Charles Gwyther from Kent decided to make an emergency landing when a fault developed in the radio equipment and the pilot's cabin began to fill with smoke.

After circling Nelson Hall, Captain Gwyther chose a large field alongside the Newcastle under Lyme to Eccleshall Road. Before reaching the field, the plane went through a hedge and ploughed through 100 yards of a cabbage field, still under control.

The landing would have been successful had it not been for a row of stout posts between the cabbage field and the adjacent field of clover. The starboard wing hit one of the posts, which tore the starboard engine away and swung the plane round, during which the port wing was also severely damaged.

The pilot reported the matter to the Police and spent the night at Nelson Hall Training College, but in the meantime Police Constable I James of Standon had heard the crash and set out in search of the plane. The plane was owned by the Lancashire Aircraft Company and Officials from the Company later inspected the aircraft and decided it was a total loss.

From the Stone Guardian published on Saturday 22 September 1956. (Mr I. Hazlehurst)

Women's Royal Naval Service Training Station, Mill Meece, 1943

WRENS working on a Hawker Hurricane at HMS Fledgling. In April 1943 the Admiralty decided to release more men for wartime service by training WRENS as aircraft mechanics. The large camp at Millmeece associated with the Royal Ordnance Factory at Swynnerton was taken from the Ministry of Supply for this purpose, becoming the first purely WRNS technical training camp. The camp opened in 1943.

After World War Two it became HMS Cabbala which trained servicemen for civilian life, and the camp closed in 1948. (Staffordshire Record Office)



Mill Meece Pumping Station, 1980s

Mill Meece Pumping Station was built by Staffordshire Potteries Waterworks Company between 1912 and 1928 to supplement the water supply to the Potteries. Seen here are the engine and boiler houses.

The old pumping station together with the steam driven plant, which last pumped water into the supply on December 22nd 1979, is now leased to the Mill Meece Pumping Station Preservation Trust, who officially took over the station under the auspices of the Severn Trent Water Authority on May 31st 1981.

Postcard published by Judges Ltd., Hastings, Sussex. (Roy Lewis Postcard Collection)



Bennison Family, Mill Meece, late 1890s

William Bennison (1865-1912) and his wife Mary Ellen (nee Shemilt) at Mill Meece Farm with their three sons, William and twins James and Robert. The farm is still in the hands of the Bennison family. (Mrs J. Jewell)



Meece Old Hall, Mill Meece, 1907

A postcard view of Meece Old Hall, published by E.J. Hurlstone of Eccleshall in 1907. Long since demolished, this substantial stone-built house was situated on Old Hall Lane at Mill Meece. (Staffordshire Record Office)



Police Training Centre, Mill Meece, about 1950

Trainee police officers performing gymnastics at No. 4 District Police Training Centre, Mill Meece.

The site was formerly the 'H.M.S. Fledgling' W.R.N.S. Training Centre. After it was vacated in 1948 the police took it over from 1949 until 1960.

The centre trained newly appointed police constables from Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire and the city and borough forces within those counties. Women police constables from all over England, except the London metropolitan police, were also trained there. The courses lasted for 13 weeks and covered criminal and traffic law, powers of arrest and general police duties.

(Staffordshire Record Office/Staffordshire Newsletter)



Gavin Joins Community Group To Call For Walton Park Refurbishment

Sir Gavin Williamson, Member of Parliament for Stone, Great Wyrley and Penkridge, has joined **Friends of ABC Park** to call for improvements to the park located on Whitemill Lane in Walton.

Sir Gavin recently joined a meeting coordinated by Friends of ABC to discuss how the park can be improved to maintain as well as advance an important community asset.

Concerns have been raised regarding the safety of play equipment, as well as the condition of the football pitch which is uneven and damaged.

Walton Community Centre owns the park, and it is leased to Stafford Borough Council which has caused some confusion as to who is responsible for maintaining the space.

Hannah Banks, Chair of Friends of The ABC Park said: "We are grateful to Sir Gavin Williamson for taking the time to meet with us and listen to the views of local residents and volunteers."

We recognise and value the important role

that Walton Community Centre has played in supporting the park and wider community over many years, and we are keen to work constructively with all stakeholders to help maintain that legacy while exploring opportunities to enhance the park for future generations.

Our shared aim is to ensure the ABC Park remains a valued, welcoming and well-used community space for years to come."

Sir Gavin said: "I was delighted to join Friends of ABC Park to discuss ways that an important community asset can be improved to the required standard."

Parks are vital recreational spaces and have obvious physical and mental health benefits, as well as bringing the community together to participate in sport.

It is wonderful to see residents so actively engaged in wanting to improve their local spaces, and I will be working side by side with them to ensure the park can be enjoyed for many years to come."



Oulton Beavers and Squirrels Go Litter Picking

Beavers and Squirrels from 1st Oulton Scout Group took part in a local litter pick around Stone on the evening of June 4th, helping to clear rubbish from the park, canal, and surrounding areas.

Leader Katie Dudley said "We are incredibly proud of how enthusiastically they got involved and the difference they made to their local community."

During the evening, we bumped into a lovely PCSO, Neil, who took the time to praise the children for their hard work.



What impressed us most was that even during their free time at the park, some of the children came back asking for litter pickers because they had spotted more rubbish that needed collecting. Their dedication, community spirit, and care for the environment were fantastic to see.

Well done, Squirrels and Beavers!! You were an absolute credit to the group tonight!"



Rotary Welcome French Visitors

Visitors from the French town of Annecy spent five days in and around Stafford with members and families of the Rotary Club of Stafford, visiting local venues and enjoying the area.

The French Rotary club has been linked with the Stafford club for over fifty years and is currently working on a project in Africa, and hopes to continue community

projects in the future.

The week of events concluded with a dinner at Aston Marina with a demonstration from the Stafford Morris Dancers.

In 2025 members of the Stafford club visited Annecy and stayed with members of the club and were treated to visits of the French countryside and hospitality.



Ava-May Brown

From Girlguiding Badges to Baking Success

A talented young baker from Stone is proving that a childhood passion can become the start of an exciting career after progressing from Girlguiding badges to achieving an Intermediate Apprenticeship Award.

At just 16 years old, Ava-May Brown has already shown impressive dedication, creativity and ambition. Her love for baking began during her time with Girlguiding, where she developed her confidence and practical skills through activities including hostess and cook badges.

Those early experiences helped inspire Ava-May's dream of working in the hospitality industry. What started as a hobby soon developed into a genuine passion for creating food and bringing joy to others through baking.

Today, Ava-May is completing a Level 2 Commis Chef Apprenticeship with Aston Marina, where she has impressed colleagues with her commitment, attention to detail and eagerness to learn. Working alongside experienced chefs, she has gained valuable hands-on experience in a professional kitchen, developing her knowledge of food preparation, presentation and the demands of the catering industry.

At Stafford college awards night in June, Ava-May was awarded **Outstanding achievement: intermediate apprenticeship of the year award**.

Reflecting on her achievement, Ava-May said: "I feel so grateful to have received this award. I hope my journey shows others that even small hobbies can lead to amazing opportunities."

My passion for baking started as something I simply enjoyed, and it has grown into something I now hope to build my future around."

Outside of her apprenticeship, Ava-May continues to challenge herself through charity fundraising activities and opportunities that broaden her experiences, while remaining focused on building a successful future in baking and hospitality.

Her journey is a wonderful example of how skills developed at a young age can grow into lifelong passions and rewarding careers. From earning badges through Girlguiding to creating cakes, desserts and bakes in a professional kitchen, Ava-May is demonstrating that determination, hard work and enthusiasm can turn dreams into reality.

With aspirations to one day work on a cruise ship or open her own bakery, the future looks bright for this inspiring young chef, whose story shows the lasting impact of youth organisations in helping young people discover their talents and achieve their ambitions.



Stone Division Girlguiding Celebrates Success at Carnival Parade

Girlguiding Stone Division celebrated a fantastic day of achievements after earning 2nd place in the Float Competition at this year's Stone Carnival community parade.

Adding to the celebrations, two units from the division also enjoyed success in the walking group categories, proudly taking home 1st and 2nd place.

Their colourful displays, enthusiasm, and teamwork showcased the spirit of Girlguiding and the dedication of both the young members and volunteers who worked hard to make the event such a success.

The award-winning float and walking groups highlighted everything that makes Girlguiding special – friendship, fun, adventure, and community spirit.

Months of planning, creativity, and teamwork paid off, with members proudly representing Stone Division and demonstrating the values that inspire girls to discover their potential and make a positive difference.

Congratulations to everyone involved in these well-deserved achievements and for making Girlguiding Stone Division proud!

We are always looking for volunteers and have spaces for girls to join. Find out more at <https://girlguidingstaffordshire.org.uk>





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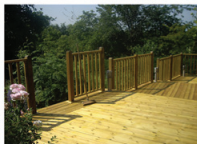
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