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MARCH / APRIL 2026



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A spiral-bound notebook with a black pen resting on it. The notebook is open to a page with a handwritten list titled "Spring To-Do List". The list includes four items, each with a checkmark: "Declutter", "Tidy shed", "Make Will", and "Set up LPA".

Spring To-Do List

- ✓ Declutter
- ✓ Tidy shed
- ✓ Make Will
- ✓ Set up LPA

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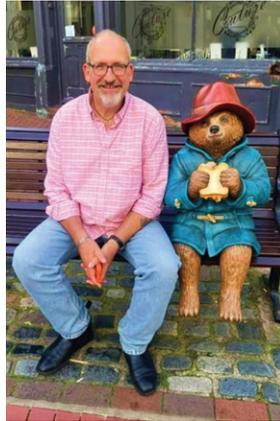


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ECCLESHALL NEWS

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

Did you know Stone is twinned with Texas?

Welcome to your Spring edition of The Gazette, I say Spring, but has Spring sprung yet? Well yes and no. It depends if you go with Meteorological Spring, 1st March, or with the Astronomical Spring, which is later, on 20th March. I prefer to go by the first signs of snowdrops, crocus and daffodils peeking out on my front garden, a little glimmer of hope that warmer, drier days are on their way.

Firstly, a huge congratulations go to Maccisha Medford, Head Of English KS2 at Walton Priory Middle School in Stone, who became the first contestant ever to win the full £100,000 jackpot, on the ITV gameshow The 1% Club! Maccisha only entered as she was on maternity leave at the time, and now plans to take some time off with her new baby. *See if you can answer the 1% question inside.*

Congratulations also go to Stone Lions, who have just celebrated 47 years of service to our local community. Formed in Stone in 1978, the work they do helps all sorts of people, from groups to individuals, and is truly amazing.

Fancy a stall? Stone Town Council are looking for new traders for their markets in the High Street, including the Farmers Market, Craft and Collectables Market, and the regular Town Markets.

The Council have also planned several upcoming events including Guest Speaker Talks at the new Stone Heritage Centre, The Mayor's Easter Egg Hunt, and brave St. George returns to Stone's market square to battle against the Black Knight, in a thrilling re-enactment.

Did you know Stone is twinned with Texas? Although not a formal arrangement, Carthage informally

granted Stone the status of 'sister city' in recognition of the kindness shown by the people of Stone, to the US airmen at the depot at Yarnfield during World War II. Texas declared independence from Mexico on 2 March 1836 and Stone Town Council therefore raises the Texas State flag at the flagpole, at the top of the High Street, in March each year to celebrate this. *Interesting stuff...*

Regular contributors, the Stone Scribblers, have just published their first anthology of work called 'Pieces of Stone', including some wonderful poems and prose, illustrated with original artwork.

Crown Wharf Theatre have *Three Months of Theatre, Music, Comedy and Cinema* lined up, with something for everyone, find the full listings inside.

Upcoming events for Easter include a 'Walk of Witness' through Stone High Street, where hymns will be sung, proceeding up to Christ Church for a service, and of course, The Mayor's Easter Egg Hunt.

See the centre pages for all details on the biggest event in Stone, The Stone Food & Drink Festival, taking place at the start of May.

With live cookery demos, great live music, street food, artisan producers, family fun and a brand-new VIP zone for 2026, the 21st Stone Food & Drink Festival is set to be a standout weekend in the midland's foodie calendar.

If you're up for a challenge, the Stone Ramblers 'Walk Of The Month' between Yarnfield & Swynnerton, is a little longer than some of their usual walks, at 5.3 miles, why not give it a go, to walk off all the Easter Eggs! **Dan Mitchell 01/03/26**



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Leighton Hall Auctions Continues to Deliver and Expand upon their Unique Services

Leighton Hall Auctions is delighted to share the latest developments from the heart of Staffordshire's thriving auction community, based in the market town of Stone. As we continue to grow and respond to collector's demand, we've introduced a range of specialist auctions and community-focused valuation events - while maintaining the same competitive fees our clients have come to expect.



The team at Leighton Hall has long been known for selling a broad range of antiques, jewellery and the wider range of collectables. Now, guided by increased interest from both local and online bidders, the auction house has expanded its calendar to include dedicated online specialist auctions across several popular collecting categories. These currently include Coins and Currencies, Militaria and Medals, as well as Fine Jewellery and Silver. With these focused sales, enthusiasts and seasoned collectors alike can enjoy tailored catalogues and deeper market insight when buying or selling.

"Our specialist auctions give us the flexibility to showcase items of real interest in their own right," says Toby Hall, auctioneer and Managing Director of Leighton Hall Auctions. *"Whether it's a rare coin, a significant military medal, or a piece of beautifully crafted antique jewellery, each sale brings a spotlight to the passion and expertise behind these pieces."*



Alongside its busy auction schedule, Leighton Hall Auctions has also increased the number of valuation days available to the public. Regular valuation days are held at the auction house in Stone by appointment on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, giving people the opportunity to bring along items for free, no-obligation advice.

In addition, the team has been travelling throughout Staffordshire and Cheshire, hosting valuation events in village halls and community venues, with the BBC's Kate Bliss due a return to assist soon. These events have proven extremely popular, offering convenient access to expert guidance for those considering selling, handling probate, or simply curious about their items.



Best of all, these enhanced services have been introduced without any increase in charges. *"We wanted to make sure our clients benefit from the expanded offering without feeling any added cost pressure,"* Toby explains. *"It's part of our commitment to accessible, professional service."*

With a busy auction schedule mapped out for 2026, Leighton Hall Auctions remains a vibrant hub for buyers, sellers and collectors alike. Whether you're new to auctions or a seasoned participant, there's plenty to explore in the months ahead.



In addition, the auction house is also planning to expand its presence into the Staffordshire Moorlands, bringing valuation events and auction services to even more local communities. This expansion reflects Leighton Hall's ongoing commitment to making professional auction services accessible across the region. For more information on upcoming auctions and valuation days, visit www.leightonhallauctions.com or follow us on social media.

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Maccisha Medford on *The 1% Club*, which aired on January 10th. Images Credit: ITV

Stone Teacher Becomes The First £100k Prize Winner On The 1% Club

Congratulations go to Maccisha Medford, Head Of English KS2 at Walton Priory Middle School in Stone, who became the first contestant ever to win the full £100,000 jackpot, on the ITV gameshow *The 1% Club*, which aired on January 10th.

Many contestants have been able to make it to the end, and win themselves some good money, in previous shows, however, no one has been able to walk away with the entire £100k before.

While most game shows focus on a person's ability to remember general knowledge, random facts and bits of trivia, Lee Mack's popular series asks contestants to instead rely on logic, to answer a series of brain teasers, which increase in difficulty each time.

To win £100,000, contestants have to finally answer a question that only 1% of the UK would know.

Maccisha Medford from Stafford, told the BBC that she has always been a fan of the show, but never applied as it is filmed in the week, when she is working. Her husband encouraged her to give it a go while she was on maternity leave.

As part of the application process, she provided two funny facts - one that a bikeability instructor once mistook her for a child, and the other that she is "ridiculously clumsy" and has broken bones in the same foot seven times.

On the show, she said as the questions got harder and harder, her heart rate started to leap. But it was also a nervy start, as she got one of the questions wrong as they were testing out the tablets the contestants use to answer on.

"Once we'd done two or three, I was like OK, I can be calm again, until we got to about 25, 20%..we're getting close now."

Because the episode was recorded in October, the result had to be kept quiet,

Maccisha could tell nobody, bar her close family, making the £100k winnings feel like a strange dream.

"The further it got away the more I was like, did that happen, did I dream that," Maccisha said.

Now that the news is out, Maccisha added *"My daughter's now six months old, she was three months old when we recorded it, so I can actually have a year off with her, we can take her on nice holidays and do nice little day trips."*

What was the 'impossible' question on The 1% Club?

For anyone who fancies testing out how well they would've done, the question was as follows:

"What is the lowest number that replaces the question mark in this sequence?"

The three finalists were then shown the following sequence of numbers:

- 1+2 = one
- 2+2 = four
- 3+2 = three
- 3+3 = eleven
- 4+3 = ??

Upon first glance, the question makes no sense whatsoever, however, the clue is in how the numbers are written.

Still not sure? The answer is below.

The first number in the sequence is the number of consonants, and the second is the number of vowels. So one is the lowest number with one consonant and two vowels, four is the lowest with two of each, three is the lowest with three consonants and two vowels, and 11 is the lowest with three of each.

Following this logic, 15 is the lowest number with four consonants and three vowels. The 1% Club is available to watch on ITVX.

What is the lowest number that replaces the question mark in this sequence?

- 1 + 2 = one
- 2 + 2 = four
- 3 + 2 = three
- 3 + 3 = eleven
- 4 + 3 = fifteen

fifteen

The first digit in the sum represents the number of consonants and the second digit represents the number of vowels. Fifteen is the lowest number that has four consonants and three vowels.



World Day Of Prayer

(A Women Led, Global, Ecumenical Movement)

World Day of Prayer 2026 Nigeria

Our sisters in Nigeria invite us to join them for the World Day of Prayer on **Friday 6 March 2026**. The service they have prepared reflects on the theme, "I will give you rest."

The World Day of Prayer is an international, women-led, ecumenical movement that shares the hopes, concerns, and prayers of women from around the globe. Each year, women from a different country craft a service, sharing their unique spiritual journey and culture.

For 2026, the women of Nigeria have created a service that speaks to our need for peace and solace, drawing on their faith and experiences in a world filled with struggles and anxieties.

The preparation for this day is extensive. The writing country and theme are chosen years in advance, and the service then travels to the international committee in New York for translation and dissemination to national committees in over 120 participating countries. From there it is adapted and shared locally, culminating in gatherings at hundreds of churches every March.

This day is a powerful demonstration of global solidarity. It begins in Samoa and moves across the world in a continuous wave of prayer, finishing 38 hours later in American Samoa. It truly is a worldwide day of prayer!

For further information and resources, including details of services in your area, please visit the World Day of Prayer website: wwdp.org.uk

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Gazette

NEWS IN BRIEF

No Rail News for Now

Regular Gazette contributor for local rail news, Jon Heal from the NSRPG, North Staffs Rail Promotion Group, has emailed to say "I have met both London Northwestern and East Midlands Railway this week (16th-20th February), but nothing definite came out the meetings that I can share - maybe the timetable developments could be clearer to detail in the next Gazette."

NSRPG will hold their next meeting in Stone Station on Thursday 26th March at 7pm. A very brief AGM will be included but all are welcome. I will give a report on campaigns over the past year. We have invited Geoff Grant to share updates on London Northwestern Railway, and Charlotte Eccles of North Staffs Community Rail Partnership for community news."

Christian Aid Sponsored Walk

North Staffs Christian Aid Sponsored Walk takes place on **Saturday 21st March** at Tittesworth Water.

If you would like to take part please speak to Dennis Abbott at dennis.abbott4@gmail.com and he will be able to let you have a sponsor form. We do not have these yet, but they should be available soon.

Stone High Street Markets Are Seeking New Traders

Stone Town Council organises a number of regular markets in the High Street and are looking for new traders to join them.

Farmers Market

Held on the **1st Saturday of each month** (excluding January) Pitches come with a Stone Town Council marquee and a table (subject to availability) and cost £68.00 unless, subject to availability, you share with another trader and the cost is then halved.

Craft and Collectables Market

Held on the **3rd Saturday of each month** (excluding January). Pitches come with a Stone Town Council marquee and a table (subject to availability) and cost £47.00 unless, subject to availability, you share with another trader and the cost is then halved.

Town Market

In addition, we have the ability to have a limited number of stalls in the High Street on Tuesdays, Fridays and the Saturdays that we don't have a craft market or farmers' market running. Pitches come with a Stone Town Council marquee and a table (subject to availability) and cost £47.00

If you would like to apply to become a trader with us or to find out more information please email lindsay.fleetwood@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

Walk of Witness in High Street

On **Good Friday 3rd April** there will be a 'Walk of Witness' through Stone High Street.

This will start from St Michael's at approximately 10am, walking up to the Market Square where hymns will be sung, proceeding up to Christ Church for a service there.

Christmas Fair Success

The Christmas Fair held on the 22nd November at St Michael and St Wulfad, Stone raised the sum of £1,510.11 for church funds.

Thank you very much to everyone involved in organising the Fair, particularly to all the stall holders, and of course, to everyone who came and spent money, making the event such a success. Thank you.



Juliet Sear



Paul A Young



Nelly Ghaffar

Celebrity Chefs Announced For 2026 Food & Drink Festival

The team behind the Stone Food & Drink Festival have revealed the celebrity chefs set to appear at the 2026 event, taking place at Westbridge Park from **Friday 8 to Sunday 10 May 2026**.

Celebrating 21 years as one of Staffordshire's best-loved foodie events, the 2026 festival promises a packed programme of food, drink and entertainment, with headline chef demonstrations, appearances from top local chefs across all three days, live music and family-friendly fun.

Saturday 9 May will see the return of Nelly Ghaffar, back by popular demand after being a huge hit with festival-goers last year. Fresh from her return to the GBBO kitchen for The Great New Year's Bake Off and with a new book under her belt, Nelly will take to the demonstration kitchen before heading to the VIP zone for Meet & Greets, and will also help judge the Saturday leg of the festival's Great Stone Bake Off competition.

Also headlining Saturday is world-renowned chocolatier Paul A Young. A multiple award-winner and regular on shows including Saturday

Kitchen and This Morning, Paul is now proudly based in Stone, where he runs his Chocolate At Home school. Expect expert insight, irresistible chocolate inspiration and plenty of crowd appeal.

Adding even more energy to Saturday's programme, popular local personality Shane Nolan will roll up his sleeves to test his culinary skills in the demo kitchen, and also lead fun-packed family entertainment on the live music stage.

On Sunday 10 May, the festival welcomes one of the UK's best-known cake experts, Juliet Sear to headline the demonstration stage. A regular presenter on ITV's This Morning, Juliet is celebrated for making show-stopping bakes accessible to home cooks, and has created edible masterpieces for everyone from Sir Ian McKellen to Prince Harry.

With live cookery demos, great live music, street food, artisan producers, family fun and a brand-new VIP zone for 2026, the 21st Stone Food & Drink Festival is set to be a standout weekend in the midland's foodie calendar.

For updates and tickets, visit www.stonefooddrink.org.uk

Go Vip At The 21st Stone Food & Drink Festival

The Stone Food & Drink Festival is turning 21 in 2026 – and to mark the occasion, organisers have unveiled brand new VIP tickets designed to take the festival experience to the next level.

Festivalgoers who choose VIP will enjoy access to a beautifully appointed VIP marquee, complete with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating, fantastic views of the live music stage and across the bustling festival site. There's also a dedicated VIP paid bar (with no big queues), luxury flushing toilets with running water, a free reusable festival cup – and exclusive meet & greets with headline celebrity chefs throughout the weekend.

Music remains a huge part of the festival atmosphere, with three days of live performances. Friday night headliners Sonic Boom Band will deliver non-stop crowd-pleasing rock, pop and indie bangers. Saturday evening's party gets underway with House Jammerz – the UK's premier live house and dance music band – performing Faithless, Chemical Brothers, Shapeshifters, Bucketheadz and more floor-fillers. Sunday closes in soulful style with the return of The Lack Of Commitments, the UK's No.1 Commitments tribute act, by popular demand.

The headline acts will be supported by a



host of fantastic bands throughout the weekend, plus 'plug in and play' performers on the brand-new acoustic stage – and even a silent disco to keep the party going – ensuring there's a soundtrack to your festival experience from first bite to last dance.

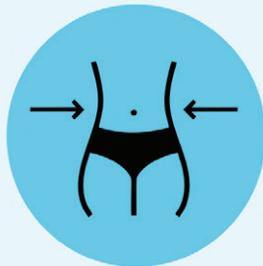
Weekend VIP tickets (covering all three days) are priced at £35 for adults and £13 for children. Friday VIP tickets are £15 for adults with children admitted free, while Saturday or Sunday VIP tickets are £20 for adults and £9 for children.

VIP tickets are **strictly limited and available online in advance only**. Head to stonefooddrink.org.uk to book your VIP tickets now and be part of a truly special 21st anniversary celebration.



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Age: 5 and over



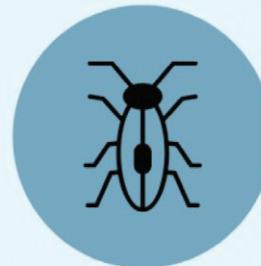
Sinusitis
Age: 12 and over



Impetigo
Age: 1 and over



Shingles
Age: 18 and over



Infected Bites
Age: 1 and over



The Sinclair family, Mum Kirsty, Dad Mark, Thea and Harrison

Kirsty Shares Her Story To Raise Awareness Of Rare Liver Disease

Kirsty Sinclair from Stone, is sharing her son Harrison's story, to mark Rare Disease Day, to raise awareness of lesser-known liver conditions and the impact they can have on individuals and their loved ones.

Five-year-old Harrison was diagnosed shortly after birth with Alagille syndrome, a rare condition affecting just one in every 30,000 live births. Alagilles affects different parts of Harrison's body, and the symptoms include jaundice and a severe itch which cannot be relieved by scratching. In 2024 he underwent open heart surgery, and he is currently on the waiting list for a liver transplant.

"The impact of Harrison's condition on our family has been huge," explains Kirsty.

"He itches like crazy day and night and causes open wounds that are hard to get to heal due to constant itching. He screams in pain and gets very distressed- this is heartbreaking to hear day and night. He has really high cholesterol, which causes lumps all over his body. His hands, feet and elbows are awful and very painful if he knocks them.

Alagilles doesn't only affect the liver and last July Harrison underwent open heart surgery which was very traumatic for him and us as a family. We were in hospital for just over two weeks. However he has healed so well, the scar is hardly noticeable to us now and crucially it has allowed him to be able to be active on the liver transplant list, which we are grateful for.

People stare at Harrison and comment on his colour and ask us what's wrong. This doesn't really bother me, but Thea gets very upset and overprotective when this happens.

Harrison on the other hand completely owns it. For example, when a child at school asked him 'why have you got a green face?' he replied 'It's not - it's yellow!'

It completely breaks mine and Mark's hearts to watch our baby go through all of this from birth and just suffer daily. We have to juggle Thea's school and activities along with monthly visits to Birmingham Children's now he's on the transplant list, as well as our jobs.

Hospital stays are certainly disruptive to family life and again, tough for Thea as she has to deal with the constant battle of only having me there whenever I can be there. That's a hard pill to swallow as parents. That being said, I cannot praise the team on Ward 8 at Birmingham enough. Our specialist liver nurse, Kylie, is an absolute angel. I honestly couldn't do this without her. And having other parents to talk to is a help too, especially when you are in for a long stint.

In September Harrison started in reception (big boy school as he puts it). He goes full time, loves it and is absolutely smashing it daily. Never did we think that the day would come that he started mainstream school. We are so proud to see what he achieves on a daily basis and couldn't ask for a more resilient child.

Our family life is tough, but we just deal with what comes our way and carry on doing what we do. It's very different to the life we had before Harrison, but we try to keep life happy and as 'normal' as we can.

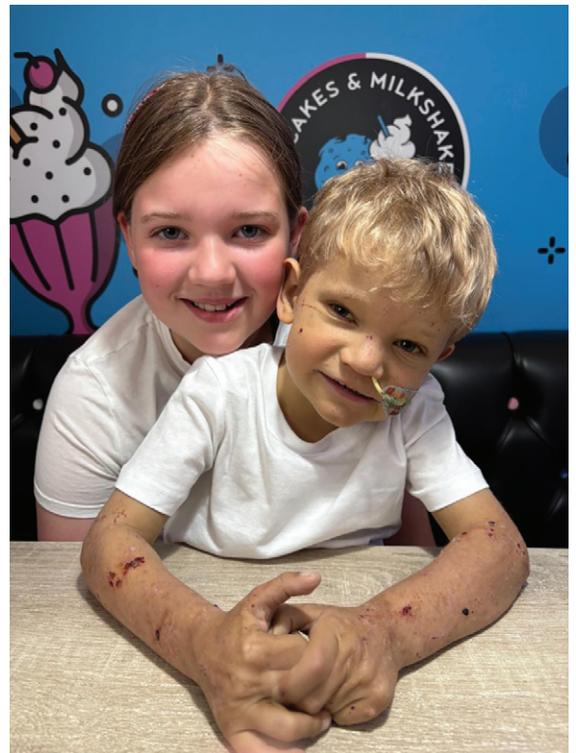
Our 11-year-old daughter, Thea, is just THE BEST big sister ever! She absolutely adores her brother and is very protective of him. We really appreciate that as parents we have got two amazing children and are very lucky to have them so happy and enjoy life as they do.

We do miss our family holidays abroad, but Harrison's needs are so complex that we haven't been able to fly. It would cause so much stress and anxiety. He is dependent on his nasogastric tube for food so the amount of equipment and medication we would need to take would be overwhelming, plus there would be the worry of him falling ill whilst in a different country.

So, we haven't been on an aeroplane since 2019. Instead, we have been able to spend quality family time together by holidaying in this country. Thea accepts this in the way she accepts the many ways in which her world has been



Harrison started reception in September



Harrison with his 'protective' big sister Thea

turned upside down due to having a brother with complex health needs.

I do think that greater understanding of rare diseases like Alagilles would go some way to helping Harrison and his sister."

Rare Disease Day is marked globally each year on 28 February and aims to raise awareness of rare diseases and improve access to diagnosis, treatment and care for those affected.

According to the British Liver Trust, thousands of people in the UK are living with rare liver diseases, many of which can take years to diagnose due to a lack of awareness and limited research.

British Liver Trust is the UK's leading liver health charity and provides information, support and advocacy for everyone affected by liver disease.

For more information, visit No One Left Behind <https://britishlivertrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/campaigns/nooneleftbehind/>

Government Launches Consultation On How Councils Work In Staffordshire And Stoke-On-Trent

In December 2024, the Government announced plans to reorganise local government across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, along with other parts of England.

Residents, businesses and community organisations across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are now being encouraged to share their views as the Government launches its statutory consultation on local government reorganisation.

From bins to bridges, safer streets to social care, councils support daily life across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The way local government works in the area could change in the future as part of national proposals to simplify council structures.

Under local government reorganisation, Staffordshire's county, city, district and borough councils would be replaced with a smaller number of new unitary councils delivering all councils services in a given area.

Councils are complicated and important organisations that provide hundreds of different services for people across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The government has asked councils across the area to consider how they might be run in the future.

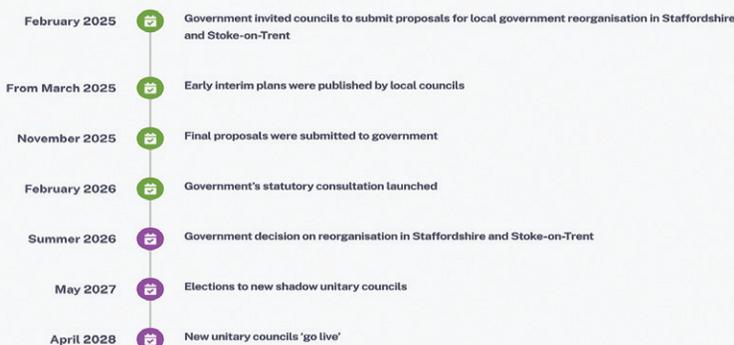


These proposals consider:

- How a council (instead of separate county and district councils) could be in charge in a given area. This is called a unitary council.
- The right size for a new council – big enough to work efficiently, save money and cope with financial shocks, but not so big that it becomes unmanageable.
- How council services can run well and be sustainable in the long term – things like social care, waste collection, roads and libraries.
 - How local people's views can help shape services
- How new council structures could support devolution in the future – that is, bringing more power and funding from Westminster to local areas.

Exactly what this will look like will be decided by the Government following consideration of five proposals that have been submitted. **You can read more about these 5 proposals at www.staffordshirestokeLGR.org.uk**

Timeline



Councillor Aidan Godfrey, Leader of Stafford Borough Council, has encouraged people to take part in the Government consultation.

"We want to ensure any new council will provide excellent services for the people and the businesses of Stafford Borough. So, if you want to have a say on how council services are delivered in the future, then please take the time to read the information that is available through our dedicated website and then share your views through the Government's consultation."

No immediate changes will be made to council services.

The Government is expected to make a decision on local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in Summer 2026.

Existing councils will continue to deliver services as normal, with new unitary councils not expected to be in place until April 2028 at the earliest.

The Government's consultation is now open until Thursday 26 March. You can find out more about the proposals and how to submit your views at www.staffordshirestokeLGR.org.uk

BEGINNER FRIENDLY FUN FITNESS CLASSES...!



MONDAY

9:30-10:15 **STRONG** (weights class) Stone
18:20-19:10 **Clubbercise** Stone
19:30-20:20 **Pilates Beginners** Stone

TUESDAY

9:30-10:30 **Pilates Beginners** Stone
13:30-14:45 **Seated Exercise & Social** Stone
18:20-19:10 **Fitness Pilates Beginners** Stone

WEDNESDAY

18:20-19:05 **Combat Assassin Fitness** Stone

THURSDAY

18:30-19:20 **Clubbercise** Stafford
19:30-20:30 **Mens Pilates Beginners** Stone

FRIDAY

9:30-10:15 **STRONG** (weights class) Stone
11:30-12:45 **Seated Exercise & Social** Stafford

SATURDAY

10:30-11:20 **Fitness Pilates Beginners** Stone

Call or text Trish 07711 115462
www.thehappyvibe.co.uk

Beginner Line Dancing Classes in Stafford & Stone....!



Monday

1.30-3 Beginners+Social Stafford

Tuesday

11-12 High Beginners/Impr. Stone
5:45-7:15 Beginners+Social Stafford
7:30-9 Absolute Beginners+Social Stone

Wednesday

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

Thursday

10-11 Absolute Beginners Stafford
11.15-12.15 High Beginners/Impr. Stafford
7-9 Beginners+Social Stone (monthly)

Saturday (monthly)

Workshops & Socials - see website

For more info call TRISH:
07711 115462

For venues & full class details:
www.discolinedancing.com

AGE Concern

Growing Older Brings New Challenges

Growing older brings new challenges especially when it comes to navigating forms, benefits, and support services. At Age Concern Stone & District, we believe no one should have to face these things alone and our friendly team helps to make life easier and less stressful by guiding you through complex forms.

Attendance Allowance is a benefit for people over State Pension age who need help with personal care or supervision due to illness, disability, or mobility issues. It isn't means-tested, and it doesn't affect your pension it's simply there to support you in living safely and comfortably at home. Many people miss out on Attendance Allowance because the application form can feel overwhelming. That's where Age Concern will sit with you, go through the paperwork at your pace, and complete the form with you.

A Blue Badge helps people with mobility difficulties park closer to where they need to be. Whether you're applying for the first time or renewing, the process can be confusing, we can help with that too.

Our trained staff will guide you through the application and make sure everything is completed correctly.

Good company and a good meal can brighten any month. Our 50+ Lunch Club offers exactly that. Once a month, the Green Bus driven by a community volunteer collects everyone by prior arrangement free of charge and takes the group out for a relaxed lunch at a local venue. You pay for your own food and drink. It's a lovely way to meet new people, enjoy a change of scenery, and share a few laughs.



Age Concern 50+ Club, enjoying a meal out at The Bird in Hand, Stafford

You'll always find a warm welcome at Age Concern Stone & District situated in Station Road in Stone. Our hours are **Mondays and Wednesdays 10.00 to 12.30 and by appointment only, Fridays**, to book call 01785 817906. Complete confidentiality, a friendly team and a hot drink with reassurance you can count on.

At Age Concern Stone & District, you're never just a visitor you're part of our community.

We are currently looking for office volunteers, if you are interested, ideal qualifications required are, a ready smile, understanding, lots of patience and usual administration skills. For further details call Chairman Jill Hood 077364 13097

From Jill Hood
Age Concern



Skipper's Journey Back to the Water

In 1985, a teenage boy stood at the tiller of Rutherford's floating restaurant in Stone, guiding diners gently along the Trent & Mersey Canal. Day after day, in all weathers, he cruised between the Star and the winding hole at Sandon, learning the rhythms of the water and the quiet responsibility of being a skipper. That boy was me - and although I didn't know it then, those early years on the canal would shape the rest of my life.

Four decades later, after a career that took me far from Staffordshire, I've found myself back where it all began. And that homecoming is the story behind CanalScapes, a new skippered narrowboat experience based at Aston Marina.

A Life in Engineering and Aviation

After my early boating years, I joined the British Army in 1989 as a helicopter technician with the Army Air Corps (REME). Ten years of military service taught me precision, discipline, and the importance of keeping people safe - skills that would later prove invaluable.

When I left the Army, I founded EleV8 Aviation, an aerospace engineering company that has taken me to projects around the world. Since 2017, EleV8 has supported the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight at RAF Coningsby, leading a major project to digitise the technical manuals for the Spitfire, Hurricane, and Lancaster.



It's work that helps preserve the safe operation of these iconic aircraft for future generations.

But despite the excitement of aviation, the canals never quite left me.

Lockdown, a Family Boat, and an Unexpected Realisation

In 2020, during lockdown, my family and I bought a narrowboat as a way to escape the four walls. What began as a simple outlet quickly became a rediscovery of everything we loved about canal life - slow days, open skies, and conversations with strangers at locks.

Curious onlookers often asked what boating was like, so I began offering short rides. Ten minutes later, they'd step off smiling, surprised by how peaceful and restorative the experience was.

Those moments revealed something important: **many people would love the canals... if only someone made it easy for them to try.**

That realisation became the seed of CanalScapes.

Introducing CanalScapes:

A Different Kind of Canal Experience

Today, CanalScapes offers skippered day trips and short stays aboard Pendelvin Gypsy, our classic narrowboat moored at Aston Marina. Unlike traditional hire boats, every trip is fully skippered - guests can relax, learn, or simply watch the world drift by.

In the evenings, I step off the boat, leaving guests to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the canal entirely to themselves. It's a gentle, unhurried experience designed for people who want to reconnect with nature, celebrate a special occasion, or simply try something new without the stress of steering.



Many local guests still remember Rutherford's floating restaurant from the 1980s and are delighted to discover I may well have skippered them 40 years ago. One even presented me with a painting of Pendelvin Gypsy, watched over by the Spitfires and the Lancaster - a perfect blend of my past on the water and my years in aviation.

Coming Full Circle

Now, in 2026, as my long-running project with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight draws to a close, I find myself returning to the very waters where my journey began. CanalScapes isn't just a business - it's a homecoming, a chance to share the calm, beauty, and heritage of our local canals with people who may never have experienced them before.



For those who live in and around Stone, the waterways are quite literally on our doorstep. My hope is that CanalScapes helps more people rediscover what makes them so special.

From Mark Wilson Owner & Skipper,
CanalScapes Aston Marina, Stone
www.canalscapes.co.uk



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Coffee Break Story



By Stone Scribblers Creative Writing Group

Easter

When chocolate eggs appear in the shop, my immediate thought is of our first dog, who joined us in 1970. Throughout our married life we had five dogs, but with each having their own unique personalities, there was no other like Rupert.

He was mischievous until he died and brought love, loyalty, amusement and comfort into our lives. When I returned home from a particularly stressful day at work, I would sit down with a mug of coffee and tell Rupert all about it. He listened intently, gazing lovingly at me. It soon became our daily routine. Afterwards, when we went for a walk, his joy and enthusiasm as he bounded along, blew the daily pressures away.

Why I particularly remember him at Easter, surrounds a large box of Dairy Milk chocolates, that I had received as a gift. I left them on top of a bookcase and Rupert managed to get them. He had ripped open the box and nibbled some of the scattered chocolates. In 1970 I did not know chocolate was toxic for dogs. Fortunately, Rupert avoided any side effects. Not like the time he ate the wax crayons visiting young children had left on the table. He had mucky rainbow poo for several days.

Everyone who has a dog will tell you of similar stories. A friend told me that her son had bought her a box of truffles for Christmas. He placed them under the tree, before joining his mum in the kitchen. They soon heard rustling and going into the living room saw that Bertie had ripped off the wrapping paper, opened the box, and was eating the chocolates!

A phone call to the vet advised them to keep an eye on him, as he hadn't eaten many. They were asked if the chocolates were milk or cocoa, apparently it is cocoa that does the most harm, although all chocolate can be harmful. It isn't just dogs who 'steal'. My brother's cat was an expert. She didn't bring home birds or mice but everyday items such as a baby's bootie, a large Yorkshire Pudding and one day, very proudly presented a hot boiled potato.

My Facebook Page often shows a picture of an attractive puppy, with the comment 'God sent them without wings, so no one would know they were angels'. How true. Having Pets is the most wonderful experience, and often an emotional life saver. Dogs also promote a healthy lifestyle, as we are compelled to undertake all that walking. Francis of Assisi taught that animals were living reflections of God's creativity and love and fulfilled a purpose. We should treat them as fellow creatures and there is no doubt they become treasured family members.

I live opposite an open Green, and my neighbour had the most delightful Welsh Collie. When her children's friends came to play on the Green, Dotty went with them, and constantly circled the group, watching all around and guarding them. She would not have let any harm come their way. By this time, we had cats. Loving them so much, and finding them so amusing, we had seven. If we were on the front and Dotty came to greet me, she never chased them and they just sat and watched her, demonstrating an understanding harmony. Humans could learn so much from them.

Easter is a time of renewal and rebirth, with animals being central to festivities and representing meanings imbedded in Christian beliefs, so perhaps with more awareness than I knew, Rupert also wanted to join in the celebrations of Christ's resurrection.

By Helen Ainsworth

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



How the pub could hopefully look in the future
- All images are of The Railway Inn, but have been re-imagined using AI

The Railway Inn Norton Bridge - Our Vision

At a packed meeting on 14th January it was decided by the Railway Inn Steering Group to try to raise the funds to buy, renovate and re-open The Railway Inn Norton Bridge for the village and the wider community. A target of £275,000 was decided on, the steering group having commissioned an independent valuation and building conditions report.

Whilst we already have had many offers of practical support once we buy the pub we needed to gauge the level of financial support before going for a Community Share Issue, where members of the public buy shares in their pub and therefore have a say in how it is run. Pledges are non-binding expressions of interest in buying the pub which can be turned into shares once the share issue is announced. There may also be an income-tax relief advantage for investors.

This is a once in a generation

opportunity for people to own and run their local pub for the benefit of their local community. All profits from the enterprise will stay in the local community for the greater good of the residents. No members of the steering group will gain any remuneration from the pub, now or in the future. We all just want to see the pub open again - and thriving. And with your help we are sure we can do it.

Since the decision to save the pub was made we have had nearly £85,000 in pledges, private donations, fundraising activities - and from our GoFundMe page. Nearly a third of the total required. A small proportion of this has already been spent on surveys and legal requirements in setting up the Railway Inn Community Benefit Society Ltd, which is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.



opportunity to save The Railway Inn as a village hub, for now - and for the future. We intend it to be the focus of village life as well as a traditional pub. Apart from two bars and beer garden, we will have a meeting room available for small gatherings, a library, possibly a small shop for essential goods/local produce, and we have had an expression of interest from an outside party who would like to run a tea-room at the pub. There may be the opportunity to expand this offer to cater for family events in the future. In the future we may be able to provide workspace or accommodation on the first floor.

There are over 1000 successful community-owned businesses in the UK,

The pledge forms are now available online at <http://www.railwayinn.org/pledge> to complete and return to us. Along with our Pledges FAQs sheet. All pledges are held in secret by only four of the steering group so confidentiality is guaranteed under current GDPR rules. If you don't feel that you can pledge at this stage there will be opportunities to do so later, the minimum pledges being £250 for 250 shares.

Or you could donate using our gofundme page <https://www.gofundme.com/f/the-railway-inn-community-pub-norton-bridge-fundraiser>

Please help us to turn our vision into reality. Please follow us.



Photo from the January Beginners class at Eagle House in their lovely Drawing Room.

Crochet In Eccleshall Our Second Anniversary

Our first class was held in February 2024. Since then, 83 people have booked for our classes or joined our meetings to learn crochet or improve their skill.

There is a great sense of accomplishment at the end of each Beginners class. The tutor is very patient.

At the Improvers classes, we meet friends and crochet together, with tuition or assistance when required.

Thank you to everyone for participating over the past two years.

Beginners classes are from **12.30pm to 3.30pm, usually on the fourth Monday of the month.**

Improvers classes are on the **second Friday of the month at Eccleshall Library from 12.30pm to 3.30pm.**

Very occasionally we crochet & chat without a tutor. Everyone brings their own project or pattern.

On the first and third Wednesday of each month, some of us join the Staffordshire Marquetry Group for crochet & chat and tea and biscuits.

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.



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Stone Ramblers Walk Of The Month

By the time that you get this in early March, I really hope that it has stopped raining, that the sun is shining and the spring flowers are blooming!

I'm writing this as we have yet another weather warning for wind, rain and perhaps a bit of snow, but I do live in Meir Heath, twinned with Narnia!



The dreadful weather hasn't deterred us and perhaps have a little laugh, when you look at the photos that I've included this time. Intrepid, that's us!

We've recently got back from our annual jaunt to Shropshire, where we spent three days enjoying the beautiful scenery of that rather remote county. Up soon is Almouth in Northumberland, which will be amazing. At the present time we are completing Two Saints Way, in manageable stages, over the course of the next couple of years.

I've thought carefully about this walk. Everywhere is so



Marilyn getting a bit wet!

Walk of the Month Yarnfield to Swynnerton

Swynnerton is the home of Lord Stafford and the Fitzherbert family and was listed in the Domesday book. The record shows the settlement consisted of ten villagers' households and five smallholders.

Part of this walk goes along the perimeter of the former Royal Ordnance Factory, more specifically a filling factory, located to the south of the village. It was built between 1939 and 1941 and remained operational until 1958.

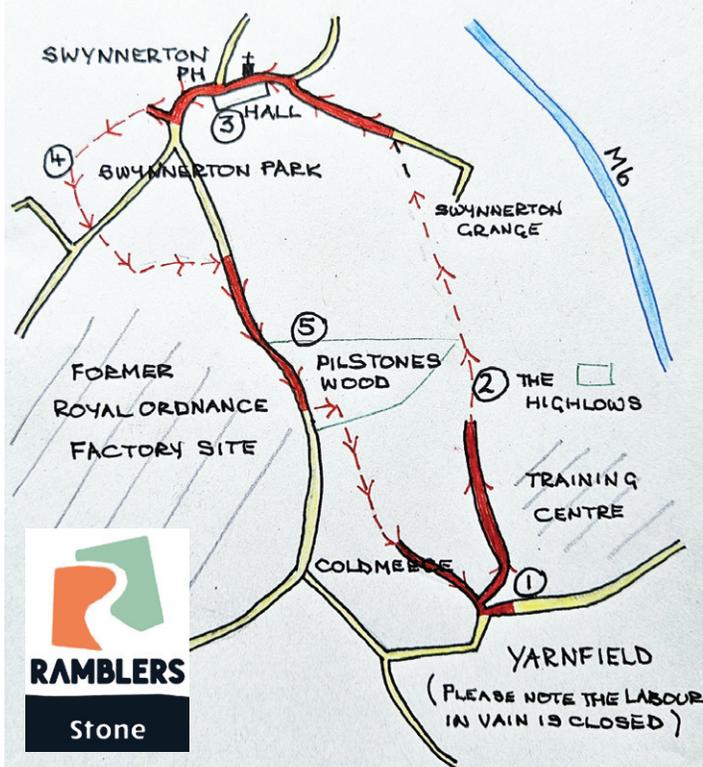
Length: 5.3 miles / 8.5 kilometres and there are 14 stiles and it should take you between 3 and 4 hours.

Refreshments: Fizeherbert Arms, Swynnerton. Please note that the Labour in Vain pub in Yarnfield is now closed.

1. Park as near as you can to the Labour in Vain (*now closed*). Leave the former Inn car park and go right and then right again into High Lows Lane following it round to a tree-lined track. Passing the BT Training College, seen through the trees on the right, and the wireless mast left, pass through fields to a private concrete road leading to The Highlows.

2. Here turn right and after 25 yds turn left passing a large corn drying barn. In 150 yds take the stile on the right in the corner of the field. Now go diagonally right across the field, over a stile and slightly to the left on a well-defined path. Ignore a track on the right just before the next

YARNFIELD TO SWYNNERTON MAP REF: ST866321



stile. Over the stile and keeping the same general direction head for a large oak tree to the left of a pylon. Now cross 2 fields to 2 stiles set close together and continue half right to the corner of the field, crossing the stile. In 25 yds, cross another stile on the right, bearing left up the field to the corner of the wood and over the stile into Hall Lane. Going left walk into Swynnerton.

3. To the right is the Church of England church and to the left one of the few remaining private Catholic chapels left in the UK.

St Mary's Church dates back to the 13th Century. Back in the 14th Century a market used to be held every Wednesday and a fair was held on August 15th each year. A grand manor house used to exist until its destruction by Cromwell's men – its replacement being Swynnerton Hall, built in 1725 by Francis Smith of Warwick. It still dominates the Swynnerton skyline today. A Roman Catholic Church, built in 1868 by Gilbert Blount, adjoins the hall. Most of the houses in the village are post war and help to make up a thriving community.

At the First World War memorial turn left past the main entrance to the Hall. Immediately past a black and white period cottage we go right and take a tarmac path going straight ahead between houses, to a minor road. Crossing over and passing the cricket field on the left go through a kissing gate and along the edge of a wood to a coppice directly ahead.

4. Now take a permissive path through the trees until you reach another minor road. Here go straight across and follow a path running parallel with the fence line until you meet metal railings.

Turning left keeping the fence on our right (*after 300 yds note the view of Swynnerton Hall on the left*) continue to the road, turn right and taking care of traffic walk for about ½ mile.

About 150 yds past the Land Fill site entrance turn left, into a wood and continue on a defined path leading to an open field. Keeping the hedge on our right proceed to a concrete road, cross and take the path which leads directly to Yarnfield and the car park.

We should make you aware that changes can occur to footpaths, so please let us know if you spot any.

We're planning to have a stall at the Stone Farmers' Market in either April or May, so please come along for a chat and find out a bit more about the Stone Ramblers. Alternatively have a look at our website www.stoneramblers.org.uk where you find all the information that you need to join us. Meanwhile, Happy Walking and don't let those pictures put you off!

Penny Meakin

Chair, Stone Ramblers



The AMG Nursing & Care Services nursing team in Stone.

“Thank you to all the ladies who've looked after our mum. Very caring and great support to us as a family. Attended to all her needs and more, giving her the confidence to get back to a bit more of being herself. Cannot fault it at all, knowing that she's had the best care.”

— Service user's family, Stone branch



AMG Stone
Homecare.co.uk, 2026



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Families across Stone have placed their trust in AMG Nursing & Care Services for more than 25 years, knowing their loved ones are supported by experienced and dedicated professionals. Our care teams combine clinical expertise with genuine compassion, delivering safe and reassuring support within the comfort of home.

From complex health needs and long-term conditions to recovery following hospital discharge, our nurses and carers provide personalised care shaped around each individual. Every care plan is carefully overseen to maintain high standards, with close attention to dignity, independence and wellbeing.

As part of the Stone community, we understand local families and their needs, and through professionalism and continuity, we provide dependable care that families can feel confident in every day.

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Gazette

Eccleshall

NEWS IN BRIEF

Community Lounge

The next guest speaker appearing on the programme at the Eccleshall Community Library on **Thursday 19th March** at the High Street library in Eccleshall will be David Slade on the subject of The Eccleshall First Responders serving Eccleshall.

The talk will take place in the upstairs room between 2pm and 4pm and tickets costing £1 each are available from the reception desk in the library from the first Thursday in the month. Entry is limited. The ticket price includes coffee / tea and biscuits. Some speakers who are representing a charity may bring collection boxes for voluntary donations.

Then on **Thursday 23rd April** the guest speaker will be PCSO Gareth Higgins who will be speaking on the subject of Crime prevention advice.

Councillor's Drop In

Borough and Parish Councillor Peter Jones is at the High Street library Eccleshall once a month for a drop-in to meet members of the public face to face who wish to raise issues or just have a chat.

In March it takes place on **Saturday 7th** between 10am and 12 noon and in **April it's on Saturday 4th**.

Peter can also be reached on 01785 851381 07815 419166 or on email peterwjones@btinternet.com or pjoness@staffordbc.gov.uk.

Voluntary Drivers Wanted

The Eccleshall Voluntary Car Scheme is looking for more voluntary drivers to replace those drivers who have retired from the scheme over the last year. The scheme provides transport to medical appointments for Eccleshall residents using the drivers own vehicles.

Agreeing to become a driver does not commit a person to fixed hours or days but when a resident needs transport if the driver is available then he or she can accept to carry out the journey.

The scheme was founded in 2018 and currently has over 100 members of the eccleshall community signed up as members of the scheme. For more details contact the coordinators peter & Joy Jones on 01785 851381 or email peterwjones@btinternet.com.

Mother's Union

The Eccleshall Mother's Union meets on the **second Thursday of each month in the Holy trinity parish room starting at 7.30pm**.

The speaker at the **March meeting on the 12th** is Kevin Reynolds on the theme of "From the Gods to the gutter" and the competition is 'a bird ornament'. The **April meeting on Thursday the 9th** has John Myatt on the subject of Art and music. With the competition of 'A piece of sheet music'.

Eccleshall Indoor Bowls Club

Eccleshall Indoor Bowls Club meet regularly at Eccleshall Community Centre (Shaw's Lane, Eccleshall). Indoor Bowls is an enjoyable activity that is played throughout the year. New and experienced players are always welcomed; all equipment is provided - as well as tea and coffee.

The Club also offers evening bowling sessions for groups and organisations. Fun sessions are supported by Club Members. Sessions: Monday 1.30 - 3.30pm, Tuesday 7.30 - 9.30pm, Thursday 7.30 - 9.30pm.

Just come along with your indoor shoes for x2 free sessions. Low cost for a lot of pleasure!

Contact Mrs Pat Davies 01785 541955 Email pals.davies@hotmail.com

Festival Under New management

The Eccleshall Festival restarts next year under local management watch for details in these columns and on Facebook.



Students from Edward V1 school and a group from Painsley Catholic College

Young Enterprise In Stone Showcase

Students from the Young Enterprise Company Programme showcased their creativity and business skills at a vibrant Craft Market held on Stone High Street on Saturday 21st February.

The event featured a wide selection of market stalls run by student businesses representing several Staffordshire teams competing in the annual programme. While each team receives extensive guidance and mentoring on how to run a successful business, the choice of product is entirely their own - resulting in an impressive variety of innovative ideas on display.

Participating schools included Alleyne's Academy, King Edward VI School, and

Painsley Catholic College. Alleyne's Academy enjoyed particular success on the day, winning awards for Most Innovative Product and Best Customer Service.

A big thank you goes to everyone who stopped by to purchase items or chat with the young entrepreneurs. Special thanks also to the Mystery Shoppers for their valuable feedback and support.

For more information about volunteering to support the financial education, employability skills, and entrepreneurial development provided by Young Enterprise, please contact: teresa.fisher@y-e.org.uk



Second Group from Painsley Catholic Collage and students from Alleyne's Academy

Walk On Fire For Katharine House Hospice

Katharine House Hospice is bringing you an all-new, unforgettable Charity Firewalk, and we'd love you to be part of it.

What is the Firewalk? The Katharine House Hospice Firewalk is an event where participants walk barefoot across hot embers, guided by the professional UK Firewalk team. It's a safe, empowering experience designed to build confidence, courage, and a real sense of achievement, all while raising vital funds for local hospice care.

Is it safe? Yes. Safety is our top priority. Before the walk, you'll receive full training and expert guidance from experienced firewalk instructors who will support you every step of the way. Thousands of people complete firewalks safely every year, no experience is needed.

Who can take part? Anyone aged 14+ can take part, whether you're joining on your own or as part of a group. You might walk with friends, family, colleagues, or a community group, or challenge yourself solo and meet new people on the night.

Why take on the challenge? By taking part, you'll be helping Katharine House Hospice provide specialist, compassionate care to patients and families across our community. Each participant's fundraising can help fund vital care for people living with incurable illness.

What to expect on the night The Firewalk is more than just a challenge, it's a fantastic evening out. Alongside the walk, there will be entertainment, food, and refreshments, creating an uplifting, supportive atmosphere and a shared experience you'll never forget.

Where? Stafford Rangers Football Club, Astonfields Road, Stafford, ST16 3UF

When? 27th March - Register by 3 pm on Friday, 20th March

· Entry fee - £25 · Spectators are free · Call the team for more info - 01785 270808





Stone Town Council Upcoming Events

2026 is set to be another busy year for Stone Town Council with lots of free-to-attend events and some fundraising for the Mayor's Charity planned!

The Farmers' and Craft and Collectables markets returned in February and will take place monthly, on the first and third Saturday, for the rest of the year. Over March and April the following events will be taking place -

Saturday 7th March - 12 noon Texas Flag Raising

Although not a formal arrangement, Carthage informally granted Stone the status of 'sister city' in recognition of the kindness shown by the people of Stone to the US airmen at the depot at Yarnfield during World War II. Texas declared independence from Mexico on 2 March 1836 and Stone Town Council therefore raises the Texas State flag at the flagpole at the top of the High Street in March each year to celebrate this.

Saturday 14th March - 2.00pm – 4.00pm Stone Heritage Centre Guest Speaker Talk

Join Shaun Farrelly for a fascinating talk exploring the history of Yarnfield and Cold Meece parish in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and how the villages have changed since 1952.

Saturday 4th April Mayor's Easter Egg Hunt

In support of the Mayor's three chosen charities (*Stone Community First Responders, Stone Alzheimer's Club and Stone Stroke Club*) children are invited to take part (for a small donation) in an Easter Egg Hunt which will see them navigate their way around the High Street by solving clues! All participants who successfully complete the hunt will be entered into a prize draw.

Saturday 18th April – 2.00pm – 4.00pm Stone Heritage Centre Guest Speaker Talk

Shaun Farrelly returns to deliver an interesting talk on how Yarnfield ended up as the home of the GPO Engineering Division's Central Training School, how it operated and how it changed.



Saturday 25th April – St. George's Re-enactment

St. George returns to Stone's market square to battle against the Black Knight, in what always proves to be a very popular, family event.

Throughout the rest of the year the Town Council will be holding events such as Classic Car event, Motorcycle event, Summer Street Party, Florence Brass Band concert, Alternative Car event and the Christmas Lights Switch On.

Further information about upcoming events can be found on the Council's website www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk and on the Council's Facebook Page www.facebook.com/STCnewsandevents/

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Tourism and Town Promotion Committee said – "This year our town will host a variety of free, fun events, offering something for everyone to take part in. It's going to be an exciting year with standout highlights including the Summer Street Party, Alternative Car Show, The Florence Brass Band Concert in Stonefield Park and the Knights fighting in the Market Square for St Georges Day. The events will bring colour, music and community spirit. Come along and join in the fun!"

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Sail Away With Nantwich And Borders Sailing Club

As the days beginning to draw out and we are beginning to see the glimmers of Spring and those long-awaited sunny days – our Spring awakening begins with the emails from Nantwich and Border Sailing Club! The reminders of the events, activities, volunteering and general updates about the club. Many of you may not be familiar with the club or you may have driven past and seen the water glistening and dinghies bobbing in the breeze. We would drive past most weekends on the way to Nantwich Market or visiting family. Looking across the fields and towards the lake, the activities always piqued our curiosity and invariably our conversations led to our desire to sail, but we didn't know where to start so plans were quietly tucked away for another day. Wandering around Nantwich market on a sunny Saturday a few years back meant our fate was about to change – we spotted the Nantwich and Border Counties sailing club stall and of course we were instantly drawn to it.

Two very enthusiastic volunteers provided information, told us about the club and invited us to the forthcoming Open day. My other half (*him outdoors!*) was busy chatting about boats, dinghies and such like, I was a little hesitant as we have joined other activities which became so competitive and I just wanted to try something for fun, so I was inspired to hear about the increasing numbers of women who were members and their '*Ladies Who Launch*' evenings!

We live near Eccleshall, so decided to tootle along to the open day, It was a glorious day the sun shining and even though we were early (*partly because we needed to get the pork pies and Copenhagen slices from Nantwich before they ran out!*) the club was buzzing. People were milling about, dinghies and boats were in various stages of preparation – on the grass, ready for launching and others magnificently gliding across the water! We were greeted and nudged towards the launch area – Richard looked up and asked if we wanted to try the water. I made numerous excuses about clothes, shoes and as many things as I could list but was coerced by my other half to 'get in' and so it began our venture into sailing and the Club!



The Club, we discovered is a family friendly affair – with a real sense of community, camaraderie and to support each other – yes there is a competitive element but it's in good spirit and with humility! The rustic clubhouse is idyllically set in the Cheshire countryside – it's also very close to the Staffordshire and Shropshire borders – so we get a good mix of folk from the three counties and beyond. The clubhouse is the hub with the huge teapot always ready to refresh the sailors, volunteers and their families. As the boats are being rigged the clubhouse is the hive of activity – a great time to pick the brains of those experienced sailors, but once they are on the water the clubhouse is calm and relaxing. For those not braving the water there is an opportunity to relax, read a book, have a quiet cuppa and chat with others, whilst watching the wind and sailors working in harmony.

We decided to do the RYA training course at the club – it was a great opportunity and such a mixed group ranging from Juniors to 80yrs young and everything in between! The group was small, so the learning experience and tuition was fabulous – the mix of theory and hand on practical was perfect, we even had homework (*and you are tested!*).

If I am honest, I didn't think we would have been on the water within an hour or so of starting the course - maybe little terrifying at first but once the wind was in the sail and the dinghy was travelling across the lake it was magical! Our instructor Pete was calm, patient and hilarious! I do think I provided him a challenge - teaching a lefty to tie knots! I also learnt there's no such thing as '*my left*' – apparently left is left! We met some great people on the course – the richness of people's backgrounds, experience and lives added to the course, we shared lunch on benches at the clubhouse and watched the experienced sailors make this sailing lark look easy and effortless. It was fabulous to see the inter-generational engagement – grandparents, parents and their children all being involved – some learning to sail, others supporting and holding the dry clothes or sandwiches.

As you would expect – you can learn to sail at the club, but there is so much more including the active Junior Club (*Dodd Squad*),



opportunity to gain experience and qualifications in the power boat handling, the aforementioned Ladies Who Launch, paddle boarding, canoeing and kayaking. There's also a full racing programme with fleet handicap from March to December. Oh, and of course the fascinating radio-controlled model yacht club!

There's a myriad of boats and dinghies at the Club – it's spectacular to see the Moths fluttering nimbly on the water, the nippy Lasers and the wooden Mirrors and Miracles with the painted bows for a bit of nostalgia.

So, the Club isn't just for those who want to sail, it's a community bringing together people from all walks of life – so whilst your partner or children sail, you can relax and picnic. One Sunday whilst on galley duty, we enviously watched an older gent, launch his Mirror and gently tack across the lake, whilst his wife set out the picnic from a wicker hamper – although not as stylish we enjoyed a slice of chocolate cherry cake!

There is a pride in the club, so it makes good use of volunteers for working parties – DIY, gardening, painting, plumbing and other such skills are well utilised – if you have a skill or talent, we do need you and in return you will be part of a community and can get involved in the social side including BBQs, and other social events. There's also opportunity to get involved in the daily running of the club through the member's duty rota – you can learn new skills, for example being an assistant on the powerboat, learning the nuances of the scoring system or providing sustenance via galley duty with the essential tea and biscuits.

For us, learning to sail and being part of the club, has been opportunity to switch off from busy jobs and the hustle and bustle of everyday life – when you are on the water (or near to the water having a cuppa) it really is an opportunity to re-charge your batteries, you have to be focussed – present in the moment, so letting go and clearing your mind comes with the territory. It's also a great leveller – there's no hierarchy at the club we are all valued members, and all have different abilities and skillsets.

The members are welcoming and always keen to help or offer advice. My only regret is I didn't try sailing earlier. My Mum who is sadly no longer with us, used to pass the club on the way to our home for Sunday lunch – she would always say 'it's going to be a lovely day – the boats are on the lake.' With this in mind we took Dad to the club – being in the Navy I thought he might be tempted to hop in the Dinghy, but alas no, perhaps he doesn't trust me yet!

Being such a family orientated club means there is real opportunity to create memories and to be nostalgic – growing up we are surrounded by a plethora of stories about the sea and lake. Water clearly captures our imaginations, so whether you want to sail with the Owl and Pussy Cat in that Pea Green Boat, become the explorers from Swallows and Amazons or perhaps have the ultimate adventure with the Count of Monte Crisco – there's opportunity to bring those forgotten and wistful dreams to fruition – well we have our little own Miracle, are you ready to set your dreams afloat?

**By Wendy and Martin
(Novice Sailors and Miracle Owner!)**

If you have been inspired to learn to sail, Kayak, paddle board or even do your powerboat qualifications, then please look at our website, www.nantwichsail.com

If you want to chat in person, Call Steve Lewis, our Training Manager on 07836 379856

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**SATURDAY
7TH MARCH**

Mon	<p>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) Slimming World Clubbercise Dance Fitness - Beginners welcome Pilates Beginners</p>	<p>9.30-10.15am 10-11am 10.30-12.30pm 1-1.45pm 2-4pm 1.30-4pm 6-7.30pm 6.20-7.10pm 7.30-8.20pm</p>
Tues	<p>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) Papercraft U3A (fortnightly 2nd & 4th Tues) Weight Watchers Fitness Pilates Beginners Disco Line Dancing: Absolute Beginners & Social Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) Rock Choir</p>	<p>9.30-10.30am 10.30-12.30pm 11-12 noon 1.30-2.45pm 2-4pm 2-4pm 6-7pm 6.20-7.10pm 7.30-9pm 6.30-8.30pm 8-9.30pm</p>
Weds	<p>Guitar U3A Knit, Crochet & Chat Tai Chi & Qi Gong 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</p>	<p>10.30-12.30pm 10.30-12.30pm 10.30-11.30pm 12.15-1.15pm 1-3pm 1.30-3pm 4-6pm 6.20-7.05pm 6.30-7.30pm</p>
Thurs	<p>Happy Feet Italian (Continuation) U3A Private Booking Indoor Bowls U3A Relaxation Session U3A Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) Sound Bath: Deep Relaxation Session (Monthly) GPC Meeting (3rd Thurs monthly) Pilates Men's Pilates - Beginners Flower Club (last Thurs monthly)</p>	<p>10-11am 10-11.30am 10.15-11.45am 1-3pm 2.30-3.30pm 6.30-8.30pm 7-8pm 7-8pm 7.30-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm</p>
Fri	<p>STRONG Fitness - Beginners welcome Tai Chi & Qi Gong Singing for Fun U3A (fortnightly) Dressmaking & Needlecraft U3A (fortnightly) Taekwondo BINGO - Community & Social Group</p>	<p>9.30-10.15am 11-12 noon 1.30-3pm 2-4pm 7-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm</p>
Sat	<p>Slimming World Overeaters Anonymous Fitness Pilates Beginners Child of Mine Playgroup (last Sat monthly) Line Dancing Tutorials & Socials</p>	<p>8.30-10am 9.15-10.15am 10.30-11.20am 2-4pm Various</p>
Sun	<p>Table Top Sale/Car Boot (fortnightly Sept-April) St Johns Church - Weekly Service St Johns Church - Monthly Service (last Sun)</p>	<p>8.30-11.30am 10.30-11.30am 6.30-7.30pm</p>



**Walton Community Centre
looks forward to meeting you
this SPRING!**

There's plenty to get involved in & lots of friendly groups to join if you fancy taking up something new or meeting people from in & around Stone.

The centre is also always looking for new volunteers to help out & maybe even get involved on their committee.

*For upcoming events see their
Facebook page:
[www.facebook.com/
WaltonCommunityCentreStone](http://www.facebook.com/WaltonCommunityCentreStone)*

*Walton Community Centre prides itself
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Fun and Games with Stone and District u3a

Adults need fun, just as much as children do!

Having fun is essential for physical, mental and emotional wellbeing as it reduces stress, boosts happiness and fosters social connection. Incorporating fun into your daily life is not just about enjoyment, it is a vital component of maintaining good health.

It has been proven that playing games and having fun can improve your attention span, memory and problem-solving skills, as it increases your brain efficiency. Emotionally it can provide stress relief, improve your mood and gives you a feeling of accomplishment. It also helps you to make personal connections, friendships and promotes teamwork and communication. More active games also promote better sleep. And on the subject of sleep, having fun and playing games help you to relax and improves your mood.

Right, so having discovered that fun and games are really good for you, how can you incorporate it into your daily life? That's where Stone and District u3a comes in. We have a wide range of fun activities running every weekday that can help you add enjoyment into your life and help you to make more friends. As well as the activities listed in the table below, we also have some summer only groups for Croquet, Crown Green Bowling and Pétanque.

Monday	Table Tennis, Gentle Exercise
Tuesday	Kurling
Wednesday	Badminton, Canasta. Chess, Walking*
Thursday	Indoor Short Bowling, Scrabble. Table Tennis, Folk Dancing, Hawaiian Canoeing
Friday	Bridge, Bridge for Beginners, Singing for Fun, Table Tennis

There is also a Strollers group that meets weekly for those who are less mobile and don't want to stride out on a long walk or hike. This group meets on various days and advertises the dates within the group

If you are interested in any of our groups, or would like to volunteer to run a group yourself, please take a look at www.stone.u3asite.uk

Stone (Staffs) and District - Keep active (in mind and body), enjoy socialising, for those who are retired or not in full time employment

Membership costs just £50 per year and this allows you to attend as many groups as you like. That equates to less than £1 per week.**

**Some groups may request a contribution towards refreshments.



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Stone Lions Celebrate 47 Years Of Service



The evening's official guests who are l-r: Past Council Chair Lion Tony Gadsby and Mrs Diane Gadsby, Stone Town Mayor Councillor Jason Metters and Mayoress Ms Sarah Goodall, Vice District Governor Lion John and Lion Samantha Fitchett, Lion Chris Handley and Lion President Dave Handley



Lion President Dave and Lion Glyn Ravenscroft following Glyn's receipt of a Melvin Jones Fellowship

In 1978, a group of young men, full of enthusiasm and community spirit, wanted to make a difference in their local community and Stone Lions Club was born. Fast forward 47 years and the club has moved forward – rumour has it that they even let women join now – but this ethos of community support, fellowship and having fun together still remains.

On February 14th members were joined at the Stone House Hotel by partners, family, friends from other Lions Clubs and a handful of official guests to celebrate another successful year where, even though projects may have changed over the years due to a changing environment, members are still providing support where it is most needed.

It was an excellent evening and the 92 guests all enjoyed a delicious meal with excellent service from hotel staff, great company and mercifully short speeches. As well as the birthday celebrations, a number of Stone Lions received recognition for their years of service:

- Lions Paul and Shirley Martin – 10 years
- Lions Glenys Sanders, Joan Oldbury, Dave and Chris Handley – 20 years
- Lion Mike Potter – 30 years
- Lion Graham Garner – 35 years
- Lion Sam Williams – 45 years

An amazing combined total of 210 years' service to the local community.



A photo of those members who were presented with service awards. Left to right, subjects are Lions Sam Williams, Graham Garner, Dave Handley, Glenys Sanders, Paul Martin, Chris Handley and District Governor John Fitchett.

For one member, Lion Glyn Ravenscroft, the evening presented a most unexpected surprise when he was honoured with a Melvin Jones Fellowship, the highest award a Lions Club can bestow upon an individual member in recognition of exceptional service achieved over the years. In addition to filling the roles of Lion President and Treasurer in the past and Minutes Secretary currently, in 2015 Glyn, together with Lion Mike Ward, was instrumental in organising the first of what was to

become Stone Lions Club Annual PSA Testing event, to try raise awareness of Prostate health amongst men, a role he still fulfils with great commitment and enthusiasm.

Lion President Dave was delighted at the success of the evening. "It is always a pleasure to spend an evening with good friends and supporters of the Club," he comments. "On behalf of all members of Stone Lions Club I would like to say a big Thank You to all who made the evening a success, especially the Team at the Stone House Hotel who provided us with an excellent meal and impeccable service."

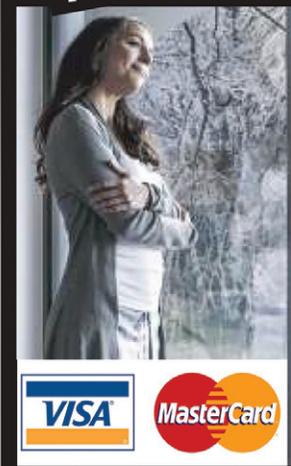
If you would like to find out more about what it takes to be a Lion, please call 0345 833 8478 for an informal chat. Who knows, maybe YOU could be there to celebrate Stone Lions 48th birthday next year!

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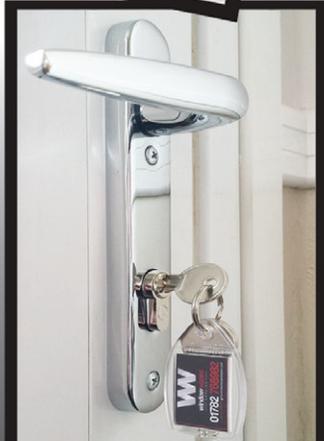
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Sugnall Walled Garden: Paradise Reclaimed?

The walled garden has a special place in the history of gardens, dating back to the 'paradise gardens' of ancient Persia. Over the centuries they have been used not only for growing food and ornamental plants, but also as places of enjoyment and contemplation. A notable local example is Sugnall Walled Garden near Eccleshall. Care of the site falls mainly to a small group of volunteers who take satisfaction in maintaining this little piece of 'paradise'.

Enclosure of the 2-acre (0.81 ha) site was initiated in 1737 by the then owner, Viscount Glenorchy. Some 200,000 bricks were made on site to construct the four perimeter walls, which were completed in 1739. Since then the estate has changed hands several times and the garden's fortunes have ebbed and flowed. After the Second World War the site was leased by the estate and used variously as a market garden, tree nursery, learning centre, and dumping ground. The Sugnall estate took the garden back in hand in 2006 with the aim of restoring some of its former glory.

Many of the garden's historical features survive, including an azalea house (*since converted to a tea room, now sadly closed*), a peach house, vinery, cucumber house, and Edwardian glasshouse, once considered a pre-eminent example of its kind. The site's history has been detailed by the present owner, Dr David Jacques OBE, a writer and scholar with a special interest in formal gardens and landscape design.

The current layout echoes the original scheme to a large extent. Paths divide the space into four 'quarters', with perimeter paths running alongside the wall fruit borders. Here, trained to grow in the shelter of the high brick walls, are varieties of plum, cherry and peach, as well as beds of strawberries, herbs, asparagus, and an abundance of early cropping rhubarb.

A notable feature is the array of around 200 apple and pear trees representing nearly 100 different varieties, including some old and rare ones. All are pruned to form dwarf pyramids and laid out in order of ripening along the main paths. They form a floral banquet in blossom season, attracting a multitude of bees and other pollinators, and are a visual treat for volunteers and visitors alike. Later in the season the rows of lavender lining the paths provide a further fragrant purple spectacle.

As volunteers we try to maintain the garden's essential structure and layout, while cultivating a range of vegetables, flowers, strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants and other soft fruit. We also look after the two resident runner ducks.

People can choose which tasks they feel comfortable doing, and can work at their own pace. Or just take time for reflection - whether

a sight, sound or smell: "It's a special place, whatever the time of year. There's always something to reward the senses and make it worth coming" said volunteer Andy. Physical and mental well-being are paramount, and usually benefit from a spell weeding, pruning, or planting.

New volunteers are always welcome. We ask only that you bring your enthusiasm and a packed lunch. Tea and coffee are provided. So if you would like to join our small team, or are just interested in finding out more about Sugnall Walled Garden, please

contact Rob Hine roberthine@btinternet.com; or phone 075267 46388.

Or you can drop by when the garden is open, generally Tuesdays, Thursdays or Sundays, weather permitting.



The Gooseberries getting a winter pruning from Andy



Whatever the season, there's always plenty to do at Sugnall Walled Garden



"I love volunteering here, especially looking after the strawberry beds. Great to see them produce such lovely fruit" Jan, volunteer

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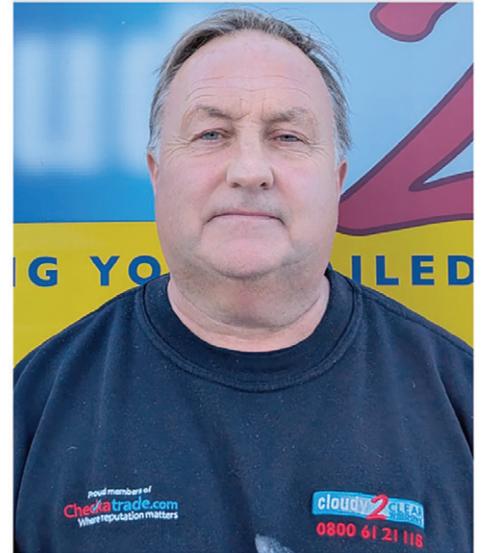
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Why Stone Should Buzz About Becoming a Bee Friendly Town

We've had a lovely wave of new people joining Stone in Bloom, and we're excited to welcome everyone. New members will soon get an invite to sign up as volunteers and join our work parties. We know it might feel a bit formal, but we do need everyone to register properly, it's part of our insurance requirements, and it means we can make sure everyone has the right safety bits like Hi-Viz vests when we're out and about and to work safely.

Work Party dates will soon be circulated and behind the scenes we have been asked if we would be interested in becoming a **Bee Friendly Town**.

We're putting together a community talk about Stone with an expert coming to talk to us about becoming a Bee Friendly Town, we were hoping to have the date ready for this issue, but things are taking a little longer than planned, so thank you for your patience. As soon as everything's confirmed, we'll share the details and we think it'll be worth the wait. Thanks for sticking with us and for all the support.

If you've seen Stone in Bloom's wildflower patches on a sunny day, you'll know exactly why we're so passionate about bees and the prospect of becoming a Bee Friendly town. The humming and the colour are a reminder that our town plays host to some very small residents.



Bees are the quiet workforce behind so much of the food we eat and the flowers we love. Without them, our ecosystems and our food would look very different. That's why becoming a Bee-Friendly Town isn't just a nice idea; it's a practical, positive step we can all take together.

Stone in Bloom is already doing our bit by planting and sowing wildflowers across the town creating pollinator friendly plants and spaces in our parks and verges.

Stone in Bloom is powered entirely by volunteers, gardeners, litter pickers, planters, weeders, and wildflower enthusiasts who simply want to make our town a little brighter. Becoming a Bee-Friendly Town is a natural extension of what we already do, and we'd love the whole community to join in.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener or someone who just likes the idea of helping the planet from your doorstep, there's a place for you in this buzzing movement!

**From Jill Hood
Stone In Bloom**



Inner Wheel St. Patricks Day Cèilidh

The Inner Wheel Club of Stone are once again celebrating St. Patricks Day with a Cèilidh at Oulton Village Hall.

A cèilidh or céilí is a traditional Scottish and Irish social gathering, with folk music, singing, traditional dancing, and storytelling.

Everyone is welcome to join them on **Saturday March 14th at 7.30pm**.

The event has been popular over a number of years, with music and dancing provided by **'The Blarney Stone'** a local

folk group.

It is a family event as seen in the photo. You are asked to bring along your own Drinks and nibbles.

There will be a raffle and tickets are £10. All the proceeds go to Local charities.

For tickets for this event or if you are interested in finding out about our Inner Wheel Club please phone 01785 812438 or you can email iwsecretarystone@outlook.com



Past President James Gillen (left) handing over the reins to new president Martin Robinson

New President At Stone And District Probus Club

At the recent Club AGM, Martin Robinson was inducted as President for 2026/27 by Past President James Gillen.

Stone Probus is non-sectarian, non-political and welcomes Men and Women Members. We are a thriving, diverse and friendly club, with the primary aim of providing regular social events and gatherings. Our Membership consists of retired or semi-retired Business and Professional people who appreciate and enjoy stimulating company and conversation.

We meet for lunch on the **first Monday of each month** (should this fall on a bank holiday we meet on the next available Monday), at The Upper House in Barlaston.

Throughout the year we also have a

range of interesting Speakers, events and trips. Companions, Spouses and Partners are invited to join in trips and attend two special luncheons each year with invited Speakers or Entertainers.

The speaker at the March luncheon meeting at the Upper house will be Steve Williams on the topic of *'The History of Old English Sayings and Customs'*.

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

Ed: Congratulations Martin and well deserved, you've been a great supporter of Stone Probus for many years.



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New Children's Activity Club Coming To Stone

Playtivity is a new children's STEAM club launching in Stone, created by local primary school teacher and mum, Lianne. After many years in the classroom, she wanted to create a space where children could explore STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art And Maths) through creative play and real world challenges- without pressure and with minimal screen time. Playtivity STEAM Club will initially run on Saturday mornings and school holidays.

Sessions are currently designed for children age 5 to 11 and run with small group ratios. Activities vary from session to session and could include things like building structures, creating a theme park, becoming an inventor, arty crafts or screen free coding with robots. These are all carefully planned to encourage curiosity, resilience and confidence. Playtivity focuses on learning through doing, giving children the freedom to explore ideas and make mistakes in a safe and welcoming environment.

As both a teacher and a parent, Lianne has noticed that children learn and develop best when play meets creativity - and so Playtivity was born!

"Years of experience in the classroom have shown me that when learning feels fun for children, curiosity follows.

Excitement helps children challenge their thinking, and feel proud of what they create. Playtivity STEAM Club It's about building resilience, communication skills and confidence that will support them throughout their lives. I want to give inquisitive children in our community a space where their ideas matter," she says.

Playtivity STEAM Club will be Launching in April at the Frank Jordan Centre, Stone, With details shared via social media and the Playtivity website. Parents can follow for updates, Session dates and booking information.

Visit www.playtivity.co.uk

Instagram: @playtivityuk Facebook: Playtivity



Stone Scribblers Publish New Book *Pieces of Stone*

Stone Scribblers is a community-based writing group, which was established in 2018. It meets at the Borehole Pub and Brewery twice a month to: share writing ideas, stimulate creativity and support members in their individual writing projects.

Scribblers have just published their first anthology of work - *Pieces of Stone*, which is illustrated with original artwork, contributed by two members of the group.

They have donated a copy of the anthology to Stone Library and further copies are available from Amazon - in

print (£7.50) and downloadable format (£2.00) and from the Londis, at Walton (£6.99).

If you fancy dipping into a surprising and eclectic selection of poetry and prose covering contemporary and traditional themes of: nature and industrialisation, loss and redemption, failed New Year's resolutions, blind-dates and Stone Age misunderstandings, then you are in for a treat.

The first edition is dedicated to Ian Evans who was an active member of the group, an exceptional writer and a friend.

www.facebook.com/stonescribblers/

Aston By Stone Village Hall AGM *New Volunteers Warmly Invited*

The Trustees of Aston by Stone Village Hall are pleased to announce that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place at 3pm on Sunday 26th April 2025 at the Hall, and they warmly invite residents to attend to see their fantastic facilities, find out more about what they do, and consider getting involved.

The Village Hall is at the heart of our community, hosting a wide range of activities, celebrations and local events throughout the year. To ensure it continues to thrive, the Trustees are encouraging new volunteers to come forward - whether as committee members or in a more flexible, occasional role.



- Supporting small improvement projects

- Offering any other skills or practical help

There is no minimum commitment required. Whether you can spare a few hours occasionally or would like to take a more active role, any contribution of time or expertise would be greatly appreciated.

The current Trustees are a friendly and welcoming group who are keen to involve new faces and fresh ideas. Volunteering is a great way to meet people, support the local community, and help maintain an important village asset for future generations.

Anyone who is interested in helping is encouraged to get in touch via email to astonbystonevillagehall@gmail.com or by telephoning the Charity Secretary (Jennifer) on 07710 501812.

Together, we can ensure our Village Hall remains a vibrant and well-loved part of the community.



There are many ways to help, including:

- Joining the management committee
- Opening and closing the Hall for occasional weekend hirers
- Assisting with gardening or general maintenance

Why now could be the right time to move



You may have seen the headlines “Housing market stalling,” “Buyers holding back,” “Developers hit pause.” It’s true, things have slowed. With house price growth slowing, mortgage costs higher, planning delays and buyer confidence dipping, many developers are rethinking their plans. But while the market hesitates, that doesn’t mean you have to. In fact, this may be one of the best times to consider a move.

The UK’s population is ageing. By 2040, the number of over-75s is projected to rise by 38%, and yet retirement living is still underdelivering, with only around 7,300 new homes completed each year¹.

Waiting doesn’t always help

In a cooler market, it’s tempting to wait, but in reality, there’s no perfect time. We know from experience that when homeowners do finally make the move, they often say the same things.

Homeowner Margaret told us: “The house sale was stressful, but Adlington kept supporting me. They were wonderful, regularly phoning to say, ‘Don’t worry, we’ll sort it’. After all the initial stress, it was such a positive experience.”

Whether it’s for lifestyle, health, finances or simply peace of mind, many of our homeowners describe the move as a positive turning point and the sooner it happens, the longer the benefits can be enjoyed, such as freedom from maintenance, 24/7 support, if and when you need it, built-in community and social connection, plus peace of mind for you and your family.

Homeowner Avril, whose son lives overseas, celebrates her new life: “I’ve made new friends, and I can tell they’re going to be like a second family.”

Whilst homeowner Dr. Trevor, remarked: “I’m more socially active here than I have been for a long time.”

That’s why the move can thankfully feel more like a gift than a compromise. So, while the headlines may shout slowdown, perhaps it’s time to see things differently: a moment to act boldly, live well, and shape your future with purpose.

After all, retirement living isn’t about stepping away, it’s about stepping forward into the next chapter, on your own terms.

Plus, we can make your move even more rewarding if you choose to part exchange your current home[^]



Now’s the time to get in touch to find out more about the apartments available to buy.



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"Fly Fishing" by Terry Cambridge

Welcome To Staffordshire Marquetry Group

Beginners and all abilities are welcome at The Staffordshire Marquetry Group. Marquetry is a heritage craft where thin pieces of wood veneers are used to create pictures and patterns. The effect is stunning. (see some examples above and below) Working with wood, a natural material, is a rewarding, mindful experience.

Very little equipment is needed, just a cutting mat, craft knife and PVA glue. The group has a good stock of veneers, equipment and resources that are free for members to use, as well as a reasonably priced supply shop. Kits are also available and are a great project for beginners.



"Time for a Change" by Terry Cambridge

We meet on: **The first and third Wednesday of the month Between 2pm and 4pm** At Eccleshall Methodist Church, Stone Road, Eccleshall, ST21 6DL The first session is free. Group membership is £10 per year, and then only £2 for each meeting attended, to include tea or coffee and biscuits.

Complete beginners are especially welcomed on the first Wednesday of each month, but we are a friendly bunch, and experienced marquetarians are on hand to guide beginners and give advice at every meeting.

The group is also considering holding some beginners' classes in the evening or at a weekend. Dates and details are to be confirmed.

To register an interest in our meetings and classes, or if you have any questions about marquetry, please contact Quentin Smith on 01785 850614 or qjsmarquetry@gmail.com

Repairs Completed On Main Eccleshall Road

Highway crews carried out repairs on the A519 Newcastle Road between Mill Meece and Cotes Heath last month. The five-day repair programme started on Monday 16 February.

Peter Mason, Cabinet Member for Strategic Highways at Staffordshire County Council, said: "After receiving many reports of defects in the area, our highway crews carried out a number of pothole repairs on Newcastle Road to get the road in a safe condition for drivers.

These took place during the February half-term holiday to help to reduce disruption.

This stretch of road is also included on our structural maintenance programme for a £3m+ scheme due to be completed in 2027/28.

As always, we thank people for their patience and co-operation whilst repairs took place."

STONE CROWN BOWLING CLUB OPEN DAY Sunday 19th April 2026 11.00 am — 4.00 pm Uttoxeter Road, Stone, Staffs. ST15 8RA

**Do you want to try a new sport?
Do you want to meet new people?
Do you want to enhance your social life?**

If your answer is yes to any of these questions read on....

Stone Crown Bowling Club offers a well organised environment for Club Competition Bowling, Club Social Bowling and Club Social Events.

We have a large purpose built Clubhouse with Changing Room, Toilet Facilities, Kitchen, Club Room and spacious Car Park. Important of course is the 'Green' itself, which is in excellent condition, and looked after year round by a professional company, supported by our own knowledgeable and enthusiastic team of volunteers.

The Bowling Season lasts from April to October, but during the closed season we use our own indoor 'Short Mat' rinks to play inside twice a week, plus holding; Coffee Mornings, Games Nights, Dining Functions and Skittles.

We are not a 'League' Club which means that the majority of our bowling is on our own Green, but we do have a tradition of playing 'friendly' return matches against a few other local Clubs.

The Club also supports local Groups by inviting them to use our facilities, and in addition our President chooses a local charity each year that we raise funds for by means of social events throughout the season (almost always involving eating and drinking!)

New Club Members, complete beginners or experienced, are always welcome, and indeed are made welcome. The Club will provide all the equipment you require, other than your shoes, which must be flat sole.



We cordially invite you to **come to our 'Open Day'** to meet our Committee Members, have a quick tour of the Clubhouse, try your hand at Crown Green Bowling, then have a cup of tea or coffee, a few biscuits, and a chat.

Please wear flat soled shoes and we would recommend 'warm clothing'.

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO BOTH THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

Club Secretary; Sylvia Mahoney 07967 157073 www.stonecrownbc.org
stonecrownbowlsclub@gmail.com

"Call To Arms" The Clifford Arms, That Is, In Great Haywood

On **June the 7th** the annual **Clifford Arms Classic show** will be taking place in between 11am and 3pm at The Clifford Arms in Great Haywood.

This year, 2026, will be our 9th show and it grows year on year. As in previous years admittance is by a donation to the Air Ambulance and /or Blood Bikes.

If your classic club would like to exhibit, or as an individual you would like to show off your pride and joy please, contact me at greataywoodbarry@gmail.com

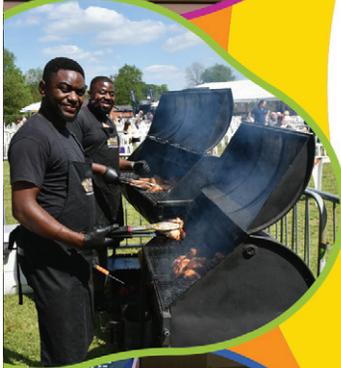


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2005-2026



8, 9 & 10 MAY 2026

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SAT 9 MAY

Nelly Ghaffar

GBBO FAVOURITE

SUN 10 MAY

Juliet Sear

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SAT 9 MAY

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CELEBRATING

21

YEARS

2005-2026

8, 9 & 10 MAY 2026

WESTBRIDGE PARK



Family Fun

Head to the Panic Circus big top for **FREE circus skills workshops**, sign up for **FREE Kids' Cookery Classes** on Sat & Sun, learn about food production in the **Farm to Fork** area, take a spin on PAYG fairground rides and head to the main stage for **Kids' Discos** and family fun acts!

NEW

VIP Upgrade

NEW for 2026 - upgrade to VIP tickets and enjoy exclusive access to our **VIP marquee** with lots of seating, private paid bar, luxury toilets, great views of the live music stage and meet and greets with celebs - **LIMITED tickets available online only - BOOK NOW!**

Eat, drink and be merry!

With Street Food vendors selling flavours from around the world and a great selection of bars offering everything from real ale to artisan cider and classy cocktails, you'll be spoilt for choice!



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MUSIC STAGE**

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DISCO**

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**FARM
TO FORK**

**TALKS &
TASTINGS**

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Pick a pop-up!

From a chillout cocktail bar to a relaxed coffee lounge, there are a number of pop-up spaces around site where you can take a break from the festival buzz – more details on our website very soon!

Shop till you drop

Discover delicious artisan treats, sweets, spirits (and cheese!) in the **Gourmet Marquee**, plus delectable homewares you won't find on the High Street in the Home & Garden zone.

NEW

Dance to your own tune!

Fancy a boogie? Head along to the **NEW Silent Disco Tent**, pick up a pair of headphones and dance away – it's all included in your entry.

**THE GREAT
STONE
BAKE OFF**

Put your best bake forward...

And enter it into the **Great Stone Bake Off** – simply bring along your cake or bake and present it at the **Talks & Tastings Tent** to enter. Daily heats judged in the **Culinary Showcase** (Fri 6pm / Sat & Sun 5pm).

MORE FUN FOR LESS – BUY NOW & SAVE!

3-day tickets just £25pp online only...

Full programme & tickets at www.stonefooddrink.org.uk

Please note map for illustrative purposes only – may be subject to change before the big weekend



SCAN ME!



STONE FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL

FRI 8 MAY

SONIC BOOM

6.45pm - 8.00pm

CITIZEN STONE

5.00pm - 6.00pm

Kids' Disco with DJ Walter

3.45pm - 4.30pm

SUN 10 MAY

THE LACK OF COMMITMENTS

4.15pm - 5.30pm

DISCO DIVAS

2.30pm - 3.30pm

Family fun with Kenyon Walker

12.45pm - 1.45pm

Rooftop Studios

11.30am - 12.15pm

GREAT

LIVE MUSIC

SAT 9 MAY

HOUSE JAMMERZ

6.45pm - 8.00pm

THE UNLAWFUL MEN

5.00pm - 6.00pm

SHANE NOLAN - GET DANCING!

3.15pm - 4.15pm

Serenity Singers Choir

1.30pm - 2.30pm

Rooftop Studios

11.30am - 1.00pm

**PLUS 'Plug in & play' acoustic
acts throughout the weekend
on the NEW acoustic stage**

BOOK ONLINE AND SAVE!

Use code GAZETTE to save 10% on online tickets*

*Valid for online purchases up till 31st March 2026

3-Day tickets: Adult £25 / Child £8 (online only)

Full programme & tickets at www.stonefooddrink.org.uk



SCAN ME!

Fri 8: Adult £9 online (£10 on gate) / Sat 9 or Sun 10: Adult £12 online (£14 on gate) / Child £5 online (£6 on gate)

(Accompanied under-16s go FREE on Friday - Under-3s free all weekend)

**VIP Tickets: 3 Day: Adult £35, Child £15 / Fri: Adult £15, Child Free / Sat or Sun: Adult £20, Child £9 **Online advance purchase only

Opening times: Fri 8 May :12 noon - 8.30pm / Sat 9 May: 10am - 8.30pm / Sun 9 May: 10.00am - 6.00pm



1st Walton Rainbows Going For Gold

On their last night at Rainbows before flying up to become Brownies, Lauren and Eve achieved the highest award in Rainbows – their Gold Award.

The Girlguiding programme is based around six themes: Skills For My Future, Have Adventures, Know Myself, Take Action, Be Well and Express Myself.

To achieve the Gold Award the girls must complete all six theme awards – to achieve one award the girls must complete an interest badge, skills builders and take part in a number of different activities based around the theme.

Unit leader of 1st Walton Rainbows Jane West said "The leaders are super proud of all of the Rainbows and their achievements, to have Lauren and Eve achieve their Gold Award is absolutely brilliant.

The girls will continue their Guiding journey of fun and adventures now in Brownies."



Stone Scooter Club Go Fundraising

Stone Scooter Club have committed themselves throughout 2026 to support and fundraise to help the fabulous work that Stone Alzheimer's Club does in the nearby area.

So for their first event of 2026 they chose the "Stone Town Mayors Annual Fund Raising Charity Quiz" which was held at the Frank Jordon Centre on Thursday 12th February.

This event attracted over 200 people through the doors to take part in a pleasurable and entertaining fund raising quiz.

The Town Mayors chosen charities for this event was the, Stone Alzheimer's Club, Stone First responders and Stone Stoke Club.



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Hot Stones Massage

More Than...

Stone Alzheimer's Club has evolved over seventeen years to become much more than a meeting place for those with Alzheimer's and their carers. The Club does more than provide support and it's a source of knowledge and caring that has helped to change lives not only in Stone but, Stafford and the surrounding villages. Carers benefit from meeting up with others, sharing problems and solutions as well as being able to access professional support such as staff from the Alzheimer's Society.

During 2024 and 2025, the Club ran its Better Lives project and this gave members access to professional skills such as legal advice, tech support, physiotherapy and more during Club meetings. These are services that they would normally struggle to get to being 24/7 carers. The Better Lives project was a great success, so much so, that it has continued in a revised form into 2026 with physiotherapy, hairdressing, surgery and Alzheimer's Society visits.



The Club's members found physiotherapy as the most popular service. It is also recognised as being most beneficial for those with Alzheimer's as well as their carers as it is both relaxing and aids mobility. The Club was fortunate to find a local physiotherapist, Phoebe who now

provides monthly sessions at the Club and she is in great demand.

Phoebe has adapted and extended what she does to cater for the needs of members. In addition, Kate and Georgia from Mansion House Surgery are regular visitors and they provide medical checks and advice. Extending the Club's support for members and carers is making a real difference.

The Club also does more by having regular special events throughout the year such as the recent Valentine's Day celebration. With popular entertainer Damien in residence the morning started off with tea, coffee and biscuits and a lot of chat before the free raffle draw along with many birthday celebrations. Valentine's themed music soon got the members on the floor dancing and a great time was had by all. Members went home with a special Valentine's goody bag with a variety of sweets and chocolates.

Lead Volunteer, Sandie McQueen said: *"Our special events are really popular with members and we look forward to hosting them. The core philosophy of the club is to provide a safe, supportive and secure place for members and their carers to meet. It's wanting to always do more for our members and we do with tailored support, special events and fun meetings...it's what makes the Club so special."* She went on to say: *"Over the last year this approach has worked really well and the membership has grown considerably to the extent that we now have to use three rooms at the Christ Church Centre for our meetings."*

Recent grants from Stone Town Council, Councillor Jill Hood and Warburtons will be used to support a new music initiative so during 2026, the club will be doing even more for members...watch this space.

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





News From Stone Flower Club

Stone Flower Club held its AGM in January where it was decided with all the price increases faced by everyone, we would keep our fees the same for the second-year running.

Membership is £45 for the year and visitors fee £8 per session. Following the meeting Committee member Graham treated the members and visitors present to a short demonstration called pure and simple.

He showed the ways flowers could be arranged by keeping a design simple. This was well received by those present.

The meetings **start up from February meeting on the last Thursday of the month, at Walton Community Centre, Whitemill Lane, Walton, Stone. ST15 0EQ at 7.30pm.**

Coming up **26th March** we have the welcome return of Alison Suffolk with a theme of *"Oh do nautical"*



April 30th we welcome back Jane Pugh, Jane has been several times to the club and is a real joy and often treats us to songs while she arranges her flowers. Jane's theme is *"Walk on the Wild side"*



The club is also looking out for people to also join us on the committee to help run the club. We are a very warm and friendly club so come along and take a look, sit back and enjoy watching the demonstrations of flower arranging.



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Sandon Bluebell Walk

This popular Walk takes place this year on **Sunday 3rd May**. As previously it is to be held at Sandon Church. We will meet at the church car park at 1.50pm, the walk then starts at 2pm and is approx. 2 miles.

The cost for adults is £5 for adults, free for accompanied children, tea and cake included.

The collection will go to 'The time for Tea' being part of the 1000 year celebration year for All Saints Church, which is supported by The National Heritage fund. Dogs are welcomed but must be on a lead.

There is no need to book, just turn up on the day wearing sensible footwear, at 1.50pm at All Saints Church, Church Lane, Sandon ST18 0DB.

Christmas Raffle Success For Stone Lions Club

Members of Stone Lions Club are delighted in the success of their Christmas Hamper Raffle, which raised over £2000 for local causes.

However, as Lion President Dave Handley commented, "This wonderful total would not have been possible without the support of all the venues who accepted a hamper and sold tickets on behalf of the Club.

We are always very grateful that people appreciate the work done by Stone Lions and are willing to support us in all that we do. We could not help as many people as we do, were it not for their support."

Stone Lions would like to thank:

- The Brushmaker's Arms • The Butcher's Block
- The Borehole • Crown Wharf • The Royal Exchange
- The George and Dragon • The Star at Copmere
- The Old Smithy • The Ecclian • The Romping Cat
- Oak Tree Farm Rural Project • Luna Rose • Shabby Chic
- The Greyhound at Burston • The Swan
- Hilderstone Garage • Morrisons Supermarket

And all Lions, and friends of Lions, who helped with the selling

With a special mention to Arcadia Café, where Fiona, her Staff and Customers raised an amazing £300 by raffling 3 hampers!

General Knowledge

Fun Quiz

Oulton Village Hall

Saturday 18th April

7.00pm for 7.30pm prompt start

Teams of four to six people

Licensed Bar for all your Drinks & Nibbles
(Card Payments now accepted at the Bar)

Tickets £6 per person

From Chris Whalley 01785 813377

www.oultovillagehall.co.uk



Stone Choral's recent Brahms Workshop

Stone Choral Society Sings Brahms German Requiem For Spring 2026

A preparatory workshop was held on January 31st at St.Dominic's Priory Hall, Stone, which was a great introduction to this wonderful work of Brahms German Requiem.

The version being performed at the concert on **April 25th** at Holy Trinity Church, Eccleshall is the composer's own arrangement for a Piano with four hands.

Our resident pianist Jennifer Hames will be playing alongside Mark Goodhew a very talented musician who has accompanied the choir on numerous occasions.

The soloists are baritone Peter Taylor who performed in 'Sounds of the Sea' at Eccleshall in summer 2025, and the soprano soloist is Harriet Hunter all under the direction of our Musical Director Harriet Johnson.

The choir welcome guest singers to join us for this work. Rehearsals are at Manor Hill First school Walton Stone ST15 QHY. **7.30pm to 9.30pm on Thursday evenings.**

For further information contact email info@stonechoral.org.uk
www.stonechoral.org.uk
www.facebook.com/stonechoral

www.stonechoral.org.uk

STONE CHORAL

BRAHMS

EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM

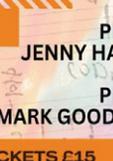
25.04.2026



SOPRANO
HARRIET HUNTER



BARITONE
PETER TAYLOR



PIANO
JENNY HAMES



PIANO
MARK GOODHEW

TICKETS £15

SCAN TO BOOK OR VISIT THE WEBSITE BELOW



7.30PM
Holy Trinity C of E Church
Church Street, Eccleshall
ST21 6BY

www.trybooking.com/uk/FZYQ



Oulton Fashion Show Success

The Fashion show and Sale at the Village Hall in January was well attended and a good amount of money was raised towards the ongoing improvements at our busy Hall.

The next social event is the Annual 'Fun

General Knowledge Quiz' on 18th April at 7.30pm.

Teams to a maximum of six, tickets £6.00 per person, Bar and Nibbles available. Contact Chris Whalley 01785 813377



Rooftop Studios Students performing in a recent show

Rooftop Studios' Stage Academy Set to Rock the Stage in High-Energy Musical

Young performers from Rooftop Studios' Stage Academy are preparing to raise the roof at The Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone, with their latest production – the high-energy hit musical *We Will Rock You*.

Running from Tuesday 17th to Saturday 21st March 2026, the show features a talented cast of local students aged 7-18, who train each week in Rooftop's Saturday Stage Academy – a specialist class combining acting, singing and dance.

Featuring iconic music from Queen, including *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *Don't Stop Me Now*, *Radio Ga Ga* and *We Are the Champions*, this exciting youth production promises to be a feel-good night out for the whole family.

Studio Director Laura Keeling says:

"The students have worked so hard in the lead-up to this production and we can't wait to see all that effort pay off on stage. It's going to be a fantastic show – high-energy, packed with brilliant songs and a great story. A perfect family outing and a real celebration of young local talent."

Tickets are available now at <https://www.crownwharftheatre.org.uk/we-will-rock-you-young-at-part-rooftop-studios/> – early booking is advised, with the Saturday night performance already sold out!

For more information about Rooftop Studios' Stage Academy and performing arts classes, visit www.rooftopstudios.co.uk or email info@rooftopstudios.co.uk

Strikes, Smiles And A Brilliant Fundraising Night

What a fantastic evening of fun, friendship and fundraising!

Ava-May (1st Stone ranger) hosted a bowling fundraiser at Stafford Ten Pin Bowling in December, and it turned into a night to remember for everyone involved.

The group took over most of the venue's 20 bowling lanes, filling the space with laughter, cheers and a little healthy competition. Leaders and Girl Guides as well as 1st Stone Scout group joined and enjoyed a relaxed evening together, complete with pizza and a well-deserved treat made by Ava-May, making it as much a celebration as a fundraiser.

Thanks to the incredible support from the guiding community of Stone Division, the event raised an amazing £503, bringing Ava-May one step closer to her international trip to India.

Every frame bowled helped contribute towards this exciting opportunity, and the generosity shown on the night was truly heart-warming.

A huge thank you goes to everyone who attended, supported, donated and helped make the night such a success – and to Stafford Ten Pin Bowling for hosting such a memorable event. With community support like this, amazing things really do happen. Ava-May would also like to thank the Stone Lions for their generous donation and all that have helped her at multiple event and many markets stalls and cafe take over at Barlaston markets.

Ava-May is only £400 away from her target and getting very excited, especially after find out while on her trip they will be visiting a Elephant rescue centre. Anybody who would like to donate can at her just giving page https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/stephaniejane-brown?utm_term=ABNY5aM3b&utm_medium=FA&utm_source=CL



Ava-May (on the left) with Stephanie Jane Hemsted-Williams

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19TH APRIL
 National Theatre Live
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 as Queen Elizabeth I
THE AUDIENCE
 by Peter Morgan
 directed by Stephen Daldry

17TH MAY
 National Theatre Live
ALL MY SONS
 by Arthur Miller
 directed by Tom Hooper

31ST MAY
 National Theatre Live
THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD
 by John Milington Synge
 directed by Richard Eyre

National Theatre Live
At
THE CROWN WHARF THEATRE

Spring on Stage: Three Months of Theatre, Music, Comedy and Cinema At Crown Wharf Theatre

As Stone steps into spring, Crown Wharf Theatre unveils one of its richest seasons yet - a three-month celebration of musicals, comedy, classic cinema, National Theatre Live screenings and homegrown talent.

March: Musicals, Movies and Community Magic

March opens with the high-energy musical *Bonnie & Clyde* (4-7 March), bringing the infamous duo to life with grit, glamour and a soaring score.

Classic cinema follows with screenings of *Aladdin* and *The Matrix* on 8 March, and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* on 11 March, offering a nostalgic start to the season.

The spotlight then shifts to young performers as *We Will Rock You: Young@Part* (17-21 March) fills the theatre with the electricity of Queen's greatest hits.

Rounding out the month, Stone's own community powerhouse *Stone Revellers* take the stage with *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (25-28 March) - a beloved tale brought to life with local talent and spectacular family appeal.

April: Comedy, Classics and a One-Night Musical Riot

April opens with a family favourite double bill on Sunday 5 April: *Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory* (2.30pm) *Notting Hill* (7.30pm)

Adventure classic *The Man Who Would Be King* screens on Wednesday 8 April, followed by *The Agenda Comedy Club* on Friday 10 April, featuring Stu Goldsmith, Tal Davies, Will Duggan and Rich Hall as MC.

Spotlight: Tuesday 14 April - It's My Life! (Take 2)

Rachel Millar returns with a night of musical comedy mayhem - cheeky parodies, clever rewrites and big laughs, all accompanied by her wife at the piano.

April closes with a double offering on Sunday 19 April: *The Lion King* (2.30pm) *The Audience* (7.00pm, National Theatre Live)

May: Comedy, Classics and National Theatre Live

May begins with award-nominated comedian Jessica Fostekew and her new show *Iconic Breath* on Sunday 3 May.

Classic favourite *Calendar Girls* screens on Wednesday 6 May (2.30pm).

On Sunday 17 May, enjoy: *SING* (2.30pm) *All My Sons* (7.00pm, National Theatre Live) The season concludes on Sunday 31 May with: *HOOK* (2.30pm) *Playboy of the Western World* (7.00pm, National Theatre Live)

Explore the full programme at crownwharftheatre.org.uk



The Inn Ringers Find A New Home

At the end of last summer The Inn Ringers put out an appeal for a new home. The team wanted to relocate to a place that would be easier for them logistically and secure the future of the team in the long term. The team are happy to announce that Tittensor Village Hall is now their new permanent home.

Following an article that appeared in the Stone and Eccleshall Gazette the team were offered several venues but it was Tittensor Village Hall who were able to meet most of the teams' requirements. The only stumbling block was the hall was not available on a Monday night for their usual practise sessions. Fortunately, all members of the team were able to make themselves available for Tuesday practises.

Paul Mellor - the Musical Director for the team said 'I met up with Kate Kenyon (chair of the village hall committee) for a couple of meetings to outline the requirements for the team after she had contacted me to say the hall could be available to us.

Kate could not have been more enthusiastic or accommodating. Following on from those meetings the team agreed to 'move in' officially on the 6th January."

Shirley said 'I was overwhelmed at the amount we raised, £1200 is an incredible amount. I was also overwhelmed by the number of people who turned up, nearly 100!! The Inn Ringers did a terrific job not only performing during the afternoon but also providing the food, setting up the room and generally helping out to make the afternoon such a success'.

The next main event for The Inn Ringers is their annual charity concert which this year, is in aid of Oak Tree Farm Rural Project. The Inn Ringers nominate a charity to support each year and they decided upon Oak Tree farm as many members of the team visit their farm on a regular basis, have people they have known who have benefited from the work they do and it is local.

MD Paul says 'this is another event which the team enjoys. Everyone just pulls together to make the event a success; it really is a great team effort. We have already started to put our programme together for the concert. It is not an easy task. We now have a concert repertoire of nearly 100 pieces of music and selecting a dozen or so to play gets harder each year. Everyone has their favourites; there are



Shirley's Party

Every member of the team has had nothing but praise for the hall and its facilities. The team have already welcomed two new members who expressed an interest in joining the Inn Ringers after seeing them perform their annual Christmas concert back in December.

Debbie Ashton was a member of a handbell team in Yorkshire and Hilary Beech is totally new to the art of handbell ringing. Both have settled into the team really well. Paul went on to say - 'both our new recruits are enjoying our practise sessions, Debbie is getting used to a slightly different way of ringing and enjoying the range of music we play. Hilary is totally new ringing and is making great progress with mastering the technique and reading our music'.

On 1st February the Inn Ringers participated in a celebratory, informal concert to mark the 70th birthday of one of their ringers, Shirley.

Shirley joined the team in 1998 and was soon elected as the treasurer for the team. For her birthday celebration Shirley insisted on no presents, she wanted to raise money for three charities that are close to her heart. The afternoon raise almost £1200 and this was divided equally with £400 being donated each to the Stoke Royal Special Baby Care Unit, Alzheimer's Society and Douglas MacMillan.

always new pieces to include and its picking pieces out that we hope the audience are going to like'.

The concert will be staged at Meir Heath and Rough Close Village Hall on Saturday 9th May at 2.30pm.

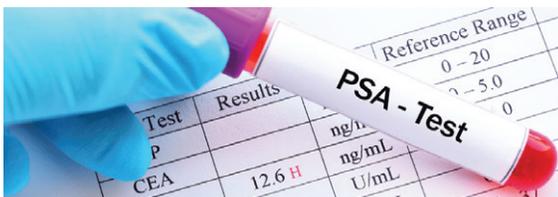
Later in the year the team will be participating the annual rally staged by the Heart of England Handbell Society, a society The Inn Ringers were instrumental in setting up.

This year the society will celebrate its 20th anniversary and the special rally will be held in Evesham in October.

Meanwhile, the team are settling into their new home, enjoying their practise sessions and looking forward to next year when the team will celebrate their 50th anniversary. Paul says 'over the years we have seen so many teams come and go. It is a remarkable achievement to still be doing what we do after five decades and still enjoy it. There will be a Special Anniversary Concert, and I am sure the team will come up with one or two other ways to celebrate our 50 years as a handbell team.



Shirley's 70th birthday cake



Stone Lions Hold Annual PSA Blood Testing Event

Men over the age of 40 are invited to attend an Annual PSA Blood Testing Event at the Stone House Hotel on **Tuesday 28th April 2026**.

A Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test is a blood test that measures the level of a protein produced by the prostate, used to screen for or monitor prostate cancer, infections, or enlargement.

This event is sponsored by Stone Lions Club (CIO) and is organised in conjunction with the Graham Fulford Trust, a registered charity who have supported Stone Lions Club and a number of other Lions Clubs in recent PSA Testing Events.

Past experience has shown that this event is very popular, with almost 500 men attending the last session in April 2025, and Stone Lions are anticipating that a similar number will attend this year.

To ensure the event runs as smoothly as possible by ensuring that there is adequate car parking available and reducing the length of waiting time for those attending, tests will be carried out **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY, WITH NO WALK-IN APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE ON THE NIGHT** and unfortunately you will be turned away at the door if you do not have an appointment. Attendees are also requested to arrive at the allocated time for their appointment as it may not be possible for them to be dealt with promptly if others are waiting.

Appointments are available between 6.30pm – 9.30pm and bookings may be made as from 16th March 2026. You can register for an appointment online by • visiting slc.mypsatests.org.uk

• or clicking on the QR Code here ->

Your appointment will be confirmed to you by e-mail. If you do not receive confirmation this means your booking has not been successful so please try again.



If you do not have internet access, or experience any problems registering, please call Graham Fulford Trust on 01926 419959.

It is necessary to restrict the number of attendees to 500 and sadly a last year number of men were unable to secure an appointment for a test. Unfortunately, 42 appointments were wasted due to **'no shows'** and it is sincerely hoped that men all who have an appointment attend on the night.

Should you find that you are unable to keep your appointment, please cancel it by either telephoning Graham Fulford Trust or sending an email to margaret@psatests.org.uk so that it may be offered to someone on the waiting list.

Once again, Stone Lions Club (CIO) is prepared to provide tests free of charge for those who wish to attend but there is no doubt that this project is extremely expensive to deliver as, factoring in the cost of phlebotomists and overheads, the cost of processing each test works out to over £25 per person.

Most men who attend appreciate the opportunity provided for regular screening and it is sincerely hoped that they will be willing to contribute towards this cost by donating generously on the night, to ensure that this service can be offered in future years.

Donations may be made either by cheque, in cash or by making use of the Card Reader which will be available at the time. In addition, Gift Aid forms will be available and UK Taxpayers are encouraged to complete one wherever possible to maximise the value of their donation.

Stone Lions would like to stress that a PSA blood test can only ever be regarded as an indicator and should anyone experience symptoms or be concerned about any health issue, they should contact their GP for advice as soon as possible.

Stone Lions Club (CIO) looks forward to welcoming as many men as possible to this event but please remember: **NO APPOINTMENT = NO TEST**



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Gazette

NEWS IN BRIEF

Adbaston Community Concert Society - 2026 Concert Dates

All concerts; 5.30 pm. Church of St Michael and all Angels, Adbaston, Eccleshall, ST200QE.

Sunday 3rd May - Manchester Camerata Principals

Sunday 5th July - Contra Guitar Duo

Sunday 6th September - Keyboard Trust

Sunday 1st November - Duo Tanwen. Harp & Flute

Parking nearby, entry £10. Interval refreshments. Please save these dates. We look forward to welcoming you there! For more details please visit www.adbastonccs.org.uk

UKE'N SING

An Evening of Singing with a Ukulele Band takes place on **Friday 20th March** at 7.30pm at Sandon Parish Room, Main Lichfield Rd, Sandon.

In aid of All Saints Church www.sandonallsaints.com tickets cost £8 and include tea and biscuits afterward Tickets from 07876 540491.

Hilderstone Village Hall

Community Cafe open 10:00 to 13:00

Our cafe will be open. All our produce is bought locally, with milk and eggs from Cotwalton Farm. Come along and enjoy a fresh breakfast and some chat!

Don't forget our specials: Drop Pancakes - one portion of three pancakes for £2 (extra pancakes 75p each) Fried Bread - can come with our popular breakfasts French Toast - 50p a slice.



Preparation For Major Town Centre Road Repair Scheme Undertaken

Preparation and investigative work ahead of a major road maintenance scheme in Stone town centre was carried out in February.

The works, including drainage, CCTV and road surface investigations, will help with design and preparation for the main structural maintenance scheme this summer. This will take place on the town centre ring road and include Stafford Street, Crown Street, Newcastle Street, Christchurch Way and Radford Street.

The main scheme is scheduled to take place from mid-June until August, with full details confirmed closer to the time.

Holly Bush Quiz

Not for the faint hearted - the Sunday night quiz at the Holly Bush quiz, Seighford is open to team of four people of average intelligent with a wide ranging set of general knowledge questions set by quizmaster Peter Jones.

Starts at 8.30pm every Sunday evening £1 per person with cash and chocolates as prizes. Join the teams already regulars and face the 15 questions per round, sign up for the online quiz sent out every Saturday morning.

Don't expect to be tested on your knowledge of sitcoms - you won't be. You will be welcome - oh! and there is good beer as well and something for the ladies. *What is the prime minister's middle name?*



Do-It-Yourself!

January is fickle, weather-wise. That's why Aston-by-Stone W.I. has a Members' night - that way, if we have to cancel, no Speaker has to be disappointed. On the other hand, it gives the Members a chance to show what they can do.

After the business part of the meeting, the Resolutions were discussed, and members had the chance to vote on which one would go forward to the National W.I. Annual Meeting in June. These resolutions may be put forward by any W.I. Member, and reflect the needs of women and of the community in general. Some have gone on to influence national policy: for example, "Keep Britain Tidy", and the recognition of ADHD in girls and women.

Next was an auction of new but unwanted items donated by members. Hidden talents as Auctioneers were revealed by Terry Milward and Chris Connolly, who were funny as well as persuasive, and every lot was sold.

After tea and home-made cakes came the high spot of the evening: the Aston-by-Stone Occasional Players' pantomime. Based so loosely on the story of Sleeping Beauty that somehow Queen Victoria



and Prince Albert managed to infiltrate, to say nothing of a star performance by a HEDGE, this was a huge amount of fun - and that's just for the Players, a.k.a. the Committee. What a relief there was no serious drama critic present, for it was a scrappy but hugely enjoyable event which seemed to be a hit with the audience and cast alike.

The performance ended with a rendering of "We love the W.I." to the tune of "Rudolph the red-nosed Reindeer" written by one of the cast. A true end to the Christmas celebrations!

Have A Heart...

Our February meeting welcomed Teresa and Steve Fisher from Stone First Responders. When there is a local 999 call, First Responders aim to be on scene as soon as possible, and start CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) or other life-saving procedures for the Ambulance team. It's amazing to think that this is a voluntary and entirely unpaid service; each volunteer commits to a weekly shift and undergoes regular training in association with the Ambulance service.

There is no doubt that lives are saved in this way, and some of us have benefitted from their help and dedication.



Steve demonstrated CPR, and we were relieved to hear that mouth-to-mouth is no longer used. I remember the horrid taste of the dummy's mouth, a nasty combination of plastic and disinfectant! It was brought home to us how fortunate we are to have this service in Stone, and

the presentation was greeted with much applause.

As the meeting took place a few days before Valentine's day, the competition was to make a Valentine card. All entries were lovely, and the three winners were Terry Milward, Anita Murphy and Julie Hughes. Our produce stall did brisk business, as did the tea and home-made cakes.



Next month will see our Annual Meeting, with a review of our Centenary year and the election of officers. Later in the year there will be an Open Meeting with a Fashion Show - all are welcome, but Ladies, you may come along to any of our meetings.

We meet at 7.30 p.m. at Aston-by-Stone Village Hall on the second Wednesday of the month. You can find out more at astonbystonewisecretary@gmail.com, or phone 01785 615662. We look forward to meeting you!



Former Division Commissioner, Jill Piggot, presenting Kath with the Division President's Award, two years ago

A Girlguiding Star (1927-2026)

It is with great sadness that Stone Division Girlguiding announce the sad passing of Kathleen Becket (*widely known as Kath*), a friend to so many. Kath had guided for many years with Walton Guides before taking on the role of the Badge Secretary, a job that she did for well over 25 years. If Covid hadn't have struck, she would still have been doing that role.

Kath had also played a vital role, helping out with the Stone Scout and Guide Band and many a Scout necker had been rolled with absolute precision by Kath for the band and at the Stone Gang Shows.

The photo shows former Division Commissioner, Jill Piggot, presenting her with the Division President's Award, two years ago. Jill spoke then of her fantastic work ethic, and dedication to Guiding and her total enthusiasm and love for Girlguiding. This continued right until the end of her life.

She lived in Autumn House for the last twelve years of her life and even there she would be busy collecting up items to be used for crafts for the guiding groups, eg old Christmas cards, craft ideas from magazines and even paper medicine cups, which were turned into paper flowers by guiding groups and even were sent out to Kenya to be used on a guiding project there!

Kath will also be remembered for her wonderful smile and brilliant sense of humour. She loved company and there would be a steady stream of visitors (*young and old*) and phone calls every day to Autumn House.

'I promise that I will do my best, to be true to myself and develop my beliefs, to serve the King and my community, to help other people and to keep the Guide law.'

Kath certainly kept her Guiding promise all her life and in the words of the Girlguiding song, Taps : ".....all is well, safely rest".



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 are provided. **The next CU@4 is 4.00pm till 5.00pm on Sunday 22nd March and 19th April**

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!

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Gazette Motoring

Stronger Than An Ox - The KGM Musso Saracen + Syd Taylor Takes 'The Rhino' For A Ride

The pickup rolls on: immune, it seems, to the vagaries of the changing motoring scene, broadcasting an uncompromising determination to impose beef into the whimpering world of battery-pack conformity. We've lost many pickups over the last few years so it's heartening to find a manufacturer with a rapidly growing reputation stepping in to fill the gap and firm-up on pickup requirements. The strongest survive - and one that is even stronger than an ox is the KGM Musso (*Means Rhino in 'Foreign'*) Saracen Plus - is as ideally suited to luxurious family travel as it is to farm and country or construction site. And before we start, I didn't test this pickup in extremis - but I can assure you that my farmer pal has and he says that it proved more capable overall than his own 'XYZ 123' - particularly when trailering Herman his Holstein bull over rugged terrain.



The pickup experience is one of the few remaining individualistic motoring treats available to the ordinary man or woman today.

Consider this. You get a cabin with space and plenty of scope for expansive thoughts - big enough for a family and what's more, it's not a hymn to utilitarianism but a celebration of luxurious comfort, with heated and cooled nappa leather seats, air con., a big touch screen, power windows, seebackra camera for looking backwards, air con. and just about everything else you need for your ease and delight. Where else will you find such versatility? It's on a par with some comfortable saloons.



In history Saracens would charge across the desert and the earth would tremble. Forward to today and civilization presents new hazards. Different problems unfold. When was the last time you took to our roads? Saladin himself would blanch at the horrors of the M6, pluck out his moustache hairs in fright at the terrors of Spaghetti Junction, run rings of sheer panic round roundabouts and cry to the heavens in despair as he disappeared down a pothole... 'Why this?'

But this mighty beast rumbles forward to the rescue? It's a hefty beast of a highway bruiser that brooks no nonsense.



Thanks to powerful brakes and a strong ladder chassis it can tow 3500Kg even with a full load bed; something no other pickup on sale in the UK can match. If this Saracen + won't float your boat nothing will. You could be carrying hay bales and towing horses one day and delivering the family to the seaside the next and bringing back half a beach of sand. And in a vehicle with this presence, no-one will kick sand in your face (Figuratively speaking, of course) as drivers of lesser vehicles keep a respectful distance - the brute in me loved its bigness.

There's good news about the engine and transmission too. The 202 PS 4 cylinder diesel is smooth. It conveys you with refinement all the way to 115 mph. Most of the time you'll be in 2wd high but there's 4wd high and low, plus various modes for when conditions change - and with the renowned six speed Aisin box, you'll never believe how good it is on the metalled highway as you cruise quietly and effortlessly at speed.

I was delighted at the way it stormed citadels of traffic chaos, muscled its way through mayhem - and all the while reasonable at the pumps. Without a load, near 38 mpg was achieved with careful driving - despite KGMs modest claim of just 31.5 mpg overall.

Highways, byways, uplands, lowlands, the Saracen + fears no potholes. How lucky we are, I reflected, to be able to choose such an individualistic engine of progress.

I thought long and hard for something negative to say and came up with just one drawback. It is not the easiest vehicle to park at the supermarket - but that's a small price to pay for a big-hearted Saracen unleashed.

And Hey! What's a squashed hatchback or two or a few bent shopping trolleys between friends? This is a gentle giant that won't let you down whether your name is Dave or Saladin.



As more and more discerning buyers are finding out - there is one answer when a libertarian lifestyle founded upon solid principles of practicality is what the doctor ordered. What better pick-me-up than a pickup of multi purpose versatility? The strikingly styled KGM Musso Saracen + - with its extended load bay that's the biggest available on a double cab in the UK - is possibly the best looking pickup on the market. It's made from granite too: no wonder you get a five year warranty.

For sporty types, farmer Palmer, the estate manager, tradesmen from Gary the go-faster plumber to Tommy Telford the builder and even the housewives of Cheshire, the pickup promises to deliver personalised yet practical motoring at attractive costs. This top spec. Musso Saracen + Double Cab is £37,143 inc.VAT (You only get a mid size saloon for that these days).

For the duration of the test I grew to like it more and more each day. My answer to those who express wonder at the desirability of such vehicles is simply to say 'try one yourself and you'll understand'.



Renault Clio crowned 'Best Used Small Car 2026'; ranked #2 overall in the Diesel&EcoCar Magazine Used Car Top 50

Renault Clio And Scenic E-Tech Electric Win Top Awards In Used Car Top 50

Renault has secured multiple successes in Diesel&EcoCar Magazine's Used Car Top 50 Awards 2026, with the Renault Clio and Renault Scenic E-Tech electric both claiming category wins, while the Renault Arkana also featured in the prestigious Top 50 list.

In the magazine's annual ranking of the best used cars on sale today, the Renault Clio achieved an impressive second place overall, earning it the title of 'Best Used Small Car 2026'.

The Clio's success was joined by the Renault Scenic E-Tech electric, which finished fifth overall and claimed the title of 'Best Used Medium Electric SUV 2026'. Renault's strong showing is further reinforced by the inclusion of the Renault Arkana, which appears in the Top 50 at number 35.

The awards are determined by the Diesel&EcoCar Magazine expert judging panel, which assessed more than 1,000 used cars, narrowing them down to a shortlist of 50 standout models based on factors including purchase price, residual value, overall competence and suitability for purpose.

Commenting on the Renault Clio's award-winning performance, Diesel&EcoCar Magazine's Editor, Ian Robertson, said: "The latest Clio feels grown-up inside, with soft-touch materials and an intuitive infotainment layout. Turbocharged petrol engines deliver strong real-world economy, and the ride is more supple than many rivals. The E-Tech hybrid is a star, returning just under 70mpg thanks to its efficient petrol-electric powertrain... A stylish, efficient and thoroughly well-rounded small car that continues Renault's upward trajectory."

On the Renault Scenic E-Tech electric, which took the 'Best Used Medium Electric SUV 2026' title, Robertson added: "The Scenic E-Tech electric reinvents a family favourite as a sleek, efficient SUV with excellent range and a calming, modern interior. Renault's Google-based infotainment system works brilliantly... As a used EV, it offers strong technology, impressive versatility and low running costs all wrapped in an attractive package."



Renault Scenic E-Tech electric wins 'Best Used Medium Electric SUV 2026'; placed #5 overall

The judges also highlighted the appeal of the Renault Arkana in the Used Car Top 50, praising its blend of design and efficiency: "Renault's coupé-influenced Arkana offers style and efficiency in a practical package... A distinctive alternative to mainstream crossovers, combining flair with everyday usability."

The Renault Clio continues to stand out as one of the most rewarding small cars to drive, with agile handling and a confident, composed feel on the road that helps it shine in everyday use. Available with efficient petrol engines and the acclaimed E-Tech full hybrid powertrain, Clio combines strong real-world economy with the engaging character that has made it a consistent favourite in the supermini class.

The Renault Scenic E-Tech electric reimagines a family favourite for the electric era, offering a spacious interior, clever packaging and the brand's acclaimed Google-based infotainment system. With strong real-world usability and a driving range of up to 381 miles, impressive versatility and low running costs, Scenic E-Tech electric continues to reinforce Renault's position as a pioneer of electrified mobility.






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UK Auto Apprentices Surge As Sector Builds Next-Gen Workforce

Britain's automotive industry is in the midst of a major skills drive with the number of apprentices in the sector rising by 33% and new starters up 28% in 2025, according to a new survey of major employers by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

There were 1,699 apprenticeship starts in the last academic year, while a further 1,824 apprenticeship courses were provided to upskill existing workers in their current role.

The survey of major vehicle and component manufacturers, R&D specialists and aftermarket firms – together employing 75% of the UK automotive manufacturing workforce – highlights how the skills transition is a top priority for employers. Almost two-thirds (61%) of existing roles across the sector are expected to have new skills requirements by 2035, such as high-voltage system capability, battery handling, and digital skills including coding, data analysis and AI expertise.

Significant investment has already been committed to the UK's EV transition, supported by government's £4 billion DRIVE35 programme up to 2035, with industry announcing more than £1 billion last year alone. With all new cars and vans joining British roads planned to be zero emission in less than 10 years' time, and trucks and buses soon after, a new-look workforce is needed to design,



engineer, build and maintain them in ever greater numbers.

As the sector celebrated National Apprenticeship Week 2026 (9-13 February), the UK Automotive Industry Career Guide showcases the huge range of exciting automotive careers available. Attracting talented people from all backgrounds, from career starters to career changers and returners, will be essential for the sector to thrive in the next 10 years.

Industry is already working alongside government to deliver the Industrial Strategy ambition for a strong skills pipeline, supported by Skills England and the new Growth & Skills Levy. Ensuring access to flexible, high-quality and verified training for businesses of all sizes – particularly SMEs – across every region will be essential. April's introduction of Levy flexibilities for short unit-style training, in particular, will help more businesses deliver the high-skilled, agile and resilient workforce Britain needs to remain globally competitive.

Gazette

Eccleshall

NEWS IN BRIEF

World Day of Prayer

A service for everyone – at the Eccleshall Methodist Church on **Friday 6th March 2pm** prepared by the Christian women of Nigeria. Followed by refreshments. All are most welcome.

Trinity Men's Fellowship

The purpose of the TMF is to promote fellowship amongst the men of the Holy Trinity parish Eccleshall with St Chad's Slindon with morning meetings at locations with a morning walk and lunches and afternoon meetings and guest speakers.

The programme in **March** has a lunch at the George and Dragon at Meaford on the **Friday 27th March** and in April at the Royal Oak in Eccleshall on **Friday 24th April**.

At the annual general meeting Phil Maitland was elected as the new Chairman, John Turnock was elected as the secretary, Bob Marsh as treasurer, Ray Gillibrand as long walks organiser and John Turnock as short walks organiser.

Walk distances are approximately 4 miles, if the weather is bad a more suitable 'road walk' will be substitute for one that involves crossing fields. Where possible shorter walks of 1 to 2 miles will be available for the less agile members who still wish to walk.

For details of the group contact secretary Jon on 01785 302541.

New Look Eccleshall Guide 2026

The 28th edition of the annual Eccleshall Guide has been delivered door to door within the town centre area of Eccleshall and is available at the library, in the arcade and other local venue free of charge, thanks to the advertisers.

Historical Talks

The programme of talks continue from the Eccleshall Historical Talks Society with **Monday 9th March** and "Bringin up Baby in the '50's and 60's, and on **Monday 13th April** with To die for – Dangerous Fashions taking place at the Holy Trinity parish room starting at 7.30pm. **Talks take place on the 2nd Monday of the month.**

Garden Guild

The Croxton and Broughton Garden Guild have a monthly programme of guest speakers and events on **Wednesday 25th March** they are holding a members Social evening at the Broughton parish room, Wetwood, ST21 6NW starting at 7.30pm.

On **Wednesday 22nd April** Nigel Hope will be speaking on the subject of 'John's Garden Ashwood Nurseries, new members and visitors are always welcome. All meetings take place **on the 4th Wednesday of the month** unless otherwise specified.

For further information about the Guild contact Catherine Baxter 01630 620291 or Linda Mifflin 01630 620215 or Ann Crump 07799 691025.

Music for Easter

On Sunday 29th March at 7pm at St Paul's Church Croxton featuring the Ann Wetton Singers led by Musical Director John Myatt and organist Wendy Jackson. No entrance fee but donations most welcome. All are welcome.

Ceilidh Barn Dance

Live music from the Tern Valley Tinkers on **Saturday 7th March** 7pm start £12, children free. Broughton Parish Room, Wetwood, ST21 6NW.

Bring your own drinks. Family friendly, sandwiches included, children's games early, no dancing partners required. For tickets email parisroomevents@gmail.com or phone 07712 508783.



The Collation Service And Induction Of New Rector, Reverend Robert Icke

On Wednesday 28th January, the Benefice of St Michael & St Wulfad Stone with St Saviour Aston by Stone welcomed a new Rector.

Rev'd Robert Icke was Licensed in a service led by the Bishop of Lichfield Rt Rev'd Dr Michael Ippgrave and assisted by the Archdeacon of Stoke upon Trent the Venerable Dr Megan Smith and the Rural Dean of Stone Rev'd Paul Kingman.

The service was attended by Civic guests, various organisations in the community, retired Clergy in the Deanery and Clergy who have assisted with taking services during the vacancy, along with members of both congregations. A Large number of people had travelled from Roberts previous parishes in the Benefice of Latchford in Warrington. Robert is joined by his wife Deborah and their Springer Spaniel Obi and their Dachshund Whisky.

Dennis Abbott (Lay Reader) said "It was a very special day, that we have waited two and a half years for! I am sure you would all like to join me in extending a very warm welcome to Rev'd Robert and his wife. Thank you to Julia Smith for capturing many of the precious moments "

Meet the New Rector Rector Rev Robert Icke

Dear Church Family,
I am honoured and delighted to join you as your new Rector. As I step into this role, I am reminded of Paddington Bear's gentle wisdom: arriving with a small suitcase, a note that reads "Please look after this bear," and a heart full of hope. Like Paddington, we come to this new chapter carrying our stories, our questions, and our trust that kindness, curiosity, and perseverance will guide us.

A New Journey This is the beginning of a shared journey. I come ready to learn from you, to listen, and to serve alongside you. Together we will discover how God is calling our congregation to grow, to reach out, and to be a place of welcome for all. Working Together Ministry thrives when we work as one body. I invite every member - young and old, long-time worshippers and newcomers - to join in shaping our life together: worship, outreach, hospitality, and the everyday care we offer one another. Your gifts, ideas, and prayers will be vital as we move forward.

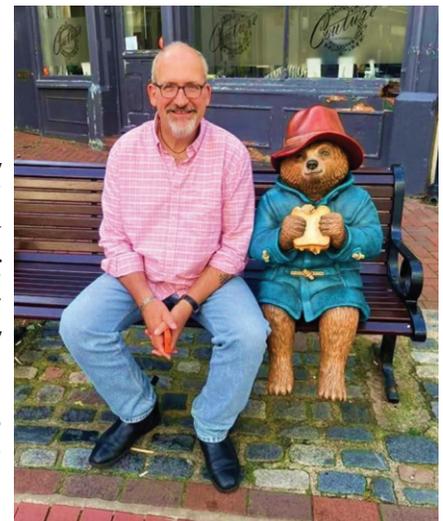
Back to Church Basics In a world that often feels noisy and hurried, I believe returning to the basics of our faith will ground and renew us: prayer, Scripture, simple worship, hospitality, and acts of compassion. We will focus on creating sincere, accessible ways to deepen our relationship with God and with one another.

A Little About Me - My name is Robert (*I am the one without the hat on in the picture*). I come with a heart for pastoral care, a love for clear, rooted worship, and a hope for a church where everyone belongs. I'll be joined in ministry life with my wife Debbie and our two loyal companions - Whisky, our dachshund, and Obi my springer spaniel, who are already fans of church gardens and gentle welcomes.

What's Next In the coming weeks I'll be meeting with parish groups, visiting homes, and inviting ideas for ministries we might start or renew. Watch for opportunities to gather, pray, and share a cup of tea - Paddington-style hospitality encouraged!

Thank you for the warm welcome you have already shown. I look forward to walking with you, learning with you, and discovering the ways God will bless our community in this next chapter.

With gratitude and hope.
Rev'd Rob





Mayor Attends Caledonians 70th Anniversary Ball

A special 70th Anniversary Ball was held on Saturday 14th February at the Peace Memorial Hall in Penkridge by members of The Stafford and District Caledonian Society.

The Caledonians were honoured that The Worshipful The Mayor of Stafford, Councillor Jenny Barron, and her Consort, Honorary Alderman Ray Barron, were able to attend. They were warmly welcomed by the Society President Mrs Maureen Crombleholme.

The evening got off to an enthusiastic start with that well known Scottish dance, the Dashing White Sergeant, which Mayor Barron joined in together with Society members and guests. As a keen dancer, the Mayor was happy to join in a couple of more complex dances later in the evening.

The Chris Dewhurst Scottish Country Dance Band provided the stirring music for the many reels, jigs and strathspeys which were enjoyed throughout the evening, with a welcome break for a delicious buffet supper and a toast to the 70th Anniversary.

A very enjoyable and fun evening was had by all.



The Worshipful The Mayor of Stafford, Councillor Jenny Barron, and her Consort, Honorary Alderman Ray Barron

Here's to the next decade of Scottish Dancing with the Stafford Caledonians who **meet each Wednesday evening at 7pm at The North End Community Centre in Holmcroft Road, Stafford.** Members are always ready to give a warm welcome to both beginners and experienced dancers. For more information please see the website <https://www.staffordscottishdancing.danceorg.uk> or telephone Gerald D'Arcy on 07904 380760.

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Eccleshall Habitat Bank To Boost Biodiversity

Environment Bank, the leading off-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) provider, has announced the launch of its new Eccleshall Habitat Bank – a 50-acre nature recovery site located just a few miles from Stafford. This latest Habitat Bank is its sixth in the West Midlands, forming part of Environment Bank's expanding national network of dedicated BNG nature recovery sites.

Comprising four large pasture fields and an arable field bordered by native hedgerow and woodland, Eccleshall Habitat Bank has been designed to enhance existing habitats and strengthen ecological connectivity across Staffordshire.

BNG rules, which came into legislation in 2024, require all developers in England to leave nature in a measurably better state, ensuring a minimum 10% improvement in biodiversity value through habitat creation. BNG was brought into law to address the UK's accelerating biodiversity loss by embedding nature recovery into the planning system.

By enhancing the existing hedgerows and grasslands, Environment Bank's ecologists aim to improve foraging and nesting opportunities for a range of priority woodland and grassland species, including the skylark, meadow pipit, reed warbler, sparrowhawk, lapwing, reed bunting and sedge warbler. The Habitat Bank's expanded shrubland and woodland edge habitats will also offer a home for species like hedgehog and brown hare.

Specially placed to connect several locally significant nature sites, such as the Loyton Moss, Cop Mere and Doley



Above - How the site looks now.
Below - This after image is computer generated, illustrating anticipated outcomes based on analytical modelling of the work being done at the site.



Common Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), the Eccleshall Habitat Bank has been designed to strengthen ecological connectivity across the area and support wider nature recovery goals.

Eccleshall Habitat Bank is one of more than 45 sites within Environment Bank's national network, created and managed by its team of ecologists in partnership with rural landowners.

Eccleshall Habitat Bank is due to be added to the national biodiversity gain sites register in September 2026.

A public footpath through the Eccleshall Habitat Bank also ensures that local communities can experience the unfolding landscape restoration first-hand.



Trio Archai

Newport Music Club Kindly supported by Making Music's Philip & Dorothy Green Young Artists scheme Proudly Present The Award-Winning Trio Archai

Do join us and enjoy a concert by the award-winning Trio Archai, on **Saturday March 14**, 7pm, at Cosy Hall, Water Lane, Newport TF10 7LD.

Mar Valor (piano), Ayla Sahin (violin), and Finn Mannion (cello) met at the Musik Akademie Basel, where they study as a trio with Claudio Martínez Mehner, Rainer Schmidt, Anna Gebert, and Anton Kernjak.

Their name Archai (pronounced "Ark-ai"), from the Ancient Greek for 'origins' or 'first principles', reflects the ensemble's shared musical values and their commitment to grow together.

Founded in Basel in 2023, the trio has quickly gained international recognition - winning First Prize and Beethoven Prize at the Schoenfeld International String Competition 2025 in China, and First Prize at the 72nd Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) Competition 2024 in London. They are described as one of the most exciting young ensembles of its generation - 'a trio sure to become one of the greats!'

They have played at many prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall, Tivoli Vredenburg, St. George's Bristol, Schaffhausen Klassik, Harbin Cultural Center, Swiss Chamber Music Festival, and Whittington Festival.

It promises to be an outstanding evening of music, featuring the wonderful Faure Piano Trio in D minor, the great Brahms Piano Trio No 1 in B major, and a Piano Trio by Francisco Coll (2020).

Tickets : Adults - £15.00; Children/Students - £2.00; payable on the door by cash or cheque. To reserve tickets in advance please contact the Newport Music Club at chairman@newportmusicclub.org, or phone 07726 959233, Visit www.newportmusicclub.org for more information.

Our next concert is pianist Kaspars Mikuzis, Classic FM Rising Star 2025, on **Saturday May 9th**, 7pm

Henderson Big Band Coming To Great Bridgford Village Hall



1st Oulton Scout Group Welcomes Spaniel Rescue Charity

Squirrels, Beavers and Cubs from 1st Oulton Scout Group recently enjoyed a fantastic visit from the Cocker and English Springer Spaniel Rescue (CAESSR) charity.

Representatives from the charity delivered an engaging and informative talk, and were brilliant with the children throughout the evening. The young people particularly enjoyed meeting the dogs and playing fetch with them in the hall, making it a memorable and hands-on experience for everyone involved.

The charity expressed their sincere gratitude for the generous donations received from the children, parents,

leaders and the wider Oulton community, which will help support their ongoing work rescuing and rehoming spaniels.

Following the visit, CAESSR shared the following message:

"Thank you for having us and our dogs. The children were really great with them. We are astounded at how much everyone collected and donated for us. There are going to be some very happy spaniels! The children were very polite and were a credit to 1st Oulton Scout Group."

1st Oulton Scout Group would like to thank CAESSR for an inspiring visit and everyone who contributed to making the event such a success.



Visit From Stoke-on-Trent Rugby Club

Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts from 1st Oulton Scout Group recently took part in an exciting visit from Stoke-on-Trent Rugby Club.

The young people enjoyed a brilliant session learning new rugby skills and getting actively involved in a game of tag rugby. The coaches were fantastic throughout, engaging the children with enthusiasm and encouragement and helping everyone to build confidence while having fun.

Despite challenging weather conditions,

the session was able to go ahead thanks to the support of Church at the Crossing Community Centre (The Barn), who kindly facilitated the use of their hall at short notice.

The visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all involved and provided a great opportunity for the children to try something new while staying active. Our group would like to thank Stoke-on-Trent Rugby Club for their time and energy, and Church at the Crossing Community Centre for their invaluable support.

Cubs Learn the Power of Braille

Cubs from the 1st Oulton Scout Group have been developing new skills by learning Braille. Through teamwork and determination, they worked hard to understand and practise this important form of communication. The activity

encouraged the cubs to support one another while gaining insight into how people with visual impairments read and communicate, helping to build both practical skills and empathy.

REVIEWS MOVIE

by Joe Jenkinson



Hamnet

Director: Chloé Zhao
Starring: Jessie Buckley & Paul Mescal

An emotionally shattering meditation on love and loss, Hamnet is a film of hushed beauty and devastating power.

Under Chloé Zhao's poetic direction, Jessie Buckley (Women Talking) and Paul Mescal (Gladiator II) deliver raw, earth-shaking performances that linger long after the credits roll.

Intimate, elegiac and deeply human, this is a soul-searching cinematic experience that will wound, heal and haunt in equal measure.

Rating: JJ Rating 5/5

Send Help

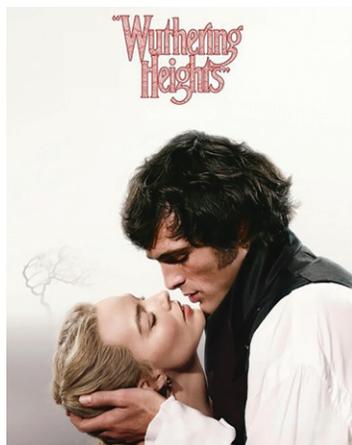
Director: Sam Raimi
Starring: Rachel McAdams & Dylan O'Brien

Psychological tension meets razor-sharp unease in Send Help, a twisted thriller that dives headfirst into modern gender politics and mind games.

Sam Raimi cranks up the paranoia with stylish flair as Rachel McAdams (Mean Girls) and Dylan O'Brien (The Maze Runner) spiral through a battle of manipulation and survival.

Darkly playful and deliciously unhinged, this is a nerve-jangling ride that refuses to play it safe.

JJ Rating 4/5



Wuthering Heights

Director: Emerald Fennell
Starring: Jacob Elordi & Margot Robbie

Passion burns bright in Wuthering Heights, a bold, visually intoxicating reimagining of the classic romance.

Emerald Fennell infuses the windswept moors with electric energy as Jacob Elordi (Saltburn) and Margot Robbie (Barbie) ignite the screen with tempestuous chemistry.

Vibrant, dramatic and irresistibly stylish, this sweeping adaptation offers heartbreak, heat and spectacle - perfect for both literary newcomers and swooning romantics alike.

JJ Rating 3/5



The beautiful temporary replacement window

Christ Church Academy Pupils Make A Splash Of Colour

All Saints' Church at Sandon has two 19th century stained-glass windows by William Wailes in the style of Augustus Pugin, who designed the Houses of Parliament. These have been removed for restoration as part of a project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to conserve rare heritage artefacts in the church.

Head of Art, Miss D Fares, and talented pupils at Christ Church Academy have created the most amazing artwork, in the form of a stained glass window, to hang in place of the original window above our Lady Altar.

Elizabeth Jarrett, Churchwarden said 'Our main altar is out of action due to works in the Chancel to restore the Elizabethan genealogical wall paintings, monuments and tombs so our Lady Chapel altar is now the focal point of our services.

Our congregation is thrilled with the excellent quality of the artwork which is brightening up our church building.'

The Heritage project also involves a range of activities to encourage more people to engage with the history of our beautiful Grade 1 listed building.

Full details of all events and updates on the conservation work are available on their website at www.sandonallsaints.com; find and like them on Facebook: [allsaintssandon](https://www.facebook.com/allsaintssandon) or telephone Elizabeth on 07534 915068.

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Spring Is On The Way To Stone C&D Garden Club

Stone Chrysanthemum And Dahlia Society, incorporating the Garden Club, will be holding a full programme of meetings in 2026 at Christ Church.

Meetings open at 6.45 for a cuppa and chat before a 7.30 start.

March 12th Paul Green talks about Plants of the Season

Paul Green of Green's Leaves Nursery in Gloucestershire specializes in rare, unusual, and hardy plants, presenting "Plants of the Season" talks that highlight seasonal, high-impact choices.

He advises on plant selection for foliage, structure, and scent, often featuring grasses, hardy southern hemisphere plants, and shrubs suited to the UK climate.



April 16th (NB change of date because of Easter) Harriet Rycroft's talk is Potty Time – a Year in Pots.

Harriet Rycroft's popular talk, "Potty Time – a Year in Pots," offers a seasonal guide to container gardening, featuring tips for year-round, vibrant, and, at times, unusual displays. Drawing on her 14 years as Head Gardener at Whichford Pottery, she combines



practical demonstrations with advice on plant combinations, maintenance, and, often, how to keep pots looking good through all seasons.

May 14th Samantha Hope who worked with John Massey at Ashcroft Nurseries on his Hepatica collection tells all about these fascinating plants and how to care for them.

June 11th John Scrae, a plant pathologist, has a talk entitled Fabulous Fungi (Malicious Moulds) which looks at the positive aspects of fungi as well as the (negative) impact of moulds.

This sounds like a must listen-to for every gardener!

July 9th Diane Clements takes us for a wander through alpine scenery as she shows us Alpines in the Wild and in Cultivation.



As ever full details are on our website <https://stonecanddclub.org/>



'Wicked!' Workshop With West End's Myles Newland A Hit At Rooftop Studios

Stone's Rooftop Studios welcomed more than 60 young performers to an exclusive Wicked workshop on Sunday 18th January, led by professional dancer Myles Newland, which proved hugely popular with both students and parents alike.

The workshop ran across two intensive two-hour sessions, welcoming dancers

wants to go into the industry it was really helpful being to ask questions and being taught by a professional dancer who has so much industry knowledge and experience."

While Nancy, 13, commented: "I learnt so much about how to be a strong versatile performer and what to expect going into the industry."



aged 7–10 and 11–18 respectively, and gave participants a rare opportunity to train with a performer currently working at the highest level of the industry.

Myles, who features as a dancer in the hit film Wicked: For Good, brought real West End experience to the studio – his impressive career includes working as assistant choreographer for Kylie Minogue, contributing to the creative team for Celebrity Cruise Line and performing for Eurovision, Jessie J, Katy Perry, Kim Petras, Jax Jones, the MTV EMAs, Netflix, Pixie Lott, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Rocketman, Todrick Hall and Westlife.

During the sessions, students learned choreography from Wicked before taking part in an extended question-and-answer discussion with Myles. He shared first-hand insight into what it was like working on the Wicked movie set, alongside practical and honest advice about forging a career in the performing arts. Topics included audition technique, building professional contacts, securing work in the industry, and how young performers can stand out while staying resilient and motivated.

The workshops were extremely well received, with parents praising both the quality of teaching and the invaluable behind-the-scenes insight offered to the students.

18 year-old Evie said: "As someone who

The event highlighted Rooftop Studios' unique approach to training, with all teaching staff having enjoyed professional performance careers themselves.

This depth of industry experience allows the studio to offer exceptional opportunities such as visiting professionals, specialist workshops and honest career guidance - giving students unrivalled insight into life on stage and beyond.



The next workshop will be taking place on 19th April led by Laura Pyatt who starred in the hit musical Six, retelling the lives of the six wives of Henry VIII.

To find out more about joining the Rooftop family and exploring the studio's full range of dance and performing arts classes at its Stone and Leek locations, visit www.rooftopstudios.co.uk.



Stone u3a Speaker Meeting *Pipes and Pipe Smoking*

On Friday 30th January the latest Speaker Meeting by our own member Kath Adams on the fascinating subject of pipes and pipe smoking. The meeting was well attended.

Kath entertained the audience with a very factual and humorous presentation showing the historical beginnings of pipes and smoking. She began by donning her smoking jacket and hat, and sitting on her very own smoking chair as would have been used by gentlemen about town in the past.

Tobacco was first brought to the UK by Sir Francis Drake and was made popular by Walter Raleigh. It's said that one of his servants saw him with smoke coming out of his mouth and threw a bucket of water over him to "put him out." Whether this is true or not we'll probably never know, but what we do know is that smoking became widely popular.

The audience were shown images of the earliest pipes, made from stone, through to the pipes that we would easily recognise today. Pipes have been made from various materials, stone, clay, wood, porcelain and Measham and in so many styles, from basic bowls with a stem to highly decorated pipes depicting whole scenes or characters. Kath had even brought some of her own collection in for the audience to see. Pipe smoking was very popular, with the size and decoration of your pipe being used almost as a status symbol, or merely to show off. Pipes were made to remember people places and happenings. In fact, no subject was out of bounds, even erotica!



Kath, a member of the Pipe Academy (*Academie Internationale De La Pipe*) amused the audience with stories about the characters that were depicted in some of the pipes.

Thank you to all who attended and those who helped to organise the meeting. Our next Speaker Meeting will be held on Friday 20th March.

Stone (Staffs) & District u3a Speaker Meetings are held regularly throughout the year and are open to non-members. If you are interested in any of our groups, or would like to volunteer to run a group yourself, please take a look at our website Stone (Staffs) and District - Keep active (in mind and body), enjoy socialising, for those who are retired or not in full time employment

Membership costs just £50 per year and this allows you to attend as many groups as you like, ** That equates to less than £1 per week.

** Some groups may request a small donation towards refreshments.



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National Trust Staffordshire Centre Talks

The Staffordshire Centre's programme of talks at Walton Village Hall in Stafford continues on **March 10th**.

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.



Stories Of Shugborough March 10th A Talk by Keith Alldritt

Apart from being a member of the Staffordshire Centre, Keith is a volunteer at Shugborough and will tell the stories behind the paintings in the smallest, most visited space in the mansion - The Veranda Passage - but also the most overlooked. Learn about an audacious horse racing gamble, capturing a treasure ship, the difficulties of being the Post Master General, and famous visitors.

See why the watercolours - recently conserved thanks to funding from Staffordshire Centre - are important to show the history and development of the estate, especially in the 1700s, including Thomas Anson's most impressive structure which no longer exists!



52nd Annual General Meeting 14th April

Followed by an update on Shugborough

As usual there will be a report from the Chair on the year's activities and the Treasurer's report, followed by the election of the committee and our donation to Shugborough from last year's fund-raising.

We're looking forward to some volunteers to join the committee or to help us to organise events, so watch out for the nomination forms with the March news bulletin. After this there will be an update on the Shugborough Estate by Hayley Mival in which we will hear about some of the longer-term plans for some of the more familiar features of the estate.

The Park Farm buildings (and the watermill), the arboretum, the servant quarters and the southern walled garden.

Non-members of the Centre are welcome to attend the AGM but they are not able to vote in the elections to the committee.

Admission to this meeting is free.

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/>

Local Author Spotlight: Sarah Brennand and Balancing Act

Growing up locally, returning to the area to raise her family, and building an international career from that base, Sarah Brennand is a familiar name to many in the community.

This spring, that journey is marked by the publication of her book, **BALANCING ACT: Mastering Work, Wealth and Wellbeing**, published by De Gruyter.

Balancing Act - Mastering Work, Wealth and Wellbeing was officially released in February 2026 and explores a question many people quietly wrestle with: how do you sustain performance at work without burning out the rest of your life?

Sarah's answer is grounded in strategy, not slogans.

Drawing on years of executive coaching, leadership education, and lived experience, the book introduces a clear framework for navigating pressure across career, finances, health, and family life. At its core is Sarah's Calibration Model, now used by leaders and organisations around the world to bring clarity, focus, and alignment when demands pull in competing directions.

Importantly for local readers, **Balancing Act** proudly features voices from closer to home. Among the contributors is Adam Burgess, our very own local Olympian, whose experiences of elite performance, resilience, and balance bring powerful real-world perspective to the book's themes.

Rather than offering theory alone, **Balancing Act** blends research from neuroscience and behavioural science with real-world stories. Contributors include Olympic athletes, military leaders, CEOs, financial experts, entrepreneurs, and professionals balancing leadership alongside parenting, transition, or a redefined view of success.

The book's distinctive visual style is also a local collaboration. The illustrations that run throughout the book and the accompanying website were created with the support of Luisa Phillips, a local digital designer and illustrator who has worked with Sarah for over a decade. Luisa's work brings creativity and warmth to complex ideas, helping readers engage with the models and tools in a way that feels accessible and human.

Early reviews reflect the book's practical impact:

Entrepreneur, investor and former Dragon on BBC's *Dragons' Den* Sarah Willingham describes it as:

"Practical, sustainable and refreshingly honest about what it takes to build a life that actually works."

Alexandra Charles, Head of the International Business School at the University of Derby, calls it:

"A book I will be jumping in and out of... both thought-provoking and inspiring, providing a foundation and a safety net."

And Matthew Peet, Head Coach of Wigan Warriors First Team, notes:

"It cuts through the noise and speaks directly to the reality of leading people while trying to be at your best yourself."

While **Balancing Act** has international reach, its roots remain firmly local. Sarah credits the area, its people, and the support around her as central to her journey - from early career, to returning home when she had her first child, to building businesses that now operate internationally.

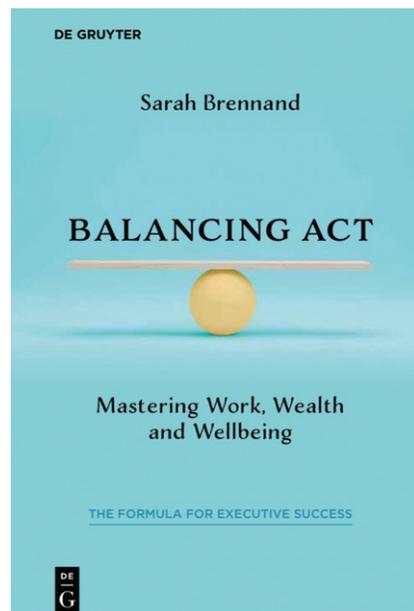
The book also links to a wider **Balancing**



Sarah Brennand

Act ecosystem, including:

- An online resource hub with free downloadable tools from the book
- The **Balancing Act - Mastering Work, Wealth and Wellbeing** podcast, now live
- Ongoing leadership and performance programmes delivered through Sarah's companies, L7 Executive Coaching and Illuminare Executive Education.



Where to find the book

Balancing Act: Mastering Work, Wealth and Wellbeing is distributed internationally and available through over 70,000 retailers worldwide.

For Gazette readers, the easiest ways to purchase are:

- Online via Amazon
- Direct from the publisher, De Gruyter
- By contacting Sarah directly for a signed copy

Further information, downloadable resources from the book, and the **Balancing Act** podcast can be found at www.balancing-act.co.uk. Or by contacting Sarah via email at Sarah@balancing-act.co.uk



Making Music With Eccleshall Community Band

The Eccleshall Community Band is a friendly, supportive, fun group for instrumentalists, some of whom are developing their skills at early grade level, others who are very accomplished musicians, aged from 18 to 80 plus.

We meet weekly in term time, on a **Wednesday from 8-9pm** at Holy Trinity Church in Eccleshall. Our musical director, Martin Jones, writes arrangements to fit the players' abilities and has a wealth of experience leading groups and working with musicians.



There are a wide range of different instruments in the band, and we try to include as many people as we can.

- Woodwind instruments, for example flutes, clarinets, saxophones and recorders (all sizes)
- Brass instruments – cornets, trumpets, trombones, tubas or any instrument you may find in a brass band
- Bowed strings - violins, violas, cellos, double basses.

Currently we cannot incorporate percussion or guitars, ukuleles etc.

The band play a diverse range of music from pop songs to folk dance tunes and classical pieces. Over the six years we have been playing together we have entertained the local community at numerous concerts and events. We warmly welcome audience members and potential new players to listen and learn from each other each week and experience real teamwork when performing to create the best sound we can.

Within the Eccleshall Community Band a subgroup of players began a recorder

ensemble called Tooty Flooty which is led by Kathryn Stevenson. The range of recorders include the garklein, soprano, soprano, treble, tenor, bass and great bass. Tooty Flooty rehearse on a Wednesday in term time, an hour before band begins - from 7pm to 8pm at Holy Trinity Church in Eccleshall.

Here is where we will be appearing for you to hear us this year: -

• Band and Tooty Flooty Concert
Wednesday 18th March 2026
from 8-9pm at Holy Trinity Church

• Charity Concert with Broughton Community Choir and Schools Friday
May 8th from 7.30pm
Holy Trinity Church

• Band and Tooty Flooty Concert
Wednesday 15th July from 8-9pm
Holy Trinity Church

• Eccleshall Singathon – **October 17th** –
daytime at Eccleshall Community Centre

• Christmas Tree Festival –
November 27th – daytime at
Holy Trinity Church

• Band and Tooty Flooty Concert
Wednesday 9th December from 8-9pm
at Holy Trinity Church

Get in touch with us on Facebook :
@EccleshallCommunityBand or phone
01785 851259

Eccleshall Community Band

Everyone is welcome to join us at 8pm on Wednesday 18th March at Holy Trinity Church, Eccleshall for our

Spring Concert

Doors open at 7.45pm

Not ticketed and free admission

Donations welcome and will go to the Band and Holy Trinity Church

Find us on Facebook

eccleshallcommunityband@gmail.com

Gnosall Comedy Festival 2026

Jokes on Us Comedy Club, who have produced comedy nights in Staffordshire since 2023, have announced the return of Gnosall Comedy Festival in March 2026.

The three day showcase of standup comedy is headlined by top TV comedian Josh Pugh, star of upcoming Channel 4 sitcom Stepping Up, Shooting Stars cult hero Angelos Epithemiou and bonafide comedy legend, Jimmy Cricket.

The three headliners will be supported by Live at the Apollo stars Harriet Dyer and Louise Young alongside Rosie Jones' Disability Extravaganza star Matty Oxley and up-and-comer Harvey Hawkins.

The festival will take place between **20th-22nd March** at Gnosall Grosvenor Centre and the last few tickets are available from ticketsource.co.uk

Resident comper of Jokes on Us Comedy Club, Alex Hylton, who grew up in Bednall, South Staffordshire said: *'Since we launched our first show in Gnosall back in 2023, Gnosall has become one of my favourite venues, it's always a great atmosphere and the local community have been really supportive of the local comedy nights.*

It's great to bring top TV comedians to such an intimate venue. Word has been getting round the circuit about Gnosall Comedy Club...comedians are always pestering me to book them in, so when we had the chance to organise Gnosall Comedy Festival, I knew we could get a belting lineup together, and I was right! I reckon it'll be the best lineup happening anywhere in the country that weekend, and it's not in a theatre, it's not at the Comedy Store, it's in a village hall in rural Staffordshire!'

JOKES ON US PROUDLY PRESENTS

GNOSALL COMEDY FESTIVAL

20-22 MARCH 2026

FRI 20 MAR FROM 8PM £15	SAT 21 MAR FROM 8PM £16	SUN 22 MAR FROM 8PM £15
ANGELOS EPITHEMIOU <small>AS SEEN ON SHOOTING STARS, SOCCER AM, THE ANGELOS EPITHEMIOU SHOW</small>	JOSH PUGH <small>AS SEEN ON LIVE AT THE APOLLO, MOCK THE WEEK, THE LAST LEG & STEPPING UP</small>	JIMMY CRICKET <small>BONA FIDE COMEDY LEGEND, AS SEEN ON LITERALLY EVERYTHING IN THE 80s!</small>
HARRIET DYER <small>AS SEEN ON LIVE AT THE APOLLO</small>	LOUISE YOUNG <small>LIVE AT THE APOLLO / COMEDY CENTRAL LIVE</small>	EDI JOHNSTON <small>MUSICAL COMEDY AWARDS WINNER</small>
HARVEY HAWKINS <small>BIRMINGHAM COMEDY FEST BREAKING TALENT WINNER</small>	MATTY OXLEY <small>ROSIE JONES' DISABILITY COMEDY EXTRAVAGANZA</small>	ALEX HYLTON <small>WINNER OF BEST SHOW AT LEICESTER COMEDY FESTIVAL</small>
MC: ALEX HYLTON	MC: ALEX HYLTON	SCAN THE QR CODE FOR TICKETS

GNOSALL GROSVENOR CENTRE
High Street, Gnosall, Stafford, ST20 0EX

LIMITED NUMBER OF WEEKEND PASSES AVAILABLE - £40 TO ACCESS ALL THREE SHOWS!

The three day event starts on Friday 20th March with a show featuring Angelos Epithemiou who became a cult favourite on BBC series Shooting Stars before memorable appearances on SoccerAM, Dave's One Night Stand and his own Channel 4 series, The Angelos Epithemiou Show. Angelos will be joined by Live at the Apollo's Harriet Dyer and rising star Harvey Hawkins whose viral sketches have earned him thousands of online followers.

Saturday 21st's show is headlined by Josh Pugh, best known for his appearances on Mock the Week, QI, Richard Osman's House of Games and The Last Leg. Josh is joined by Louise Young, fresh from supporting Jason Manford on a national tour and rising star Matty Oxley.

The weekend of laughs will round off on Sunday 22nd with an extended headline set from comedy legend Jimmy Cricket. Boasting a comedy career spanning five decades, Gnosall Comedy Festival is a rare chance to catch one of the biggest names of the 1980s in action.

Alex Hylton, who grew up in Staffordshire before becoming a professional comedian and winning the Leicester Comedy Festival 'Best Show' in 2020, will comper the three-day extravaganza.

Tickets range from £15-£18.50 from [Ticketsource.co.uk](https://ticketsource.co.uk) or by searching online for 'Gnosall Comedy Festival.'

Three Anniversaries For Girl Guiding In Stone

By Philip Leason MBE

This year marks two important milestones in the history of the Girl Guide movement in Stone and one nationally.

Firstly a little about the history of Guiding nationally. The Boy Scout movement was founded by Robert Baden-Powell, the foundational camp was held in August 1907 on Brownsea Island. The movement was officially launched in January 1908 with the publication of "Scouting for Boys."

In 1909 a Scout Rally was being held at the Crystal Palace which was gate-crashed by a group of girls calling themselves Girl Scouts and demanding a similar organisation to the scouts for girls.

It was felt that having girls as scouts and doing the similar things to the boys was totally un-lady like and so in 1910 Baden Powell asked his sister Agnes Baden-Powell to start a separate organisation for them.

It was felt the title Girl Scouts was too masculine, and it may antagonise the boys and parents would be reluctant to allow girls to join the scouts. Baden-Powell therefore decides to call the new unit Girl Guides, after The British Army Corps Guides in India and the reputation and resourcefulness of the Swiss Mountain Guides.



Olave Lady Baden-Powell photographed by a Stone Guider on one of her visits to the county

In 1914 a group was formed for girls aged eight to ten, originally known as Rosebuds they were later renamed Brownies. Over the years the movement has expanded with the establishment of Rangers in 1916 and Young Leaders in March 1973. In 1987 Rainbows were formed for girls aged 5-7.

In 1918 Robert married Olave Soames and she became the Chief Guide.

Girl Guiding in Stone started thanks to the Rev. Arthur Haig, the Minister of the Congregational Church in Granville Terrace (now apartments) assisted by the Rev. A. Stevenson the Congregational Minister of Burslem and Miss Howard, Captain of the 1st Burslem Guide Company. The Rev. Haig had seen how successful the Guides were in Burslem and was keen to establish a unit in Stone.

The idea was discussed by the Rev. Haig at the Elders Meeting of the church and it was resolved to recommend the formation of a unit at the "ordinary meeting" held on Monday 19th July, 1915 and the resolution was passed unanimously. The first meeting of the new group was held in October 1915.

The group proved to be popular among the girls mainly from the church and at the Church monthly meeting of 1st November, 1915 it was resolved to give the Guides the sum of £5 to help them get established. The group was registered at Guide Headquarters in London on 22nd February, 1916. One can only imagine how many girls have been involved with Guides in those 110 years and the memories they have.

During the First World War the Guides took an active part in the war

effort knitting socks etc., entertaining the wounded soldiers housed in St. Joseph's Hall (now St. Dominic's Social Centre) and going around the streets with a handcart collecting waste paper.

As Guiding started to grow within the county (by 1917 there were 200 enrolled Guides in Staffordshire) it was decided to form districts and Stone Division came into being in February 1919.

I wonder how many ladies who were Brownies or Guide remember the various badges that they undertook. It was from 1910 various badges were introduced which were designed to help girls explore new interests, develop skills and gain confidence through often self-led activities. The Brownie program began in 1914.

One such badge was "the hostess" (which was popular in the 1960's) whereby a girl had to demonstrate skills in sending a invitation, preparing the room, welcoming guests, making a cup of tea and serving refreshments.

Another popular badge was "The Laundress" where a girl had to prove proficiency in washing, ironing and in treating fabrics. In the 1960's the requirements were updated to include using a washing machine and reading fabric labels.

The needle work badge include learning such stitches as herring bone, feather stitch, button hole and how to darn (I wonder how many people still darn today and still have a darning mushroom).

Over the years the badge programme has been adapted to meet changing hobbies and modern interest and skills. In the 2020's a new range of badges, including Digital Design and Entrepreneur was introduced and today there are over 72 badges a girl can choose from.

Another aspect of Guiding particularly in the early days focusing on building outdoor skills, teamwork and activities like pitching tents, cooking on open fires and various crafts. Key activities include wide games, scavenger hunts, pioneering and of course camp fire songs. Again I am sure many readers will have memories of guide camps or Brownie sleep overs.

As you can imagine as well as unit activities the Guides in Stone have taken part in many county, national and international activities and events over their 110 years of history.

From the start guiding in Stone have always taken part in many of the events in the town including Chairman's Sunday (now the Civic Sunday), commemorations such as the Peace Celebrations after both wars, Royal events and the Stone Festival parade. I am sure many have memories of riding on floats decorated on Bass or Bassett lorries or taking part in walking groups.

The next anniversary I want to mention is Thinking Day when members remember the founders of scouting and guiding and indeed guiding throughout the world.



The Guides taking part in Chairman's Sunday in the 1920's

It was in 1926 during the 4th World Guiding Conference in America where the delegates decided to establish 22nd February as a day for international friendship. The date was chosen as it marks the shared birthdays of Lord Baden-Powell (22-02-1857) and his wife the World Chief Guide Olave Baden Powell (22-02-1889). (In 1999 the day was renamed "World Thinking Day" to emphasize the global nature of guiding). As part of thinking day every Guiding member renew the Promise that they made when they joined the movement.

In 1932 at the 7th World Conference a Belgian delegate suggested using the day to raise funds, which led to the creation of the World Thinking Day Fund to support international projects. Later that year, Lady Baden-Powell wrote a letter informing guides about the idea and asked them to spare a penny to help support Girl Guiding around the world.



Guides on parade in the High Street in 1923 passing the Midland Bank and Black Horse public house

The various Guide Divisions arranged events (often a church service) for girls to take their "Thinking Day Pennies." Girls sought out a new shiny penny or cleaned one with Brasso. In 1984 the first official "Thinking Day Badge" was issued.

Back to 1932 and it was also an important year for the Scouts as to celebrate Lord Baden-Powell's 75th birthday they started "Founders Day" at which they renewed their promises and reflected on scouting values.

The last anniversary being celebrated this year by Stone Division is the 50th anniversary of the start of the Guide show "A Handful of Songs" as was mentioned in last month's Stone Gazette.

In 1975 the Guide Captain of 1st Barlaston Guides, Maureen Recine decided to put on a show at Christmas for the senior citizens of the village. The event was held in the Parish Room in Barlaston from the 11th to 13th January 1975. The problem was that there was no room there for a changing room and so a marquee was erected on the car park with a covered walk way to the stage. Apparently the cast of 38 Guides from Barlaston, Oulton and Tittensor froze as they went back and forth.

To stage the show Maureen had borrowed £25 from Barlaston Guides and was able to pay it back with a profit of £48. It was agreed that the show had been a success and was greatly enjoyed by those in the audience as well as those who took part and it should be repeated sometime.

The 1979 show was again performed in the Parish Room at Barlaston with Brownies taking part in the cast for the first time.

It was apparent the show was something both the audience and those taking part really enjoyed and looked forward to and so it was decided to put on a show every two years. As the Scouts also put on a Gang Show it was arranged they would put on theirs in "odd years" and the Guides would put theirs on in "even years."

Originally the cast came from Stone Outward Division but in 1984 it was extended to Stone and Eccleshall Division.

In 1982 the show moved to the theatre at Alleyne's school and more recently has moved to the Stoke Rep. Over the years the shows have become more ambitious and one can only marvel at the amount of hours of planning that goes into a show by Maureen Recine and her team. Rehearsals start after Christmas and are held every Sunday afternoon.

This year's production of "A Handful of Songs" takes place the Rep Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent from **Tuesday 31st March to Saturday 4th April** and tickets are now on sale.

I hope that this article has brought back memories to some readers and been 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 at www.staffspasttrack.org.uk

All photographs will be treated with the utmost care and returned safely to their owner after they have made digital copies.

Philip Leason



Stone Scout and Guide Band Parade on the High Street at Eccleshall Festival in 1997. Photo credit staffspasttrack.org.uk

Stone Scout and Guide Band 40th Reunion Event - *Get In Touch*

Stone Scout and Guide Band is celebrating their 40th Anniversary this year. The band was started in 1986 with Kath Pickering as Bandmaster.

The Band has been a permanent fixture in the town ever since, offering young people over the age of 8 the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, learn discipline and to work as part of a team.

We are often found at the head of parades and events in Stone and the surrounding areas. Generations of young people have passed through our doors.

We are looking to hold a **reunion event in July**.

If you were a member of the band, or know of anyone that was, please ask them to get in touch with us.



It would be good to have as many past members present as possible. Please contact Nichola Abbott on 07866 101998.



Stone Lions Quiz Night Raises £587

St Dominic's Social Centre was packed to capacity on Saturday 24th January for the Stone Lions Club (CIO) Annual Fun Quiz Night, with over 90 attendees.

The evening was a great success, with an amazing £587 being raised for local causes.

Questions covered a wide range of subjects, some more imaginative than others, and there were a number of very

puzzled faces at times but everyone seemed to enjoy the evening.

Thanks go to the Richard and Adrian from St Dominic's who manned the bar during the evening and helped with setting out the room, Quizmaster Dave who compiled the Quiz and to everyone who came along on the night to support the event.

Barlaston Through The Years

By Chris Copp of Staffordshire Archives & Heritage

For this edition, we take a look at some of the images of Barlaston from the Staffordshire Past Track website www.staffspasttrack.org.uk

The village's more recent history has been dominated by the Wedgwood factory but it is an ancient parish with a much longer history.

The name Barlaston is Anglo-Saxon in origin and is derived from 'Beornwulf's tun (i.e. farmstead or enclosure)'. The mediaeval parish church of St. Peter remains but was abandoned due to mining subsidence and a new church opened on Station Road in 1984.

Barlaston still retains its village identity, with its village green and rural surroundings.



1906 Barlaston Hall Under Repair, 1984

Barlaston Hall stands on a hill, overlooking the Trent Valley.

It was built in 1756 for Thomas Mills, an attorney from Leek. The design is attributed to Sir Robert Taylor.

In 1774 Barlaston Hall featured on one of the dishes of a dinner service produced by Josiah Wedgwood for Empress Catherine II of Russia. Barlaston Hall and estate was later purchased by the Wedgwood family in 1937; they developed a modern factory and village there.

In the late 1940s the hall became the Wedgwood Memorial College but, due to dry rot, the college was forced to move to 'The Limes' in 1949.

The hall was neglected and fell into disrepair, but was renovated in the 1980s.

(Staffordshire County Museum / Save Britain's Heritage)

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.



Trent and Mersey Canal, Barlaston, 1890.

A horse-drawn narrowboat approaches the photographer. (Mr A. Kirkham)



Pupils at Barlaston Village School, about 1916-1920

A group of pupils in the playground of Barlaston School. Barlaston School was built in 1845 as a charity school, and extended in 1861. It became a public elementary school in 1873. The school closed in 1963 when it became Barlaston Library. This in turn closed in 2008. A postcard view by Stone photographer Phillip Dutton, of 63 High Street. (Mr B. Kirkland)



Brook House, Old Road, Barlaston, 1890.

Looking north towards Trentham from Barlaston along Old Road. Brook House is on the right and still stands. The ford has been culverted. (Mr A. Kirkham).



Aerial View of The Wedgwood Factory, Barlaston, about 1960.

Josiah Wedgwood (1730 - 1795)

began his

apprenticeship as a

potter in 1744.

He started his own

pottery business

at Ivy House in

Burslem 1759.

As Wedgwood

experiment with

new techniques

and glazes, his

business expanded

and he moved to

the Brick House or Bell

works in 1762. In 1766 he

began to plan a new

factory on the Ridge House

estate, which he named

'Etruria' after the ancient

Etruscan potters.

The present factory was

built 1938 - 1940 on the

Barlaston estate, purchased

from the Broughton-

Adderley family in 1936. The

move from Etruria only took

place in 1950, due to the

intervention of the Second

World War. The circular

building on the right is the

Round House, the

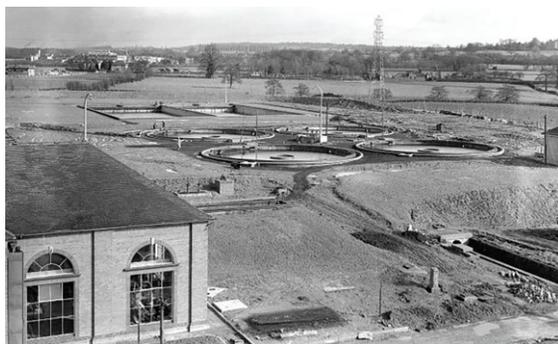
Wedgwood Design Studio.

In the foreground can be

seen the sports field

belonging to the factory.

(Wedgwood Museum)



Strongford Sewage Plant construction, Barlaston, late 1940s.

The main pump house and circular slurry tanks. By 1924, the first sewage filter beds had been built on the site of Strongford Mill on the River Trent, between Stoke on Trent and Barlaston. New slurry beds were built in 1938. Further expansion at Strongford was authorised in 1946 and this phase of the work was completed by 1951. (Mr J. Fisher)



The Hammer Strikes Back: Star Wars Toys Perform Well At Auction

It seems the force is still strong among Star Wars collectors, with a pair of Star Wars: Return of the Jedi toys putting in a strong performance at Staffordshire auction house Cuttlestones' recently.

Among the highlights was Lot 438, a Star Wars: Return of the Jedi Scout Walker Vehicle, complete with its original box, which marched its way to a hammer price of £100. Condition and originality remain key factors for collectors, and the presence of the original packaging helped ensure competitive bidding.

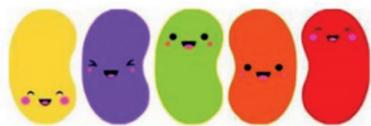
Even stronger results followed with Lot 439, a varied collection of boxed and carded Return of the Jedi toys, including the Hoth Rescue MTV-7, offered alongside a Star Trek Shuttlecraft Goddard mini playset. The eclectic grouping clearly appealed to sci-fi enthusiasts, with the lot achieving an impressive £550.



MD and head auctioneer, Ben Gamble, told the Gazette "Vintage Star Wars collectables from the original trilogy continue to attract strong interest from bidders – and these lots were no exception.

As early examples become more scarce, well-preserved toys from the late 1970s and 1980s are increasingly being viewed as serious collectables rather than playthings."

Cuttlestones is now welcoming consignments for upcoming specialist and collectors' sales. Anyone considering selling toys, collectables or pop-culture memorabilia is invited to get in touch for a free, no-obligation valuation via WhatsApp 07949 603872 or email valuations@cuttlestones.co.uk



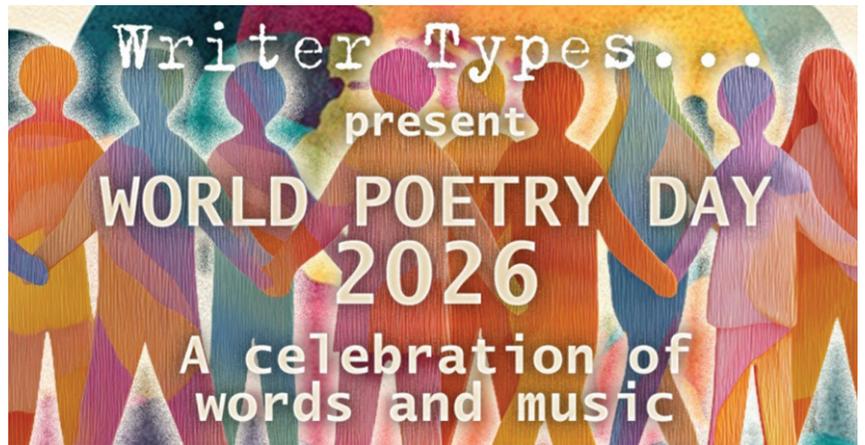
Jelly Tots

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 11.00am.**

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?



World Poetry Day 2026 Comes To Stafford

On **Saturday March 21st**, UNESCO's famed celebration of the enduring power of poetry to express human emotion, celebrated since 1999, is coming to our county – and you are invited!

Hosting the day long celebration of this year's World Poetry Day in words, music and food is the Stafford writing group, Writer Types. **It takes place at Stafford Cricket & Hockey Club ST16 3WB between 10 a.m. and 5pm** and visitors do not have to be a poet to attend the celebration, but do have to be open to listening to words in another language, happy to be entertained by stories from the other side of the world in their own and hungry for good food of the literal variety.



Charles Kouasseu

The day starts with the rare opportunity to work with one of the UK's most respected translation specialists, the Poetry Translation Centre, London, who will teach participants how to preserve the music of the original language and how much of a part culture and the environment play in translation.

The workshop is open to everyone and participants don't need any prior knowledge of the language, literature or culture that is translated.

Street food from around the world will provide a delicious lunch break before the afternoon gets underway, under the genial eye of the renowned and ever-entertaining Stafford based poet and film maker, David Brazziel. The music of poetry in the mother tongues of, amongst others, Poland, Indonesia, Trinidad, and Bengali, is first up.

"We often hear the spoken word of poetry or other literature in our own language," says Ingrid Wagner, co-organiser of the event. "Listening to the same stories and poems in a different language has a strange kind of beauty to it. There will be

simultaneous translation into English on a screen with visuals to illustrate."

Music itself will come from the guitar strings of Algeria, Brazil, Africa, Spain and the reels of Scotland and Ireland plus the ever popular Fish from Oblivion who started on their world cruise of singing traditions in around 1998, they say, and haven't really managed to get off since.

They'll be singing songs from all parts of the globe, stopping off in Bulgaria, Georgia, America, the Middle East and the Middle Ages.

And a treat for the last part of the afternoon comes with Cathy Carson, Northern Ireland's incomparable queen of words, taking her audiences from tragedy to joy with her mesmeric delivery and from Cameroon's master storyteller, Charles Kouasseu in a performance designed to captivate, educate and inspire his audience with "The King's Chair", part of the rich tapestry of African folklore.

Saturday 21st March has never looked or sounded so fine! The event is sponsored by Stafford's newest and most successful independent bookshop, That Little Bookshop and will be supporting literacy based charities in Staffordshire.

For more details on the day's programme and to book tickets, head to <https://www.writertypes.co.uk>

For more information on Writer Types, head to FB / Instagram Writer Types.



10:00am - 12:30pm Translation workshop

Translating prose is relatively easy, but poetry is far more demanding. How do you preserve the music of the original language? This workshop by The Poetry Translation Centre is a special start to a very special day.

12:30-5:00pm
David Brazziel
presents
World Poetry Day 2026
The celebration



The Many Voices of One World

World music

Cathy Carson

Charles Kouasseu

World food available all afternoon

Circle of Friends

CUPPA & CHAT GROUP

Every other Wednesday
2-4pm

Held at
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In association with
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Bereavement & Loss
Support Service



Circle of Friends Offering Comfort, Companionship & Understanding

Bereavement, loss and loneliness are experiences that touch many of us throughout life. Some find comfort in sharing with family or friends - others may prefer to cope in silence, or feel they have no one to turn to at all.

'Circle of Friends' is a supportive community group created by and for those who understand what you're going through. We offer a warm hand of friendship, a listening ear and a space where you're never judged, only supported by others who have walked a similar path.

The group is led and supported by trained bereavement support workers, and most people who come to the group have come via Co-op funeralcare, after arranging funerals as well as through our service.

What can I expect at a meeting?

You might be surprised - it's not all sadness and silence. You'll likely hear laughter, see smiles and feel the warmth of genuine connection. Whether you choose to share your thoughts or simply sit back and listen, you'll be met with kindness and understanding.

From your very first visit, our friendly volunteers will welcome you, introduce you to others and help you to feel at ease with a comforting cuppa in hand, of course.

Grief and loss are part of a journey. There are good days and difficult ones, but having something to look forward to - a chat, a cup of tea, a moment of connection - can make a real difference.

We offer you our hand of friendship. You don't have to face it alone.

Meetings will take place every fortnight, from 2pm until 4pm at Co-op Funeral Care, High Street Stone. You can stay for the 2 hours or just pop in for half an hour or so!

Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be available.

It would be helpful if you can let us know if you are planning to come by emailing lesleybailey058@gmail.com or by calling Jill Forkin at the Co-Op on 01785 813375 or email stone.funeralcare@coop.co.uk

These sessions are in association Stafford & District Bereavement & Loss Support Service and Co-op Funeralcare, Stone.

The next ones coming up are...

18TH MARCH 2 - 4PM, 1ST APRIL 2 - 4PM, 15TH APRIL 2 - 4PM, 29TH APRIL 2 - 4PM, 13TH MAY 2 - 4PM, 27TH MAY 2 - 4PM

In the last Gazette we announced that Stafford & District Bereavement & Loss Support Service (SDBLSS) had been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service, in recognition of our charity work in the community.

The date has been confirmed for the Kings Award Celebration with agreement of the Staffordshire District Lieutenant, Liz Barnes on Monday 15th June 2026 at 7pm at the Civic Offices in Stafford.



Staffordshire Gardens And Parks Trust

An exciting new window opens in 2026 for each of you who loves real nature, and who loves beautiful GARDENS especially.

Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust has been bringing joy to its members for many years; however for too long it has almost remained a secret, until now....

In 2026 the Trust is re-presenting itself and its long standing events to all new-comers! This year it's dedicated committee have created a special programme of garden visits designed especially to appeal to potential new members who may be thinking, on reading this, that they might like to come along and share the unique pleasure of the many beautiful gardens in our County.

As well as sharing gardens cared for and maintained by like-minded enthusiasts you will meet new friends who share this valuable interest with you. Every visit concludes with welcome refreshments in a lovely setting, quality time to meet and chat with new and old friends. The Trust exists to make every visit and all the pleasures affordable for all, the visits are not expensive. There are real incentives to join the Trust:

New visitors please fill in the membership form on the website <https://sgpt.org.uk/> And return to the membership secretary John Hyde at hyde.john@gmail.com OR call John in person on 07957 811930.

You will then enjoy free membership of the Trust for the first year and receive booking details and prices for each event in the year, three weeks or so in advance.

Do study the following fascinating list of visits and consider who you might like to come along with you on your first visit. We will make you all very welcome! This is certainly the year for new members to join!

Programme of Events 2026

Thursday 30th April A visit to The Old Vicarage, Fulford, preceded by a short Annual General Meeting at Fulford Village Hall. A rare 'not to be missed' opportunity to experience the many features in one large privately owned garden of the Old Vicarage. As well as the

ornate vegetable gardens and the formal garden, there is an extensive and imaginative arboretum with carefully maintained grass paths and more than one hundred specimen trees from all over the world. There is a circular walk around a beautiful lake to one side of the arboretum.

Thursday 11th June Biddulph Old Hall, Biddulph Guided tour of the gardens and house followed by tea and cakes. Brian Vowles, who bought and restored the derelict historic gardens with Nigel Daly will guide us. The Pevsner entry will whet your appetite. This is a not to be missed visit. (See Pevsner).

Saturday 4th July Chillington Hall, Codsall Wood, Wolverhampton, Tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival followed by a motorised tour of the gardens and park, and a tour of the house, a ploughman's lunch, and a self-guided visit to the gardens adjacent to the house. Charlie Gifford took over the running of the estate and house from his parents John and Crescent in 2024 and set about investing to bring in more paying visitors to fund the running of the estate. This visit includes a ride in a trailer to see the parkland and the James Paine bridge. It is worth reading the entry in Pevsner to prepare for the visit.

Wednesday 7th October Shugborough A guided tour of the newly opened Forest Garden which is now called Arcadia, and we shall be able to see progress made on the walled garden since our last visit in 2022. Also, progress on opening the Lichfield Drive entrance and visitor facilities due to open in 2026. Members could have lunch afterwards in the Mansion Tea Room

Late October or early November (Date to be agreed) The Cloister House, Blithfield. An illustrated talk by Sir Henry Every on the founding and development of the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas followed by tea and cakes. This talk will enhance your subsequent visits to the arboretum. The 2024 Pevsner entry for Blithfield provides some information on Blithfield.



Eyes down for a full house - it was a full house on the night too!

Stone Division Chocolate Bingo!

Girlguiding Stone division brought the community together for an evening of laughter, prizes and plenty of chocolate at its recent Chocolate Bingo Night.

Held in Stone, the event welcomed Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers, leaders, families and local supporters for a sweet twist on the traditional game of bingo. Instead of cash prizes, winners took home an array of chocolate treats, from popular bars to boxed favourites,



Girlguiding International opportunities in the future. To date we have 2 girls off to Mexico and 2 girls and a leader off to Norway in 2027. There will be a trip closer to home for our younger guides to give them a taster of what could be on offer, but no decisions have been made as yet about that trip.



Lisa Kane - Division Commissioner said "The Chocolate Bingo Night was a fantastic example of how guiding continues to thrive locally, thanks to the enthusiasm of volunteers and the backing of families and the wider community". Lisa extended her thanks to everyone who donated chocolate prizes, helped organise the event, or came along to support it.

much to the delight of players of all ages. The hall was buzzing from the first call of "eyes down", with excited whispers as players checked their numbers and compared winnings. Younger members eagerly scanned their bingo cards while parents and grandparents joined in the fun, creating a real sense of togetherness across the generations.

Funds raised during the evening will support girls and leaders attending

If you know a young person who would like to be part of Girlguiding in Stone or you would like to become an adult volunteer to support our young people and discover new skills and opportunities, please get in touch.

You can register with Girlguiding on website: www.girlguiding.org.uk or contact: Lisa Kane, Division Commissioner - Stonedivision8@gmail.com



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