

THE STONE & ECCLESHALL *Gazette*

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025



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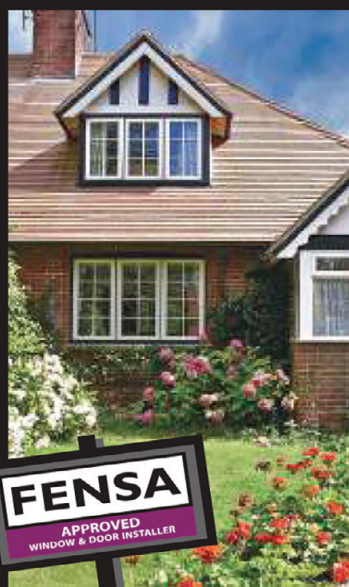


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CONTENTS



NEWS

- *New Town Mayor, Cllr. Jason Metters*
- *The Picture House Programme 2025*
- *Rowing Squad Reach Crowdfunding Goal*
- *Frankie Aged 6, Raises Incredible £5k*
- *Gold Medals For Local Athletes*
- *Important Meeting To Discuss Norton Bridge Pub*

IN PICTURES

- *Croxton Community Well Dressing Festival*
- *Old Alleynians Presentation Day*
- *Burma Star Commemoration*
- *Lions Meet The Vikings*
- *Ramblers Celebrate 30 Years*
- *Stone Marks Victory In Japan (VJ) Day - 80th Anniversary*



HERITAGE

- *The 200th Anniversary Of The Railway*

A Fascinating History Of Stone's Railway Past.

By Philip Leason MBE

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GETTING IN TOUCH

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Martin Robinson

The views expressed in this publication are those of our contributors, and are not necessarily those of the publishers, nor indeed their responsibility.

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

If you're about to cry, call in the professionals!

What a busy couple of months it's been, after living in my new house for over a year now, I decided I could no longer live with my pink and blue kitchen walls (*who even does that?*). I've been decorating one room at a time since moving in, but putting off the kitchen and opting for the smaller, easier rooms, like the home office, utility room and downstairs loo instead.

As soon as the magazines were all out, I donned my scruffs and got the roller out, and just like magic, there were no more pink walls. I changed the lights, blinds and the sink and tap too, the one that was currently in looked like one you'd find at a communal washing up area at a camp site, you know, well battered! I was quite proud of my DIY achievements, I'm not the best, unfortunately I've inherited my dad's handyman abilities, and he was known in the family as 'Willy Fixit?'

However, despite my, quite frankly top-notch workmanship, the new sink waste out wasn't in the same place as the old sinks out, and no matter what configuration of pipes and connectors I bought and tried, it just kept leaking!

Almost at the point of crying, I reached for the Gazette small ads and rang Rob, from Johnson's Plumbing, who within 30 minutes had got rid of the maze of old pipes and put in a new clean simple section of pipework (*thank you Rob!*) It just goes to show, if you're about to cry, call in the professionals!

It's been busy in Stone and Ecclesham too, loads have been happening to share with you inside, and of course there's lots of things coming up to do in September and October too.

Congratulations, firstly, go to Frankie Griffin aged 6, who has raised an incredible £5,100 for Dougie Mac after climbing Mount Snowdon, in memory of her Nan. *Well done Frankie!*

Also, staying in the mountains, to Janice Curtis, who entered the Peak District Ultra Walk 75km, raising £1200 for Age Concern Stone and District.

We have a New Mayor, and a New President! Our new Town Mayor is Cllr. Jason Metters, who was inducted into the Office of Town Mayor at the Civic Sunday Parade and Church Service on 13th July.

And new Stone Lions President, Lion Dave Handley, takes over the reins from Lion Glenys Sanders for the coming year, we wish them both a very successful and fulfilling term of office.

Anniversary celebrations this time for Jeffries Property Buyers and Peter Bowers Opticians, who both proudly celebrate their 40th anniversary in business, and to Stone Ramblers who celebrate 30 years of walking together.

Don't let me hear you saying there's never anything to do, as coming up in September and October we have...

A Classic Car Show, A Memorial Concert, Gardening Club Meetings, Vegan Market, A High Street Event To Celebrate Blue Light Heroes, Halloween Fest, Sandon Park Estate Walk, Chebsey History Society Exhibition, Sandon History Talk, Heritage Days, Ginger And Spice Festival, Ingestre Wedding Show, National Trust Talks, Live Theatre At Hilderstone Village Hall And At Crown Wharf Theatre, New Cinema Listings, An Irish Night, plus lots more events inside, but I'm running out of space here... *All the best, til next time*

Dan Mitchell 31/8/25

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A Whale Of A Time At Westbridge Park

Stone Town Council were behind the sudden arrival of a huge, inflatable whale to the 'shores' of the River Trent, and the Trent and Mersey Canal on Tuesday 12th August.

The 18 metre long sperm whale became 'beached' in Westbridge Park for the day, with live performances taking place inside its belly!

The free, family event was aimed at children aged 3-10 years, however many adults enjoyed the fun too, the spectacle drew huge crowds to the park, to explore

the enormous inflatable member of the Cetacea Family (Whale).

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Council's Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee said "The Council is very aware that keeping the kids entertained during the summer holidays can be a challenge, and it is often very difficult to find interesting, free activities, so I was very pleased that we are able to offer this new event to Stone families."

Photo by Martin Robinson



Celebrating Girlguiding Success at 3rd Stone Guides

It's been a fantastic term for our Girlguiding unit here at 3rd Stone Guides! We're proud to share some incredible achievements from our Guides, whose dedication, teamwork, and community spirit continue to shine.

Five Guides Achieve Bronze Award, see photo above. Over the last year, five of our Guides were awarded their Bronze Award, marking a significant milestone in their Girlguiding journey. This achievement reflects months of commitment and hard work across the six programme themes: Know Myself, Express Myself, Be Well, Have Adventures, Take Action, and Skills for My Future.

To earn their Bronze Award, each girl completed a mix of skills builders, interest badges, and section challenges, showing perseverance and creativity along the way. From learning practical life skills to contributing to their community, these Guides have grown in confidence and capability—and we couldn't be prouder!

1st Stone Rangers Step Up for Sangam Adventure! Meanwhile, two of our Rangers (photo below) are working hard to fundraise for the trip of a lifetime - a visit to Sangam, one of Girlguiding's

World Centres, located in India. This international experience is not just about travel; it's a chance for them to meet Girl Guides and Girl Scouts from around the world, develop leadership skills, and take part in community action projects.

Their fundraising efforts have included everything from local events and sponsored challenges to community stalls and craft sales. It's inspiring to see their commitment and initiative as they work towards this amazing opportunity, which will take place in July 2026. Keep your eyes peeled as to where they may next pop up, or if you wish to help and support them in donations/ sponsorships reach out.

Join the Adventure We're always excited to welcome new members to our unit—whether you're a girl looking for fun and adventure, or an adult interested in volunteering. Girlguiding offers something for everyone, and our local group is a vibrant and supportive space for girls to thrive.

For more information on joining or supporting Girlguiding please visit <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/>



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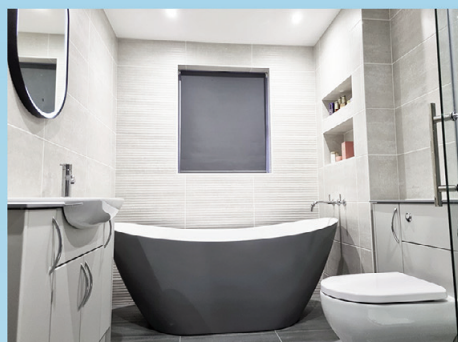
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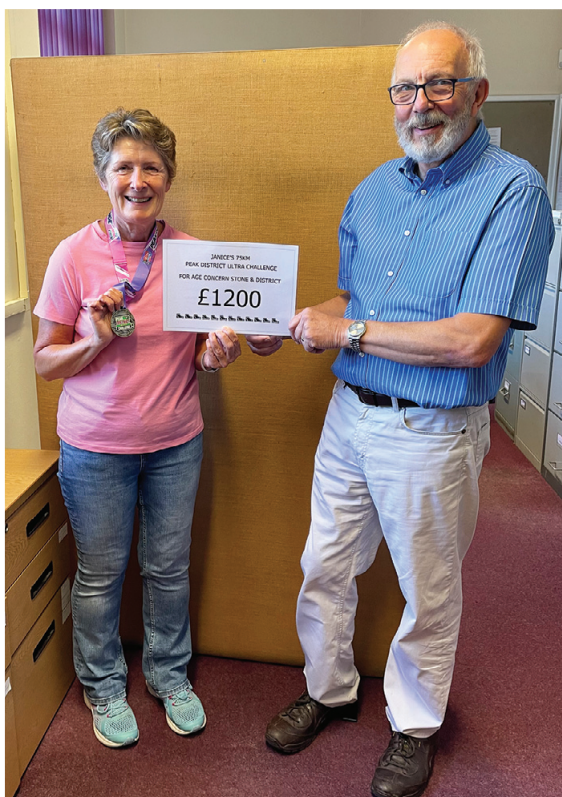


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Janice presents the amount raised so far to Neil Norman, Treasurer of Age Concern Stone and District.

Janice Completes Charity 75km Ultra Walk

Congratulations go to Janice Curtis who on 28th/29th June entered the Peak District Ultra Walk 75km, in aid of her chosen charity, Age Concern Stone and District.

Janice, who is an Office Volunteer at Age Concern Stone and District told the Gazette "I completed the walk (in 23 hours, 14 minutes) and to date have collected £1200 in sponsorship money, which will greatly benefit our charity. Many thanks to all of you who have donated."

If you'd like to make a donation to Age Concern, you can by visiting their website at <https://age-concern-stone.chessck.co.uk/Donate> or by calling in person at 15, Station Road Stone ST15 8JP the current opening hours are 9.30 - 12.30, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.



Sandon Park Estate Walk

Don't miss this opportunity to have a guided walk around the lovely Sandon Park Estate.

We will be leaving All Saints Church car park in Sandon on **Sunday 28th September at 2pm**, and returning to the church for tea, and our now famous home made cakes!

Cost is £5 per person and there is no need to book. Just turn up on the day at 2pm and enjoy the walk.



Civic Sunday Parade and Church Service

The Civic Sunday Parade and Church Service took place on 13th July, when the walking parade left Station Road at 10.30am and proceeded down the High Street to St Michael and St Wulfads Church for the service, upholding the annual tradition of Town Mayor Making. The event was open to members of the public too, many of whom followed on down to the church.

Mayor making is the official induction of a new Town Mayor. Cllr. Jason Metters was inducted into the Office of Town Mayor, and is the new Stone Town Mayor.

Photos by Martin Robinson



The New Stone Town Mayor - Cllr. Jason Metters



Stone Town Mayor, Cllr. Jason Metters celebrates with fellow councillors and friends

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Gazette Eccleshall

NEWS IN BRIEF

Eccleshall Poetry Group

Eccleshall Poetry Group have that definite 'back to school' feeling as they return refreshed from their summer break.

Whilst thinking of the last days of summer, there is hope that the warm, sunny weather will continue, and they are reminded of 'September's Change' by Canadian poet Catherine Pulsifer.

*"September arrives with echoes of change,
A new chapter in life's intricate range.
Friends reunite, laughter fills the air,
As we embark on an academic affair."*

The group enjoy twice-monthly poetry meetings in Eccleshall Methodist Hall, Stone Road, Eccleshall ST21 6DL from 2.00pm – 4.00pm on the **1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.**

Each meeting has a theme but isn't actually overly academic, is always fun, and definitely enjoyable.

The first meeting after the summer break is on **Thursday 4th September** – 'Colours of the rainbow', then on **Thursday 18th September** – 'Poems about people', **Thursday 2nd October** - National Poetry Day – 'Play' and **Thursday 16th October** – 'Friendship'

Why not come along, bring your own poem choice to read, or simply listen and see what you think of the afternoon. This sociable group would love to welcome you.

Eccleshall Butterfly Observations The Year So Far...

Each year, and for many year now, Eccleshall Thomas W. W. Knowles has monitored butterfly numbers in Eccleshall. Having just brought his matrix of 2025 Butterfly observations up to date, here are his findings so far.

Thomas told the Gazette "After last year, 2025 has been quite exciting. In fact so far observations on 22 days have exceeded the best day in 2024.

I think I should mention that I discontinued the Unidentified Whites column this year from the beginning of July.

There have been large numbers of unidentified whites since then, but as it is difficult to identify Small Whites and Green Veined Whites on the wing and there are so many, both species are greatly understated compared with what is really on the wing.

It is worth noting that Small Tortoiseshells have made a bit of a recovery whilst Large Whites have been prolific."

REVIEWS MOVIE

by Joe Jenkinson



Weapons

Director: Zach Cregger

Starring: Julia Garner, Josh Brolin, Amy Madigan

Weapons continues 2025's horror hot streak with eerie small-town paranoia, chilling silences, and powerhouse turns from Julia Garner and Josh Brolin.

Though repetition and tonal inconsistency dull its impact, standout performances (especially Amy Madigan's villainy) keep it gripping. Not perfect, but a haunting, atmospheric entry in modern horror.

JJ Rating 4/5

Together

Director: Michael Shanks

Starring: Dave Franco, Allison Brie

Together cleverly fuses couple drama with grotesque body horror, made believable by real-life duo Dave Franco and Alison Brie.

Franco shines with vulnerability, while Brie's typecasting sometimes flattens key scenes. Though its metaphor of love as flesh is potent, rushed cult elements blunt an otherwise sharp, unsettling vision.

JJ Rating 3/5



The Life of Chuck

Director: Mike Flanagan

Starring: Tom Hiddleston, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Mark Hamill

The Life of Chuck moves backward through time in a surreal, emotionally rich meditation on life's fleeting magic.

Tom Hiddleston's dance-filled portrayal and Chiwetel Ejiofor's heartfelt turn anchor Mike Flanagan's philosophical, genre-defying tale, with stunning imagery yet uneven emotional cohesion.

JJ Rating 3/5

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Feel Warm Glazing Unveils New Garden Rooms and a Fresh Brand Identity

For almost a decade, FWG has been transforming homes across Staffordshire with high quality conservatories, warm roofs, orangeries, and glazing solutions. Now, as part of an exciting rebrand to reflect their innovation, they are proud to introduce the latest addition to their range: premium fully composite Garden Rooms.

This is more than just a new product - it's a leap forward in quality, design, and comfort. Built using the Leka Xi modular system, the FWG Garden Rooms offer a level of performance and finish far superior to the quick-build sheds and summerhouses often found locally. From the GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) structure to the choice of brick, render, or cladding finishes, every detail is designed for year-round comfort, style, and longevity.

FWG's Garden rooms contain NO TIMBER or metal, which means they are completely maintenance free so no painting, no corrosion and no rotting. Not only are these highly insulated rooms one of the most energy efficient in the UK, they are also designed for you to take them with you if you wish to move home.

And with their average installation taking only a few days, you can enjoy your new space without months of disruption. Whether you dream of a light-filled home office, a garden bar, a personal gym, or simply a peaceful retreat at the end of your garden, their new range blends practicality with elegance - backed by a 40-year materials warranty for total peace of mind that are designed for year round use.

As a family-run business based at Beacon Business Park in Stafford, they've built their reputation on personal service, attention to detail, and products that stand the test of time. This year marks another milestone as they prepare to open their brand-new Garden Room Showroom, where customers can explore the range in person, experience the quality first-hand, and be inspired by what's possible. FWG believes your home should work for you all year round, inside and out. Their rebrand reflects that belief - modern, confident, and committed to creating spaces you'll love for decades.

For more information, please contact the FWG team or visit feelwarm.co.uk.



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Stone Lions Meet The Vikings Down On The Farm

The members of Stone Lions Club have always been great supporters for everyone involved in the Oak Tree Farm Rural Project, recognising their valuable contribution towards making a difference in the lives of their Team Members - adults with additional needs.

This year, Lions were once again delighted to receive an invitation to their Annual Staycation, which took place at the farm on 22nd August; a day where all Team Members are invited along for a day of fun and special activities - this year's theme was 'Vikings'.

An authentic Viking village had been assembled, with several hardy Vikings camping overnight ready for an early start the next morning. Although a number of them looked exceedingly fierce, they spent a great deal of time interacting with Team Members, demonstrating their weapons and explaining their traditions, and even took part in a battle, which had the majority of the audience cheering loudly and spurring on their favourite warriors.

There were also plenty of opportunities

for Team Members to practice spear throwing with the Vikings and to decorate their very own shields.

As in previous years, Stone Lions had provided a lunch of hot pork baps, together with the appropriate stuffing and apple sauce, which was extremely popular, with enough 'leftovers' for second helpings for anyone still hungry!

Thanks must go to Griffin's Butchers of Adies Alley, Stone, for supplying everything at such a reasonable cost – your support is greatly appreciated as always, Nick.

In recognition of the efforts of all those connected with Oak Tree Farm, Stone Lions President, Lion Dave, presented a cheque for £200 to their Chief Officer, Wendy Robinson, to help towards the upkeep of the project.

Members of Stone Lions wish continued success to everyone at Oak Tree Farm - Team Members, Staff, Volunteers and Supporters - and really look forward to receiving an invitation to attend next year's Staycation!



Stone Lions President, Lion Dave, presenting a cheque to Chief Officer Wendy Robinson



Getting Crafty - Decorating the shields for battle!

Celebrations At The Crossings

A wonderful Celebration evening organized by futures2gether (at The Crossings) was enjoyed by those who attended.

The weather was warm and dry, picnics and drinks were brought along to enjoy at the interval. The evening was full of joy, laughter, signing, poetry reading, music and lots of wonderful star turns!

The clients who attend the futures2gether service all took part in the evening, whether it was performing, doing the sound, selling raffle tickets or giving out the raffle prizes. Everyone played a role in making it such a magical and successful evening; some £600 was raised on the night with a raffle and ticket sales. The evening ended with everyone up on their feet for a rousing rendition of Dancing Queen.

Futures2gether is a community based service offering fulfilling and engaging activities and training for adults with learning difficulties.



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Crown Wharf Theatre Unveils: The Picture House Programme For 2025



The Crown Wharf Theatre is pleased to announce the 2025 programme for Stone's very own cinema – **The Picture House**. There's something for everyone with our fantastic blend of classics, Oscar winners and family favourites.

Every other Sunday we invite you to join us with the family for our **2:30pm Family Favourite** or come along later with friends for our **7:30pm Oscar winner**.

And if the classics are more your thing, we hope our brand-new monthly **Wednesday afternoon screenings** will hit the spot.

Full listings can be found here but be sure to look out for some special themed screenings such as our spooky Halloween films, a historic drama around Remembrance Day and of course a bumper offering of Christmas films in December!

With tickets at just £6 for adults and £5 for children, this is a great chance for an affordable trip to the movies right here in Stone, with a giant screen and surround sound. To ensure the full cinema experience we have a great selection of **sweets** and also **locally sourced ice-creams** from Red Lion Farm in Stafford.

We are also proud to screen **National Theatre Live** – screening the best of British theatre right here in Stone. For just £12 you can enjoy a host of remarkable theatre productions right here on your doorstep.

Featured Screenings for 2025

- The Goonies (U) – FAMILY – Sunday 14th September, 2:30pm
- Dirty Dancing (12) – OSCAR WINNER – Sunday 14th September, 7:30pm
- Casablanca (U) – CLASSIC – Wednesday 17th September, 2:30pm
- The Little Mermaid (U) – FAMILY – Sunday 12th October, 2:30pm
- Inter Alia – National Theatre Live – Sunday 12th October, 7:30pm
- Singing in the Rain (U) – CLASSIC – Wednesday 15th October, 2:30pm
- Hocus Pocus (PG) – FAMILY – Sunday 26th October, 2:30pm
- The Exorcist (18) – OSCAR WINNER – Sunday 26th October, 7:30pm
- The Land Before Time (U) – FAMILY – Sunday 9th November, 2:30pm
- Everything Everywhere All At Once (15) – OSCAR WINNER – Sun 9th Nov, 7:30pm
- Darkest Hour (12) – CLASSIC – Wednesday 12th Nov, 2:30pm
- ET: The Extraterrestrial (PG) – FAMILY – Sunday 23rd November, 2:30pm
- Mrs Warren's Profession – **NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE** – Sunday 23rd November, 7:30pm

The Christmas Lineup 2025

- Arthur Christmas (U) – Sunday 7th December, 2:30pm
- Last Christmas (12) – Sunday 7th December, 7:30pm
- It's a Wonderful Life (U) – Wednesday 10th December, 2:30pm
- Frozen Sing-a-Long (PG) – Sunday 21st December, 2:30pm
- Gremlins (12A) – Sunday 21st December, 7:30pm
- Miracle on 34th Street (U) – Monday 22nd December, 2:30pm
- The Muppet Christmas Carol (U) – Wednesday 24th December, 1.00pm

Live Shows

- The imminent production of the award winning 'How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found'. A darkly gripping psychological drama brought to life by the acclaimed Stone Revellers. Performances run from Wednesday 10th September to Saturday 13th September at 7:30
- Stand-up comedy from The Agenda Comedy Club on the 17th October headlined by Radio 4 star Robin Ince.
- A professional production of the Tales from Acorn Wood by Julia Donaldson on 21st and 22nd October, which promises to be a magical experience for children of all ages.

For more information and to buy tickets please visit: crownwharftheatre.org.uk

THEATRE & AGENDA COMEDY

WED 10th to SAT 13th Sept
Stone Revellers Presents...
How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found

SUN 28th Sept
Apolo Theatre Company Presents...
Round The Horne

SAT 4th Oct
JLW Productions present...
Roald Dahl's The Twits

THURS 9th Oct
A Talk by Admiral Sir Trevor Soar...
Nelson, Jervis and The Age of Sail

FRI 17th Oct
Agenda Comedy Club presents...
Robin Ince and Special Guests

TUE 21st & WED 22nd Oct
Norwell Lapey Productions present...
Tales From Acorn Wood

THURS 30th Oct
Agenda Comedy Club presents...
Ben Moor's A Three Thing Day

SAT 1st Nov
Stone Choral & Aceler8 Brass present...
Stone Circles

SAT 15th Nov
Theatre 1 presents...
Songs For a New Decade

PICTURE HOUSE CINEMA

SUN 14th Sept
The Goonies (U) 2:30
Dirty Dancing (12) 7:30

WED 17th Sept
Casablanca (U) 2:30

SUN 12th Oct
The Little Mermaid (U) 2:30
NT Live - Inter Alia (14+) 7:30

WED 15th Oct
Singing in the Rain (U) 2:30

SUN 26th Oct
Hocus Pocus (PG) 2:30
The Exorcist (18) 7:30

SUN 9th Nov
The Land Before Time (U) 2:30
Everything, Everywhere, All At Once (15) 7:30

SCAN TO BOOK

Stone Revellers Present - How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found



The newly established Crown Wharf Theatre will welcome *How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found*, a darkly gripping psychological drama by Finn Kennedy, brought to life by the acclaimed Stone Revellers. Performances run from Wednesday, 10 September to Saturday, 13 September 2025, at 7:30 PM each evening.

This award-winning play follows Charlie, a man unraveling under the weight of modern life - grief, addiction, and the crushing demands of identity. In search of escape, he crosses paths with Mike, an expert in disappearing, and Sophie, a pathologist on her own desperate search for answers. What follows is a surreal, unsettling exploration of identity, mortality, and the question: what if we could just vanish?

"You are who you can prove you are, you are what people think, and that's the easiest thing in the world to change."

From the high-pressure corridors of a London marketing agency, to shadowy alleyways of lost identities, Charlie's journey is a stark examination of how society defines us - and how easy it might be to step away from it all.

"There's no correlation between birth and death in this country, no one thinks to match up the certificates. This loophole is large enough for several thousand people a year to walk right into. The disappeared. The missing."

Performance Details: Dates: **Wednesday-Saturday, 10-13 September 2025**. Time: 7:30pm nightly. Tickets: £16 (standard); £14 (concessions) Venue: Crown Wharf Theatre, Crown Street, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 8QN

Content Advisory: Contains strong language and mature themes

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Thurs 11.15-12.15 - Improvers
@ White Eagle Club, Stafford **£6**

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The Railway Inn: A sad loss to the community

Open Meeting To Discuss The Possible Acquisition Of The Railway Inn, Norton Bridge - As A Community Pub

The historic Railway Inn at Norton Bridge sadly shut its doors in January 2025 and is now for sale.

The pub has a long and interesting history; it first opened its doors in the 1850s, although parts date from at least the 1700s.

The building is registered as an Asset of Community Value, (ACV) meaning that it has been assessed as being an asset that furthered the social wellbeing of the local community and could do so again in the future.

The Railway Inn was the local 'heart' of the village and Chebsey Parish Council,

together with Friends of Norton Bridge, has invoked the ACV protections which gives the community a six-month window to raise funds to purchase the building.

As a first step, Friends of Norton Bridge and Chebsey Parish Council invite you to a meeting to gauge the level of interest in purchasing the Railway Inn as a community pub.

The meeting will be held on Monday, 15th September 2025 at 7.00pm at St Luke's Church Hall, Norton Bridge. Parking is available across the road from the church hall. Everyone is welcome.

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A Busy, Fun Time At Cameo At The Crossings

Lots of interesting activities and talks have been held over the summer months during Cameo.

The activities have included: armchair yoga, indoor bowls, arts and crafts and fascinating talks on bee conservation and swifts.

A warm welcome awaits you all to Cameo which is held **every Wednesday afternoon from 1-2.30pm at The Crossings Centre, Station Approach, Stone.**

This is a joint venture between us here at St John's and Futures2gether. Cameo stands for Come And Meet Each Other.

The activities are varied and the Autumn events programme is already filling up.

The sessions will include **an art class on the 17th September, a Macmillan Quiz on the 24th September and further into October, on the 29th October, a**



very useful and informative talk on scamming (with Christmas in mind).

Tracey, one of the organisers of the sessions, says, "Please come and join us for activities, refreshments and friendship".

Cameo is disability, child and dementia friendly.



Stone Ramblers completing a short walk around Moddershall before lunch

Stone Ramblers Celebrate 30 Years Together

What a wonderful celebration of 30 years of the Stone Ramblers!

After twenty-nine members completed a short walk around Moddershall, forty-six enjoyed a fabulous buffet at The Boar Inn in Moddershall, on Sunday 24th August.

Gerald Gittens, one of the founder

members, gave a short speech about the history of the group, thanking all of the volunteers over the years.

The group then collected £262 towards Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, meaning that the name of the Stone Ramblers will be on one of their helicopters!



A chance to catch up for a chat at The Boar Inn in Moddershall



Arcadia Café Go For Gold! ... Again!

In the last edition of the Gazette we carried a story from the Stone Lions, thanking all who supported their Easter Egg Raffle, which raised over £1500 in support of local charities and good causes.

The Golden Egg Award was presented to Fiona at the Arcadia Café who raised an egg-cellent £205 by selling raffle tickets

to her customers.

However, we used the wrong photo to go with the story, so here is the correct one now!

We apologise for any confusion caused, the correct photo, above, shows Lion President Glenys and Lions Pete and Sam (Fiona's very proud Dad) as they present Fiona with her Egg-squisite trophy.

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2025 Croxton Community Well Dressing Festival

Saturday 14th June saw the seventh Well Dressing Festival held in Croxton. It is the most westerly Well Dressing to take place in England. Many people of all ages and abilities became involved in this wonderful countryside tradition.

The exact origins of well dressing have been lost over time, but it's thought that the custom may have started as a pagan ritual of leaving gifts, thanking the local water gods for a continued supply of fresh water. What started out as a simple offering of flowers grew more elaborate when the custom was revived by the Victorians and well dressings were created depicting popular stories from the Bible.

The well dressings at Croxton have a different theme every two years, with the celebration of 80 years since VE day, the work of the Women's Land Army, an appreciation of the work of 33,000 local munitions workers known as the 'Swynnerton Roses' and a peace dove being illustrated in 2025.

After months of organisation and planning the process of preparing the well dressings itself takes about three weeks. The wooden frames are left in the River Sow for two weeks so that when they are filled with clay the wood does not absorb the moisture from the clay and the designs last longer. The clay boards are then decorated with natural material including alder knobs, coffee beans, seeds, eggshells, dried banana skins and most importantly flower petals which give the pictures their colour, detail and impact. This creates a beautiful mosaic picture standing over 2 metres tall.

The pictures are built up by teams of 5 people working in 2-hour shifts over the 7 days prior to the festival day. In all 35 people enjoyed creating the designs working together as a team, some were old hands and others learnt the skills of this ancient art from them. It is mindful, time consuming and addictive – the yellow petals of Big Ben took one person 11 hours to complete! The flower petals and fresh greenery must be overlapped like tiles on a roof to ensure they are secure and withstand the weather.

Early on the Saturday morning the completed Well Dressings were carefully loaded onto a trailer and towed up from the dressing barn to Croxton by Rob Unsworth's red tractor. A team of strong people then erected the heavy clay boards by the wells along the half mile trail through the village.

Crowds gathered at 11.30am in front of the old village well in the centre of Croxton – known as Boughey's Well. Mrs Ruth Butter (a longstanding member of Croxton community) officially opened the Festival. Phil Finch, Training Safety Officer at Swynnerton camp then spoke of the brave work of thousands of munitions workers in World War 2 and the Rev. Dawn Walker and Rev. Sara Humphries conducted a traditional "Blessing of the Well".

David Hemingway (this year's Well Dressing Festival joint Co-ordinator) thanked Staffordshire and Shropshire Community Foundation, Eccleshall Parish Council and Fletcher's Garden Centre for the funding support they had given to the event and to the planning committee who worked so hard to make the event happen.

Visitors could then walk the Wells trail to view the designs or visit the stalls and displays by the community groups in the Millennium Wood. There were also bacon buns for sale for brunch and delicious homemade cakes and drinks served in Croxton church.

At 2pm local musicians entertained the crowds in St Paul's church with a concert of poetry, singing by the Broughton Community Choir, and some World War II familiar tunes played by the local recorder group 'Tooty Flooty'. Some of the poetry was written specially for the event depicting the joy of lights shining in the village houses after the end of the wartime blackouts.

The Well Dressings were displayed for 7 days, and many people will have seen Winston Churchill surrounded by Big Ben and St Pauls Cathedral celebrating 80 years of peace in this country from the roadside as they drove past. Long may that peace last. What an amazing achievement to create the Croxton Well Dressing Festival 2025 to celebrate VE day, the local community really showcasing their organisation and team work to produce this enjoyable artistic, poetic and musical event.

Croxton village NEEDS YOU to join the planning group for this event to happen again!

Some of the organising group are stepping back and we need new people to help plan and implement the dressings in two years.

Come to hear about what is involved on

Monday 29th September at 7.30pm in Croxton Church.

Tea and cake provided.

Find out more on our website
croxtonwelldressing.weebly.com or by contacting us on
email CroxtonWells@gmail.com



The frames being carefully lowered into the River Sow to soak



Swynnerton Roses



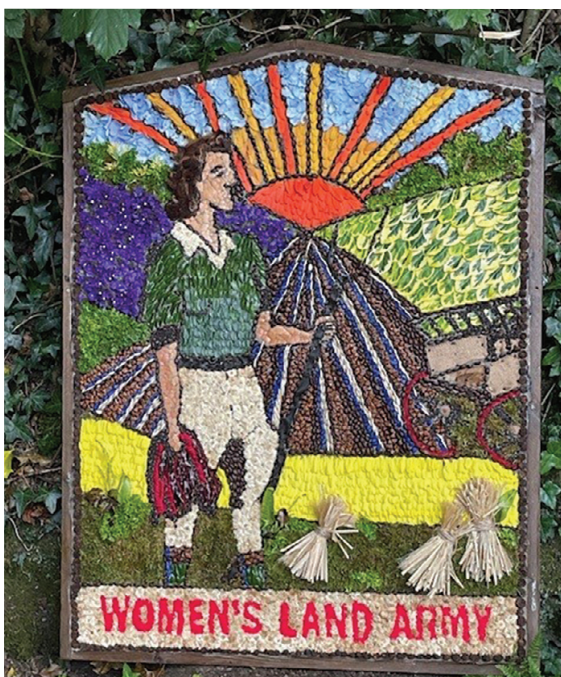
Dove



Bougheys Well



A trailer full of dressings



Land Army Girl

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The Vegan Market coming to the High Street on Saturday 20th September

Stone Town Council Events

Stone Town Council is looking forward to a number of upcoming events that it is providing in the town...

On Saturday 20th September, the Council will welcome back the **Vegan Market** to the High Street, after a very successful first market last year. Please come along to the High Street to see the many interesting stalls and goods this market has to offer in what will hopefully become a regular annual event.

The fun continues the following **Saturday, 27th September**, when the High Street will again be filled with **Classic Cars Galore!** We are expecting over 60 classic cars to be exhibited this year in what has become one of the highlights of the year. This year the event is being organised jointly by the Council and the Stone Carnival Committee.



Then on **Saturday, 13th September** the Heritage Centre will, as part of the **'Heritage Open Days'** programme, and in conjunction with the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership, be offering a guided walk from Stone Railway Station which will take in the historic town and canal and will end at the Heritage Centre where there will be a specially curated exhibition exploring the history of Stone Station.

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Council's Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee, said "We try to offer something for everyone with our events and hope that you will be able to join us at one of our free to attend September events for an interesting and enjoyable day out."

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



The Burma Star Commemoration

Stone Town Council held a Brass Band Concert and Cream Tea Afternoon in Stonefield Park, Stone on Sunday 17th August, where there was a short service to commemorate the Burma Star and VJ Day, and those who lived through, served and sacrificed their lives in the far east, and to celebrate the formal end of the Second World War.

Record numbers of people enjoyed the concert by Florence Brass Band and the refreshments kindly provided by Stone Town Council, while enjoying the sunshine/shade in this award-winning park.

The annual 'Burma Star' wreath laying ceremony took place during the interval, which was particularly significant on this 80th anniversary of VJ Day.

Councillor Jill Hood, Chairman of the Council's Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee, said "It was great to see the people of Stone turn out in such numbers, everyone had a lovely day, a day which also offered a chance to reflect, remember, and learn about an important chapter in our history."



Stone Town Mayor, Cllr. Jason Metters, waiting in line to lay a wreath on behalf of Stone Town Council

Photos by Martin Robinson



Shake off the burdens of a big house



At this time of year, many homeowners turn their attention to their gardens, home maintenance, and the long list of seasonal tasks that come with keeping a property in top condition. While the warmer weather is welcome, the thought of tackling outdoor upkeep can start to feel overwhelming.

For many homeowners at Adlington Retirement Living communities, the appeal of leaving all that behind was one of the reasons they decided to move.

Freedom from home maintenance

Since moving to an Adlington community, Trevor has enjoyed his newfound freedom from home maintenance.

"There's so much stress and anxiety that comes with maintaining a house. We had a handyman, cleaners, a gardener, but it was still a worry. When you're paying for odd jobs week by week, you don't realise how much it adds up over the years.

"Some people think service charges for retirement communities are expensive, but when you consider what you get, I think

it's worth it. If I was talking to someone considering a move, I'd say it relieves an enormous amount of stress and adds so much positive social interaction."

Ann and Harry, other Adlington homeowners, also found that home maintenance responsibilities were a key factor when deciding to move.

"When you have a house, you become a servant to it. You have to keep it sellable and up to scratch, but the day comes when you don't want to do it anymore. It starts to worry you."

Since their move, Ann and Harry have felt a real sense of relief and freedom.

"We've got rid of all the concerns of painting the house and weeding the garden. Now, it's all done for us, you don't have worries here. It's like being on holiday all the time, I can't get over it. It's wonderful. It takes all that anxiety away."

For retirees looking to shed the burdens of homeownership while gaining more time to enjoy life, a move to a retirement community could be the perfect solution.



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News From Oulton Scout Group

Five of our Beavers, Lily, Frank, Noah, James and Logan (pictured above) have earned all of their activity badges, as well as their bronze award.

All of their hard work and dedication has truly paid off, and their journey will now continue on to Cubs.

Our Squirrels were invited to be the first ever squirrel group to try out the new Squirrel Wood.

Our children spent the evening at Kibblestone, with Clive Leader.

Pictured on the right is Arthur make some plant bombs. Our Squirrels made lots of these, and then at Kibblestone they threw them on to a field, to help grow some wild flowers.

In July we had our pirate themed family camp. We were joined by Yarnfield beavers and had over 100 people on camp. This was a great success with lots of positive feedback.

The children also enjoyed an hour session of Bellboating at Trentham Gardens, and they took part in the Barlaston Town Trail. They had our slip and slide, and made giant boats that their whole team could fit in!

In July we also had our AGM and fun night. Our parents and children learnt lots of skills such as a tying friendship knot, how to make a woggle, cooking on fires and they all enjoyed time playing games. We also awarded over 600 badges to our young people.



*Bombs Away!
The only good bomb
is a flower bomb!*



From Katie Dudley

Crochet In Eccleshall Join In At Eccleshall Open Gardens



Members of the Crochet In Eccleshall group exhibited at the Eccleshall Open Gardens weekend in June. Christine & Quentin opened their large garden, and in the garden workshop they had a display of crochet by Crochet in Eccleshall, and some intricate examples of Marquetry, by the Staffordshire Marquetry Group.

Visitors admired the crochet and marquetry (and garden) and many said they would think about taking up a new hobby in the autumn. So now is a good time to join one of our classes.

We have small monthly Beginners classes at Eagle House from **12.30pm to 3.30pm, usually on a Monday or Tuesday.**

We meet **monthly on a Friday at Eccleshall Library, also from 12.30pm to 3.30pm.** Usually these are Improver classes but on Friday 12th September we have Crochet & Chat.

Evening classes are held at **Eccleshall Community Centre from 6.30pm to 8.30pm, usually on a Wednesday.**

And on the **first and third Wednesday of each month**, some of us join the Staffordshire Marquetry Group for **"crochet & chat"**.

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 Author Releases His Final Book - Black Eyes

Stone author Michael Morton has just released his final book, in the tetralogy, *Black Eyes* is now available.

The four books tell the story of the fictional Mick Gibson joining the National Coal Board on leaving school as a sixteen-year-old in 1975. He is the first to enter the coal industry in his family, his eyes firmly set on becoming an Undermanager. The future looks secure after the 1974 Plan for Coal is published.

His journey commences at Cronton Colliery in the Western Area, where after seven years he qualifies as a Deputy. Prior to the 1984/5 strike Cronton Colliery closes and he transfers to Parkside Colliery. Initially as a Deputy he works his way through the ranks from Face Overman to Colliery Overman before a regular night shift role as Shift Undermanager. Finally achieving his ambition at the age of twenty-nine when he is appointed Statutory Undermanager at the last deep mine in North Wales, Point of Ayr Colliery.

The industry however is in turmoil with the Governments desire to destroy a once great and proud industry. The short-sighted dash for gas see's many pits closing until finally the decision is taken to privatise the industry. Mick decides to leave British Coal and join Coal Investments at Hem Heath Colliery, in Staffordshire as Underground Manager, however the die has been cast, two years later the company is forced into Administration. After twenty-one years in the industry his time is up, like many others he now needs to find alternative employment.

You can buy it now at <https://www.amazon.com/author/michaelmorton>

Road Safety Guidance For Parents Of Children Starting A New School In September

Whether your child is planning to travel to school by car, bus, walking or cycling, the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) has developed guidance to help you prepare them for their new journey.

During this stage of their development as road users, children find themselves at greater risk as they start to travel more independently.

Parents and carers play a crucial role in the development of a child's road safety knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour.

Deputy Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Commissioner, Dave Evans, who is Chair of the SSRP said: "It's really important that parents and carers talk to their children about road safety and their new journey to school, especially if they are planning to travel on their own."

Starting a new school can be exciting for children but can also cause them to worry. Talking to your child about how they are going to get to school and general road safety, can not only help ensure they travel safely, but can also help them feel calmer about their new school."

The SSRP has developed a guide for parents and carers on what to cover with children as they plan their new journey. To help with their planning you may ask them:

What is the safest route to get to and from school?

Where are the safest places to cross?

Who are you going to travel with?

Are there any hazards on their route and how can they deal with them?

What worries do they have about walking to school?

For more information on how to prepare your child for a new school journey visit: See our Moving on to High School - Guide for Parents & Carers in Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent at <https://sway.cloud.microsoft/dN1SuBcoEqfJ0oT1?ref=Link&loc=mysways>



Frankie and her team at the top, with proud dad Nick in the middle

Schoolgirl, 6, Raises Incredible £5k By Climbing Snowdon In Memory Of Nan

A six-year-old schoolgirl has raised an incredible £5,100 for Dougie Mac after climbing Mount Snowdon in memory of her Nan.

Little Frankie Griffin, from Stoke-on-Trent, decided to take on the mammoth challenge for the Blurton-based hospice after they cared for her Nan, Karen Griffin, who passed away in July last year following a brave battle with cancer.

Frankie wanted to raise money for Dougie Mac after telling her dad Nick that she needed to help 'poorly people like Nannie' - Nick's Mum.

Nick said: "Frankie loves walking and has already climbed and walked the local hills and points of interest in the Peak District, so we decided to take on Snowdon as Frankie knew that Wales was once of her Nannie's favourite places, and also one of the last places her Nannie visited."

Frankie and Nick, along with relatives and staff from Griffins of Stone, a butcher's shop which is owned by Nick,

completed the gruelling climb to the summit in five-and-a-half hours on July 10 - a year to the day since Karen died.

Nick said: "Mum was diagnosed with small cell cancer in the lungs, and some cancer on her collarbone in October 2023. After two rounds of chemotherapy and immune therapy, we were told in March 2024 the treatment wasn't working and so heartbreakingly, it was stopped."

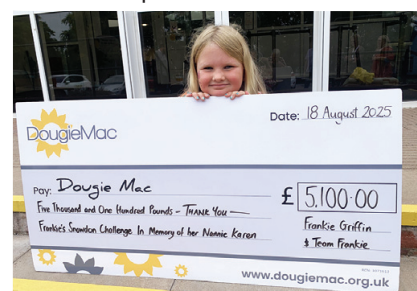
"As a family we were told to make Mum as comfortable as possible, and it was a matter of time. Dougie Mac arranged home visits and the nurses that came out to her and the advice they offered was superb - no question was too silly and they always seemed to say the right thing."

Since Mum's passing on July 10 2024, I decided to reach out and talk to the counsellors at Dougie Mac and what a difference that has made to me. I cannot say thank you enough."

During their walk up Snowdon, Frankie and the team - who left at 6am - endured temperatures of 32C.



Frankie's nannie Karen Griffin



Frankie handing over her massive cheque

Nick said: "Frankie was amazing and lead the team of eight. It was hard going but it was a real team effort and so many memories were made. We also took Mum with us and laid a photo under some rocks with a view that was worth the walk. I couldn't be prouder of my six-year-old little girl!"

Thank you to everyone who donated to such a great cause - friends, family and customers at the shop."

Frankie, who received a medal and certificate from Dougie Mac for her achievements, said: "It was good to walk all the way to the top but it was hard coming back down."

To donate to Frankie's fundraising, take a look here: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/frankiessnowdonchallenge>



Oulton Village Hall Summer Rock BBQ

The weather was perfect on the 21st of June for this successful fund-raising event to support future improvements at the Hall.

The evening's entertainment was provided by local band 'Citizen Stone'. And a great time was had by all.

Future events at the Hall include

- Fun Bingo on Saturday 20th of September

- The Film "Thelma" on Saturday 18th of October

- The Daleians Male Voice Choir on Saturday 8th of November

For further information contact Chris on 01785 813377 or see our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/oultonvillagehallstonestaffs/

You can also visit our website at www.oultonvillagehall.co.uk

Photos by Martin Robinson



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TUESDAY

9:30-10:30 **Pilates for All** Stone

11-12 **Improvers Line Dancing** Stone

13:30-14:45 **Seated Exercise & Social** Stone

18:00-19:00 **Beginners & Improvers Line**

Dancing Stafford

18:15-19:00 **STRONG** (weights class) Stone

19:30-20:30 **Gentle Pilates Stretch & Relax** Stone

WEDNESDAY

12:15-13:15 **Beginners Line Dancing** Stone

13:30-15:00 **Beginners & Improvers Line**

Dancing Stone

18:30-19:15 **Combat Assassin** Stone

THURSDAY

10-11:00 **Beginners Line Dancing** Stafford

11.15-12.15 **Improvers Line Dancing** Stafford

18:30-19.20 **Clubbercise** Stafford

FRIDAY

9:30-10:15 **STRONG** (weights class) Stone

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Coffee Break Story

By Stone Scribblers Creative Writing Group

Video Nasty

Terry liked to do a bit of 'charity-shop gambling' on his way home from the oppressive grind at work that left him totally drained. Finding a rare film gem amongst the usual mediocrity on the charity shop shelves was always a great source of delight. In fact Terry was addicted to the physical medium of video to the point it had taken over his life, and his small flat had become less of a home and more of a video-freak temple.

Terry was not just seduced by celluloid dreams of cancelled futures like Star Trek, but most of all enjoyed the cathartic release that came from a good gothic horror flick in which, unlike the real world, evil is vanquished and the natural order restored at the end. Of course this was because he could only cope with the misery and emptiness of modern life by escaping into the fantasy of film; he justified it to himself by identifying its virtues above other more harmful forms of oblivion such as alcohol.

Therefore Terry was almost overcome with an endorphin rush upon discovering, on this occasion, a true video rarity from the 80s, 'The Evil Rites of the Oligarchs', the last of a series of low-budget vampire films written and directed by Christopher Lynch who died under mysterious circumstances viewing the Final Cut of the film. It was banned as a 'video nasty' and was thought lost forever as even the original master was seized and incinerated by the state. This restored and digitally remastered High Definition limited edition boasted to be the first time the film was available completely uncut.

Terry could not contain his excitement as he handed over his cash, describing enthusiastically the background of the film to the cashier, oblivious of their total lack of interest. "This film used actual dark rituals, not like those timid films where they read out a recipe in Latin hoping no one would notice."

Finally Terry arrived home to his dusty 'man cave', packed with DVDs and CDs, and made haste towards his home-cinema setup, almost knocking over one of his many stacks of DVDs. He sat before the TV screen like a worshipper before an effigy of their God and began to read the enclosed booklet. In addition to the history of the making of the film it included detailed instructions on how to perform the ritual of the 'Magic Circle of Protection' in order to guard oneself from the dark energies depicted in the film.

The film began with a warning urging those watching to protect themselves with the enclosed ritual before proceeding, and disclaiming any responsibility if they failed to do so. Terry took delight in this marketing gimmick, but ignored the warning.

The film included the usual derivative vampiric hokum featuring 'William the Conqueror', the father of all vampires, and his retinue of Norman vampire-oligarchs bleeding the country for over 1,000 years from behind the scenes. The realism of the ghastly rituals depicted in the film perfectly complemented its high camp gothic aesthetic. As the film began Terry noticed his room becoming increasingly dim and it started to feel incredibly cold, but he merely noted he couldn't afford to turn on the heating with his tiny pay packet.

Soon the room was so dark that the screen was the only source of illumination as something sinister began to take form in the shadows. Terry was so adept at using films to block out grim reality he remained oblivious as the shadows closed in around him

by Dannon Hoppe © 2024

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



All club athletes. left to right Shaun Ainge (coach), Sophie, Joyella, Ella, Chloe, Natalie, Mia, Larna, Stella, Allee (athlete/ club official).

Gold Medals And New Records At England Athletics Relay Championship For Local Athletes

Four Cannock and Stafford Athletics Club (AC) teams were invited to take part in the National Relay Championships based on their UK rankings and, against the biggest clubs in the Country, they all did the club proud.

The U20 womens 4x100 team of Joyella Jeffries (from Stone), Mia Wainwright, Sophie Hulse and Matilda Perry were first to race and got through to the final. In the final, the ladies ran brilliantly to finish fourth with a time of 48.14 which may be a new club record.

Three of the U20 team also ran in the Senior Women's 4x100m, which competed in a straight final, with the only change being Stella Perrett who came in for Matilda Perry. The team came sixth in 48.09, the fastest time run by a Cannock & Stafford Women's team for many years.

The U17 women 4x300m team were next to race. Prior to the competition, they were ranked as the sixth fastest club in the country. The twelve teams were split into two races with the medals decided on time. We were in the second race.

Stones' Joyella Jeffries ran the first leg and moved into the lead around the top bend to hand over to Larna Watkins level with the Cambridge athlete. Larna continued her excellent form, moving into the lead over the first 100m and extending the lead to around 25m before handing over to Ella Haycock.

Ella also ran a strong leg and, despite being caught by the Woodford Green athlete, she pushed over the last 40m to hand over to Sophie Hulse neck and neck with the number one ranked Woodford

Green team. Sophie ran a fantastic leg, gradually moving away from the rest of the field to finish in 2:46.65, over five seconds faster than their season's best and, subject to checks, a new club record.

There was a short period while everyone checked the time from the previous race before it was confirmed that they had beaten the winner of that race by a quarter of a second to take GOLD and become the fastest club team in the UK!

Finally, the clubs Senior Women 4x400m quartet of Stella Perrett, Natalie Griffiths, Mia Wainwright and Chloe Wilde all ran great legs to finish fourth in 3:58.56, the first time that the clubs Senior Women have gone below 4 minutes since 2022.



Left to Right: U17 4 x 300 Gold winning team. Joyella, Sophie, Shaun Ainge (coach), Ella, Larna.



Photo on podium of U17 4 x 300m team receiving medal



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Laurie Gregory

Laurie Gregory Memorial Concert

A memorial and fundraising concert is coming to Holy Trinity Church, in memory of little Laurie Gregory.

Sixteen years ago, in Ecclesall, two year old Laurie tragically died in his sleep, due to a twisted bowel and cardiac arrest. He would have been 18 this September, and so to mark his birthday his brother and sister decided to organise a special concert at the church where he is buried, to remember him, as well as raise money for the charity SUDC (*Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood*).

The siblings are well known locally as they both attended Bishop Lonsdale, Christchurch Academy and Allyn's schools. Brother, Al Gregory, who is due to go to Birmingham Conservatoire this year, will be performing with his band Cadenza Jazz, sister, Martha Gregory will be compering the event, which will also feature The Heath Chorus from Uttoxeter. The musical director is Helen Clayton.

There will be a raffle, and Prosecco and Cake to raise extra funds for the charity. Martha will also be climbing Snowden in the middle of the night in October, along with her Grandma, Barbara Gregory who is 82 this year!

Everyone is welcome to come along and enjoy some music from local musicians, and help raise much needed funds for the charity.

The concert takes place at Holy Trinity Church, in Ecclesall, on the **27th of September, at 7.30pm**, tickets are just £5, and are available on the door on the night.

5th Stone Beavers And Cubs Go Wild At Rodbaston Animal Zone!



5th Stone Beavers and Cubs pictured with some of the many wild animals they met, and fed, at Rodbaston Animal Zone in Penkridge.

At the start of July, the 5th Stone Beavers and Cubs enjoyed an unforgettable overnight adventure at Rodbaston Animal Zone.

Their evening began with a woodland walk, where they learned how to identify and gather "browse" – leafy branches and treats for the animals. They gathered around the campfire for snacks and sang animal-themed songs as the light faded.

Once the browse was delivered to the Animal Zone, the group set off on a magical night-time safari. They encountered creatures that thrive in the dark, including the mysterious binturong, the curious civet, and the prickly porcupine – a thrilling end to a wild evening!

The next morning came early (*especially for the leaders, who were kept awake by a rogue cricket!*), and after a hearty breakfast, it was time to get stuck into animal care. The young adventurers rolled up their sleeves to clean enclosures and provide fresh food and water. The browse collected the night before was fed to the goats and alpacas, *much to their delight!*

The afternoon was packed with more hands-on fun – from tortoise fishing to handling snakes and rodents, the Beavers and Cubs made the most of every moment.

It was a weekend full of discovery, responsibility, and animal magic – one they won't forget in a hurry.

A New President For Stone Lions

Members of Stone Lions Club are pleased to introduce their new President for the coming year, Lion Dave Handley, who takes over the reins from Lion Glenys Sanders who filled the post last year.

The event was celebrated in great style, as usual, with a buffet supper provided by members in the Tea Room at Oak Tree Farm Rural Project.

Lion Dave recognised the sterling service given to the club by Lion Glenys during her term of office and expressed thanks on behalf of all the members for her hard work and dedication to the club.

He is no stranger to the role of President, having filled this position on two previous occasions, and is looking forward to leading his fellow Lions for the next year. All members wish him a very successful and fulfilling term of office.



Lion Dave Handley is handed the reins from Lion Glenys Sanders



Peter Bowers turns 40!

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Cuttlestones Ben Gamble with the Jaguar E-Type
- found in a barn!

Vintage Vehicles Steal The Spotlight At Auction...

Staffordshire auction house Cuttlestones has once again realised the strength of the car and motorcycle collectors' markets, with a series of standout vintage vehicle sales. Across both its Winter and Summer Antiques Auctions, a host of iconic classic vehicles stole the limelight-proving that even in 'barn-find' condition, quality and provenance still attract serious buyers.

The undisputed star of the Winter Antiques Auction was Lot 401: a 1972 E-Type Jaguar discovered languishing in a local barn for over two decades. Despite its need for restoration, the car's status as a motoring icon drew global interest, with telephone, online and in-room bidders vying for ownership. The hammer finally fell at an impressive £20,000 to a local enthusiast from just over the Shropshire border-proof, if needed, that you never know what treasures are tucked away nearby.

Fast forward to the Summer Antiques Auction, and vintage motorcycles took centre stage. Lot 543 - a 1949 Vincent HRD Series C Rapide Motorcycle generated huge excitement, racing past its estimate to sell for £11,500, despite being offered in 'barn-find' condition. Other two-wheeled classics also performed strongly: a 1965 Velocette Viper 350cc Motorcycle (Lot 550) sold for £3,000, and a 1946 James Comet (Lot 542) fetched £1,300. Even more compact classics turned heads, including a 1975 BSA Ariel 4 Moped (£550) and a quirky Sinclair C5 (£190) in need of extensive restoration.

It wasn't just bikes and cars getting collectors' pulses racing. Lot 555, a 1959 Land Rover Series II complete with a treasure trove of spare parts, proved there's still huge affection for these utilitarian icons, selling for £2,100.

These results prove that the vintage vehicle market is alive and well, and that there's real appetite among collectors for restoration projects and characterful classics alike.

Cuttlestones is now inviting entries for upcoming specialist auctions. If you have a classic vehicle - or indeed any item of interest - you'd like valued, get in touch for a free, no-obligation appraisal. Simply email valuations@cuttlestones.co.uk, WhatsApp 07949 603872 or call 01785 714905.

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity Holds Thank-A-Thon

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity proudly hosted its annual Thank-A-Thon in celebration of National Thank You Day, a day dedicated to acknowledging and appreciating the kindness and generosity from individuals and businesses in local communities.

On Monday 7th July, the charity's aircrew, staff, and volunteers came together to contact over 28,500 loyal supporters across the region through phone calls and emails. This annual event offers a meaningful way for the charity to express its gratitude to those who have contributed to its lifesaving missions.

Those who could not be reached by phone were sent warm messages of appreciation by email and via the charity's social media platforms, ensuring no supporter was left unrecognised.

Carl Williams, community fundraising lead at Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support we receive from across the communities we serve. Thank-A-Thon is a great way for us to collectively show our gratitude and thank all of those amazing people who make our vital pre-hospital emergency service possible."

To find out more about Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's lifesaving work in your area, visit midlandsairambulance.com and follow them on social media.



Stone OA Presentation Day

On Saturday, 21st June, Stone Old Alleynians Football Club held their annual presentation day, at Alleynes Sports Centre.

In glorious conditions, 70 teams ranging from u5 to over 70s were present, celebrating the season in fantastic style. The all day affair attracted over 1,500 people throughout the course of the day, with lots of other activities and events as well.

Staffordshire Police and Fire Service were present, to keep the youngsters entertained, as well as inflatable football, live music and a variety of food and drink stalls.

On behalf of the Club, Richard Jones told the Gazette, "This event is the most important day in the calendar for the Club. For the fourth year running it was great to see so many people attend."

Our Club membership keeps growing and we are now the biggest in Staffordshire with 72 teams. Recognising everybody's achievement over the course of a long season is very important to the Club, as well as an opportunity to say thank you to all of the volunteers for their tremendous dedication and hard work."

The Club is actively seeking more juniors and adults to join and can be contacted through Facebook.





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For 25 years, AMG Nursing & Care Services has supported families across Stone, helping loved ones stay comfortable, safe, and independent at home. Recently, two wonderful members of our team took part in the Walk to d'feet MND, a special event raising awareness for motor neurone disease. We were honoured to walk alongside the wife of someone we support, united in every step.

This kind of compassion comes naturally to our carers. It's not something learned from training alone, but part of who we are and how we care. Celebrating 25 years means more to us than just marking time. It's about continuing to support local families with warmth, respect, and genuine kindness each and every day.



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The Trentham Boat Club juniors raising funds at the 24-hour Rowathon

Local Junior Rowing Squad Reaches 117% of Crowdfunding Goal

Trentham Boat Club, a small but thriving junior rowing squad based at Trentham Gardens lake, have just hit 117% of their Crowdfunder goal, to raise £6,000 for essential equipment to support the juniors as they compete on the national stage.

Reaching the target has also made the club now eligible to apply for match funding from Sport England.

Many of the rowers began through low-cost Learn to Row sessions, and now represent not just their club, but the region, competing at events like the British Rowing Club Championships, the Junior Inter-Regional Regatta, and the GB trials.

This campaign was launched to ensure they can continue to train and race on equal footing with better-funded clubs, and that rowing stays accessible to all regardless of background.

Every donation will go directly into improving access, safety, and opportunity for the juniors, and the money will be invested in key equipment for the junior rowers, these include: New oars suitable for juniors (£1,200–£1,500) A double scull (2x boat) – approx. £3,000–£4,000, Replacement safety gear for coaches, life jackets, throw lines, and launch equipment, a contribution toward a second-hand quad (4x).

Also, as part of the fundraising efforts, a group of parents from the club have each been completed a 100km challenge across August (rowing/running/swimming/walking). The juniors also ran a 24-hour Rowathon from 21/08–22/08.

You can still make a donation (closes 5th September) at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/trentham-juniors-rowing-for-the-future>



Sophia Is To Take On The London Marathon

Stone's Sophia Hitchman is taking part in the London Marathon 2026 to raise funds and awareness in aid of Target Ovarian Cancer, the UK's leading ovarian cancer charity.

They target what's important to stop ovarian cancer devastating lives – that means symptoms awareness, life-saving early diagnosis, better treatments and support for everyone affected by ovarian cancer.

Sophia said "This hits close to home after watching my friend battle a rare form of ovarian cancer this past year, and we are so grateful she is still with us. It's hard to put into words what it's like to watch someone you love go through something like cancer, especially when the symptoms for this type of cancer can be so undetectable. It is very difficult to get your head around what is happening to them and how you can support and help them through it all."

I feel so lucky and grateful that I still have my friend here, she is so strong and I am doing this for her. Please support my fundraising if you can, and together we'll transform the future for everyone diagnosed with ovarian cancer."

You can make a donation to Sophia at <https://join.targetovariancancer.org.uk/fundraisers/SophiaHitchman/london-marathon-2026> or by canning the QR code above.



All Aboard For The Amerton Railway Santa Specials

It may only be September but the team at Amerton Railway are already getting the locos prepared for their Santa Specials starting on Saturday 29 November.

As winter wraps Staffordshire in its icy embrace, few experiences rival the charm and warmth of the railways Santa Specials - a festive journey that rekindles the magic of Christmas through steam, community, and nostalgia.

The narrow-gauge heritage railway offers families a memorable ride aboard lovingly preserved carriages to meet Santa. The train departs from Amerton Station and chugs gently through the beautiful Staffordshire countryside stopping at Toyland. Here Santa visits every compartment to chat with each child and hand them a hand picked gift. The grown ups aren't forgotten either as they are treated to a warm mince pie and glass of sherry or orange juice.

Rather than selling individual tickets the compartment booking system is what sets this experience apart. Options include Standard (seats up to 6 adults), Small (3 adults), Large (8 adults), and Accessible (3 adults plus 1 wheelchair; or up to 6 without a wheelchair). The numbers are for the adult seating space, and of course children take up a little less room but hopefully this allows you to best judge your space requirements.



Amerton Railway is run entirely by enthusiastic volunteers and the Santa Specials raise vital funds for the upkeep of Amerton's heritage steam and diesel locomotives.

This year the Santa Specials are running on 11 days: Saturday 29 November, Sunday 30 November then every Saturday and Sunday up to Christmas along with Wednesday 10 December, Wednesday 17 December and Wednesday 24 December.

Tickets go on sale on from 1st September at amertonrailway.co.uk

The Santa Specials at Amerton Railway are more than just a train ride - they're a festive, nostalgic, and heartfelt way to celebrate Christmas. From the steam locos journey through the beautiful countryside, to Santa's personal gift for every child and treats for the adults this experience captures everything magical about the festive season.



Stone C&D Society Gardening Club Meetings

Visitors and guests are welcome to attend Stone Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society Gardening Club meetings which are usually held on the **second Thursday of the month at 7.30pm** prompt at Christ Church Centre, Christchurch Way, Stone ST15 8ZB. Refreshments are available from 6.45pm.

During 2025 Garden Club Members have free entry to meetings; visitors are welcome but will be asked for a small contribution.

This is what the Garden Club have planned for the Autumn...

On September 11th - Jane Allison presents It's a Family Affair - Have you ever wondered which plants are in the same family? There are plenty of surprises in this light-hearted talk about plant relatives. I guarantee you will walk round your border with new eyes!

Jane Allison runs Mayfields Plants and Garden Design from her third of an acre garden in Stanthorne. Her plants are available for sale through Plant Hunters Fairs and you may have seen her at the Dorothy Clive Garden. She prides herself on the wide range of perennials on her stall, including favourites such as verbasum, geums and geraniums. She also has a particular passion for digitalis (foxgloves), and part of her stall is always given over to at least a dozen varieties of these lovely plants at any time of the year.

October 9th - Gardenalia plus recorded **TSGCN Zoom talk - Sally Gregson on Hydrangeas**

Sally Gregson ran Mill Cottage Plants nursery for over thirty years, having trained professionally at Hadlow College, Kent, and exhibited at the major flower shows, including Hampton Court Palace. Mill Cottage Plants specialised in Hydrangea and sold the more unusual, and more interesting, species and cultivars of hydrangea and their shade-loving companions.

The Gardenalia is our sale of no-longer-required garden tools etc that members bring along after a grand late summer tidy of sheds.

November 13th - Pip Smith presents Totally Tulips - An inspiring lecture on creating colourful spring displays in your very own garden.

Pip Smith, formerly Head Gardener at several private and public gardens (most recently at the highly acclaimed *Wollerton Old Hall, Shropshire*), is now a garden designer using his previous knowledge and experience to create imaginative, sympathetic and long-lasting designs for private clients.

For more information please visit our website at <https://stonecanddclub.org/>

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Local talent takes in spectacular at The Regent

Hundreds of performers from leading Staffordshire performing arts school Rooftop Studios lit up The Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, back in May in a dazzling celebration of dance, drama and musical theatre.

The show, *Believe!*, brought together every single class from the Stone and Leek studios, showcasing the talents of students aged 2 to 82. From show-stopping musical numbers to elegant ballet and energetic street dance, audiences were treated to a vibrant, feel-good production that embodied Rooftop Studios' ethos of inspiring confidence, ambition and self-belief.



The two-day run, which featured four shows, was a sell-out success, with audiences providing fantastic support to the performers – many of whom were appearing on a professional stage for the very first time.

Stone studio manager Claire Simpson, who also heads up the Leek branch, says: "We are all immensely proud of our students – they put on a fantastic show and were hugely professional throughout. This has been our biggest and most ambitious show to date, and is the first time we have performed at The Regent. It was a real honour to tread the boards at a venue that hosts many professional dance and drama productions.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to our whole team who worked tirelessly in the run-up to and during the run to ensure our students could fully showcase their talents, and to all the parents, friends and family who volunteered during show week to make it happen."

The show was such a hit that Rooftops has again booked the Regent for 2027 ahead of its next full school show – making now the perfect time to sign up for classes and be a part of this and other future performances.

All systems go in September!

Students returning to the studio in September are in for a busy term – with Stage Academy classes starting work toward their next production, which will be performed at Stone's very own Crown Wharf Theatre in March 2026. Dance classes, meanwhile, will focus on exam preparation as well as taking part in competitions and performing at local events.

And that's not all – the Stone studio is also adding several exciting new classes to its already packed timetable. Baby Dance – packed with role-play, movement and confidence-building for little ones aged 6-18 months (and their grown-ups) will take place on Mondays from 10.30am – 11.15am, offering a great way for parents with very young children to meet new friends and socialise while their babies hone vital skills.

Another new addition is Tots Disco which, on Mondays from 4.00pm – 4.30pm will see kids get into the groove of this fun, fast-paced and high energy dance style, performing to the latest hits as well as chart classics. On Tuesdays from 4.45pm – 5.45pm wannabe cheerleaders will get to hone acrobatic skills in Junior Acro while Commercial Jazz offers a range of classes suitable for ages 7 to adult on Tuesdays; giving dancers a feel moves featured in the latest stage and music video performances.

For those looking to further progress their dance skills, a new 'Beyond

Leek centre stage 'Believe!' show Leek Theatre



'Technique' session, also on Thursdays from 5.00pm – 4.45pm will see children aged 11+ focus on performance styles, dancing with feeling and stage presence – especially useful for those with their sights set on a career in the industry. Private LAMDA sessions will also be available on request to help budding actors develop their skills in a one-to-one coaching environment, while with the studios' Street Dance performance squad going from strength to strength a new, invite-only Street Comp Class has been added for under 10s wanting to join Street Team RTK to perform in group and solo events around the country.

Join the 'Rooftops' family...



Rooftop Studios Stone is now welcoming new students for the Autumn term. Whether your child is a budding ballerina, a future West End star or simply wants to build confidence and have fun, there's something for everyone – from age 2 to adult, with free trials available for all classes.

PLUS get 50% off your first month of classes when you quote GAZETTE at the time of booking. Offer valid for new students joining the Leek studio in September 2025.

For more information about classes and workshops at Rooftop Studios – or to book your free trial – visit www.rooftopstudios.co.uk or email info@rooftopstudios.co.uk

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Helping To Live With Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia. It is a physical illness which damages the brain and it eventually affects memory and thinking.

Most people develop Alzheimer's when they are sixty-five or older though it is possible for those younger to develop symptoms. About one in thirteen people aged 65 to 84 and one in three people 85 and older live with Alzheimer's so it is surprisingly common.

As Alzheimer's worsens, people experience greater memory loss and problems can include wandering and getting lost, trouble handling money, repeating questions and taking longer to complete normal daily tasks. At the same time there are changes, often significant, to personality and behaviour.

Over time, it interferes with a person's daily life and activities. Eventually, those with Alzheimer's lose the ability to perform simple daily tasks, such as eating or walking so will, eventually, need help which may include bathing, grooming, and dressing.

Alzheimer's is also life changing for those who provide care. The transformation from loving partner to carer is not easy to manage especially as caring for someone with Alzheimer's is a twenty-four/seven occupation. Being a carer can also be a lonely existence for many – the lack of support and having the time for even simple everyday tasks can be a real challenge.



This is where Stone Alzheimer's Club makes a real difference to so many lives. For the last nineteen years, the volunteers at the club have provided a safe and secure environment where those with Alzheimer's and their carers can be supported and enjoy time together.

The majority of the Club's volunteers have experienced life as an Alzheimer's carer so are well placed to fully support all those who come to the club – their commitment and enthusiasm makes it a very happy place to be. The laughter and fun that is present at every meeting has made the Club increasingly popular – not just in Stone but Stafford and further afield.



One of the key benefits of the Club is that carers can share experiences and over the years this has proven to be most beneficial. In more recent times, the active involvement of staff from the Alzheimer's Society who make regular visits to the Club has really helped both carers and members.

At a Club meeting, there is tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival along with lots of chat and laughter with opportunities to mingle and meet others. Then there is entertainment and dancing, in particular, is really popular with all. Not all meetings are the same, however, and throughout the year there are celebration meetings where we often have cake and Shloer so there is always variety. In addition, the Club's ongoing Better Lives project brings in specialists such as physiotherapy for clinics on a regular basis to better support members.



Lead Volunteer Sandie McQueen said: "Stone Alzheimer's Club brings people together and we know that we make a real difference to many people's lives. Members and carers find the friendly and happy atmosphere that we create every week really special and for many, it is the highlight of their week. It is no surprise that the Club has grown in popularity throughout the community"

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

Chebsey Parish Local History Society Exhibition of Railway Photographs

Railway 200 is a series of year long events which celebrate 200 years since the birth of the modern railway with the opening of the Darlington to Stockton Railway in 1825. To coincide with this anniversary, Chebsey Parish Local History Society is staging an exhibition of railway photographs at **Chebsey Parish Hall on the 11th and 12th October 2025.**

The exhibition will feature the collection of photographs belonging to Mr Stephen Charles Hemsworth, the last Stationmaster at Norton Bridge Station. These photographs chart the progress of railway modernisation in Norton Bridge and nearby Great Bridgeford in the 1950s and 60s. As well as Mr Hemsworth's collection, photographs in the exhibition will cover other decades and themes appropriate to the local area. A book accompanies the exhibition.

The Railway 200 anniversary is particularly relevant as the village of Norton Bridge itself owes its existence to the early modern railway system. It grew from being just an intermediate station on the Grand Junction Railway, opened in 1837, to a locally important railway junction and small village – a story told in our publication 'The Railway Hamlet. A History of Norton Bridge'.

In addition, we will also be launching the next book in our series of Photographic Histories. Entitled Places 2, it features 12 short histories of significant buildings and places in Chebsey Parish, including the Railway Inn, Norton Bridge, Quaker Burial Ground, Shallowford and Mill Farm, Chebsey. Photographs of these, and the other places in the book will also feature in the exhibition.

Chebsey Parish Local History Society started in 2018, and this will be our third exhibition. We have also produced five other books on people and places in Chebsey Parish which we will be selling at the exhibition. We also regularly attend local events to fundraise for our activities.

There is no charge for the exhibition which is open each day from 10.30 am to 4.00 pm. Tea and cake will also be freely available (donations welcome).

For further information on the exhibition or for more details of our books, you can contact us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/p/Chebsey-Parish-Local-History-Society-100067890368735/>

CHEBSEY PARISH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

EXHIBITION OF RAILWAY PHOTOGRAPHS

Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th October at Chebsey Parish Hall
School Lane, Chebsey, Staffordshire ST21 6JU
10.30 am to 4 pm

Free event
Tea, coffee and
cake provided



This year is the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first passenger railway to use steam trains to transport passengers. Coinciding with this, Chebsey Parish Local History Society is holding an exhibition of local railway photographs, including the collection of Mr Stephen Charles Hemsworth the last Stationmaster at Norton Bridge and Great Bridgeford.

A book accompanies the exhibition, and we will also be launching our next book in our series of Photographic Histories. Entitled Places 2, it features short histories of significant buildings and places in Chebsey Parish.

200
Years of Progress
1825-2025

For more information about Railway 200 or this event visit <https://railway200.co.uk/> and click on Events.

Autumn events & get togethers for all to enjoy!

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Table Top/Car Boot

Sunday 21st Sept

8.30-11.30am

Call Andrea to book
01785 813461



Weekly Timetable of Events

Mon	STRONG (weights class - beginners welcome) Gentle Exercise U3A Talking Books U3A Craft U3A (monthly 2nd Mon) U3A Meeting (monthly 1st Mon) Slimming World Clubbercise Dance Fitness	9.30-10.15am 10-11am 10.30-12.30pm 2-4pm 1.30-4pm 6-7.30pm 6.30-7.20pm	Presidents Chairmans Classroom Classroom Classroom Chairmans Presidents
Tues	Pilates: All Abilities Family History U3A (fortnightly) Improvers Line Dancing Gentle Seated Exercise to Music & Social Sequence Dancing Papercraft U3A (fortnightly 2nd & 4th Tues) Weight Watchers STRONG weights class - beginners welcome Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) Gentle Pilates Stretch & Relax: All Abilities Rock Choir	9.30-10.30am 10.30-12.30pm 11-12 noon 1.30-2.45pm 2-4pm 2-4pm 6-7pm 6.15-7pm 6.30-8.30pm 7.30-8.30pm 8-9.30pm	Presidents Classroom Presidents Chairmans Presidents Classroom Chairmans Presidents Classroom Presidents Chairmans
Weds	Guitar U3A Knit, Crochet & Chat Beginners Line Dancing Tutorial Hour Beginners & Improvers Line Dancing & Social Conexus Tuition Stafford & Stone Combat Assassin Yoga: All Abilities	10.30-12.30pm 10.30-12.30pm 12.15-1.15pm 1.30-3pm 4-6pm 6.30-7.20pm 6.30-7.30pm	Chairmans Classroom Presidents Presidents Chairmans Presidents Classroom
Thurs	Happy Feet Italian (Continuation - Sept 2025) U3A Indoor Bowls Relaxation / Meditation U3A Pregnancy Loss Support (bi-monthly) GPC Meeting (3rd Thurs monthly) Flower Club (last Thurs monthly)	10-11am 10-11.30am 10.15-11.45am 2.30-3.30pm 6.30-8.30pm 7.30-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm	Presidents Classroom Chairmans Classroom Classroom Presidents Presidents
Fri	STRONG weights class - beginners welcome Singing for Fun U3A (fortnightly) Dressmaking & Needlecraft U3A (fortnightly) Taekwondo BINGO - Community & Social Group	9.30-10.15am 1.30-3pm 2-4pm 7-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm	Presidents Classroom Classroom Presidents Chairmans
Sat	Slimming World Child of Mine Playgroup (last Sat monthly) Line Dancing Tutorials & Socials	8.30-10am 2-4pm Coming Soon	Presidents Chairmans Presidents
Sun	Table Top Sale/Car Boot (fortnightly Sept/April) St Johns Church - Weekly Service St Johns Church - Monthly Service (last Sun)	8.30-11.30am 10.30-11.30am 6.30-7.30pm	Chairmans Presidents Presidents

As we head into **Autumn** why
not pay a visit to

Walton Community Centre

for one of three events in Sept/Oct
plus the fortnightly **TABLE TOP** sale.

The Community Centre holds their
annual Macmillan coffee morning on Friday
26th September - a great time to meet some
new people while raising money for a
fabulous cause.

Maybe you fancy finding some new pieces
for your Winter wardrobe? The charity
fashion show is definitely a good
place to start & a great evening!

If you need any further info - get in
touch direct!



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Saturday 11th October



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or email: waltoncommunity@gmail.com



The raising of the flag - to the sounds of The Last Post

Stone Marks Victory In Japan (VJ) Day - 80th Anniversary

Stone Town Council hosted a short ceremony on Friday 15th August to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day. The community joined in commemorating those who lived through and served in the Second World War and to celebrate the end of the war.

The ceremony, led by Cllr. Jim Davies, began at 6.00pm with performances from Stone Scout and Guide Band and the raising of the VJ Day flag in a short ceremony at the flagpole located at the top of the High Street.

Stone Heritage Centre also hosted a special VJ Day exhibition, which explored a fascinating display of historic artefacts and memorabilia, telling the story of Victory over Japan and its lasting impact.

Photos by Martin Robinson



Cllr. Jim Davies pays tribute to those that gave their lives



Don't look down! - The view from above the bells looking down the tower

All Saints' Sandon Celebrate The 400th Anniversary Of No 5 Bell

All Saints' Church in Sandon will be celebrating the 400th anniversary, and sound of, No 5 Bell at their service on **Sunday 7th September at 11.15am**, and also during their Heritage Open Day on **Sunday 21st September between 10am and 4pm**.

Bells have rung out at Sandon Church for almost 600 years to call people to worship and mark significant events. However, today, we do not have any bells from that early period in our tower.

In those early years there would only have been one bell which would have been used to celebrate Mass.

No. 5 bell is four hundred years old this year. It was originally cast in 1625, possibly by famous bell founders, Robert or Richard Purdew of Bristol. Its diameter is two feet six and a half inches (for those of you who are more modern that's 77.47cm). Its weight is 5 cwt, 1 qtr and 27 lbs or roughly 300 kilos!

It was one of the first bells to be installed in the tower and sits next to our oldest bell which was cast in 1609. Some of you may remember the celebration we had in 2009 for this, our tenor bell.

Often the bells were cast in a mould in an adjacent field to avoid transporting them over very poor tracks. For quite a number of years we only had three bells which are the present 4, 5 and 6 bells. In 1963 these three bells were restored by John Taylors of Loughborough and two smaller bells added to the tower.

These works were the gift of the Earl of Harrowby. Unfortunately, within a couple of months, our No. 5 bell cracked and had a return visit to the bell foundry in Loughborough to be repaired.

We are delighted that those works have seen our birthday bell ring out clearly for 400 years, with the hope that it will go on doing so for many more years to come, do come along and hear it for yourself.

Sunday Service

7th September 11.15am

We will be celebrating the 400th anniversary of our number 5 bell during the service.

History Talk

September 16th 7pm - 9pm

Join us for a talk by Diane Bradley on "A thousand years of history from a Saxon, Mercian settlement" through to The Norman Foundation of All Saints Church, and her research into the Ministerial and Baronial families from the Norman times to the present era.

All Saints Sandon

H

Heritage Open Day

Free for all the Family

Sunday 21st September
10:00am - 16:00pm (no need to book)
At All Saints' Church Sandon ST18 0DB

Join us for:

- Drop in history tours of the church and graveyard (last tour at 15:15)
- Visit our bell tower to chime an ancient bell
- Make a peg doll knight and lady
- Have a go at our nature and outdoor trails
- Hear about our biodiversity plans for the grounds
- Learn about our National Lottery Heritage Fund restoration plans and how you can help!
- An exhibition about Sandon's history
- Refreshments including lots of cake!

www.heritageopendays.org.uk/submit-event/
all-saints-church-sandon.html
www.sandonallsaints.com

H

heritage opendays

Heritage Open Day

Sunday 21 September 10am- 4pm

Join us at church for our Heritage Open Day to celebrate the wonderful heritage of our Grade 1 listed church. We are offering:

- History tours inside the building – learn about rare features and our plans for restoration and conservation
- Graveyard tours – learn about the historic graves and the work to digitise all our records
- Visit the bell tower – chime a bell and celebrate the 400th anniversary of our No. 5 bell
- An exhibition created by our History Group members, including photographs of old Sandon
- Study the beautiful chart detailing the Ministerial and Baronial families from the Normans to the present era
- Family fun activities outside
- Lots of cake!

All activities take place at the church and are free of charge – though any donations towards our heritage project would be most welcomed

www.sandonallsaints.com



The James Du Pavey Food Theatre

Multi award winning independent estate agents, James Du Pavey, are named as headline sponsors of the 'James Du Pavey Festival Food Theatre' at this year's 9th annual Ginger and Spice Festival in Market Drayton, Shropshire.

The Food Theatre which will be a star attraction at this year's festival, will be located under the 19th century stone portico Buttercross on Cheshire Street, in the centre of Market Drayton and will showcase top, local and regional chefs demonstrating **between 10am and 4.30pm on Saturday 27th September 2025.**

The James Du Pavey Food Theatre will be free of charge to attend and for the first time will be hosted by Ryan Kennedy, presenter of the mid-morning show on Shropshire Live local radio who are also a festival sponsor and media partner.

So far the lineup includes Italian cook Sara Guidi, Chef and Master Baker Michel Nijsten of The Inn Baschurch and British Bread Company; Stephen Hill Managing Director of Perry's, Dan Smith the Pastry Box Shropshire. There will also be local Market Drayton butchers taking part: Scott Shepley from Shepley's Butchers,

The team from James Du Pavey Eccleshall branch, led by branch manager, Lee Davies, will be present on the day to meet festival goers and assist with supporting the fun and festive atmosphere near the festival food theatre. They will be offering facepainting for children and giving away branded balloons.

James Du Pavey, sponsor of the Ginger and Spice Festival, commented:

"We're absolutely delighted to once again support the Food Theatre at this year's Ginger and Spice Festival in Market Drayton. It's fantastic to see the event continue to grow each year, becoming a real highlight in the town's calendar."

With so much to enjoy - from mouthwatering food and live cooking to food and craft stalls and family activities - it really does offer something for everyone. Be sure to pop by our gazebo on the day to meet the team, whether you're thinking about buying or selling, or simply want to say hello!"

For further information about the Ginger and Spice Festival, please visit the website www.gingerandspicefestival.co.uk and check out the what's on page.

Ingestre Wedding Show

Brought to you by KB Wedding Events, the brand new Ingestre Hall Wedding Show takes place on **Sunday 5th October 2025, from 11am to 2.30pm!**

Explore this historic venue while meeting over 50 incredible wedding suppliers ready to help bring your dream day to life. From florists to photographers, dresses to décor, there's inspiration waiting at every turn.

Admission is free - grab your tickets now at www.kbweddingevents.com.

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The impressive Ingestre Hall - photo by Langstraat

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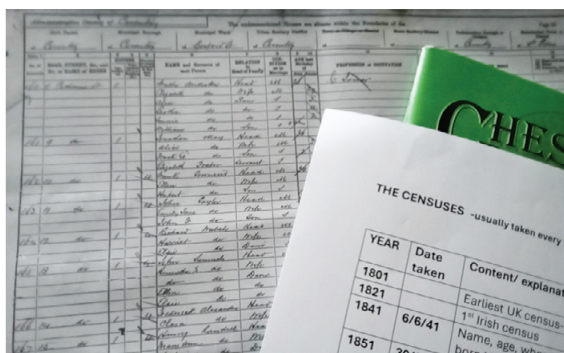
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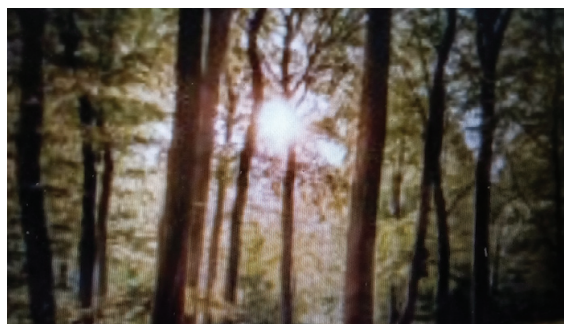
We Are Stone & District u3a!

As summer has faded, and autumn looms, some of us will look towards more sedentary and cerebral activities, posing a variety of conundrums, so if you're looking for both - why not Bridge for Beginners, Cryptic Crosswords, Family History Research, or Scrabble, to name a few. Groups looking for members are Craft, Further French, Dressmaking and Needlecraft. Poetry, and Scrabble.



Scrabble Fun!

Our next Open Day of 2025, is on Saturday 4th October at the Christchurch centre where numerous groups will display their activities. If you also fancy a cuppa and homemade cake, why not drop in and see us there. Look out for our 'stall' in the market as well!



On Friday Sept 19th, our members are expecting a Speakers Meeting talk at Christ Church, Stone - "Restoring neglected ancient woodland", his involvement since 2010.



The further French group

Why not join us? There is no upper or lower age limit and no restrictions on u3a membership, which costs just £50 per year. Members can join as many groups as time allows. u3a is all about learning for learning's sake and having some fun whilst doing it.

If you are not a member of our u3a you may attend "taster" sessions free of charge. See our website for more information, and to contact Group Leaders - <https://stone.u3asite.uk>



Stone And District Probus Club Visit The Aircraft Museum At Raf Cosford

Members and relatives from Stone and District Probus Club visited The Aircraft Museum at RAF Cosford in August on one of the hottest days of the Summer.

The museum was packed with families and visitors of all ages checking out the planes from the many different viewpoints.

The exhibits clearly showed the skill and ingenuity of the human race in being able to design and build aircraft in large quantities in times of conflict. The happier side of all this being the consequential spin-off of similar designs for more peaceful and practical pursuits such as transport, rescue work and tourism.



The groups **October 6th** Lunch Meeting at the Upper House, Barlaston with feature Gary Fear speaking on the topical subject of "Aid work in Ukraine".

This is an **'open meeting'** with additional places available for guests and visitors, pre booking is essential for catering purposes.

For details about this event and to find out more about Stone and District Probus Club, please contact our secretary Simon Cornes on 07960 811637 or visit our website www.stoneprobus.org.uk

Photos by Martin Robinson



National Trust Talks

The Staffordshire Centre's programme of talks at Walton Village Hall in Stafford continues on **September 9th**.

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.



A Concert Party

Every Night Something Awful

9th September - A Talk by Dean Nixon

The Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) was an organisation established in 1939 by Basil Dean and Leslie Henson to provide entertainment for British armed forces personnel during World War II.

ENSA was the world's largest ever entertainment organisation that included Gracie Fields, George Formby, Tommy Trinder, Noel Coward and Joyce Grenfell to name but a few. Despite many extremely talented entertainers working for ENSA, the organisation was necessarily spread thin over the vast area it had to cover. Thus, many entertainments were substandard, and the popular translation of the acronym ENSA was "Every Night Something Awful".

This is a talk looking at how ENSA and other war-time organisations raised our morale in the dark years of 1939-1945. As Churchill said to ENSA performers: "Your job is to sing while the guns are blazing."



The Jam Butty

Life Aboard The Jam Butty

14th October - A Talk by Wild Side Preserves

A Preserver's Year. This talk is delivered by Helen and Andy and covers preserve making, foraging, their life on the canals and the story behind The Jam Butty & Wild Side Preserves.

Wild Side is a business born from an enthusiasm for cooking, boating, waterways and hedgerows. It is run by Helen Tidy who was keen to combine her love of cooking with husband Andy's enthusiasm for narrow-boating. Noticing that the towpath hedgerows were an overflowing larder of wild food, Helen began to experiment with making homemade preserves. Wild Side Handmade Preserves is the end result of these labours.

The business is called Wild Side, reflecting the foraged aspect of the ingredients, they are probably better known as The Jam Butty on account of the 27ft engineless boat that they tow behind their main narrowboat.

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/>

Warriors Offer A Friendly Ear

Affected by cancer? *Maybe Eccleshall Cancer Warriors can help support you.*

Eccleshall Cancer Warriors is a voluntary support group which aims to help anyone affected by cancer, whether that's the person diagnosed with it or their friends, family members or carers.

Set up a few years ago by Eccleshall women Mandy Willberry and her friend Emma Kendrick after their own cancer diagnoses with the aim of offering a chance for others like themselves to chat about their concerns, the group has gone from strength to strength.

The Warriors offer peer to peer support at informal bi-monthly meetings held in Eccleshall, sometimes with health-related speakers. There are also plans to extend this schedule to monthly to include regular socials at venues in the town. (dates and venue to be confirmed.)

The aim of the group is to help anyone diagnosed with cancer to chat to other people to talk through their concerns, experiences, opportunities – anything that helps them to navigate the cancer journey more easily and with support.

In addition the group holds regular fundraising activities which enables them to also able to make gifts to those who have or have had cancer, including afternoon teas, bouquets of flowers or manicures and other treats. The group has a nomination form and anybody affected by cancer can be put forward to receive one of these regular treats – all supported by businesses in Eccleshall.

Mandy said: "We all know how difficult it can be when you're on the cancer journey and through the group meetings and the gifts, we hope we can just make people's lives a little easier, a little brighter."

The bi-monthly meetings are held at the Parish Rooms adjacent to Holy Trinity Church on High Street, Eccleshall and are open to everyone. **The next meeting is on Thursday, October 9th starting at 7pm.**

For further information on the meetings or to nominate somebody for a gift, email eccleshallcancerwarriors@gmail.com
You can also find the group on Facebook.



Warriors leaders Tony Ware, Emma Kendrick and Mandy Willberry



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Crown Meadow Spotlight

Crown Meadow in Bloom: *Progress Highlights and Summer on the Meadow*

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

Over the past few months, several planned improvements have been started across Crown Meadows. In this feature, we will take a closer look at the progress to date, the key initiatives currently underway, and what's been happening over the summer season.

Investing in Nature: Key Improvements Taking Root

One of the most noticeable recent improvements at Crown Meadow is the enhancement of the car park area. Our contractor has widened the space to accommodate more vehicles, replaced the fencing and improved the surface.

Another key improvement underway at Crown Meadow is the ongoing maintenance of the wetland scrapes, an essential feature of the site's ecological landscape. Wetland scrapes are shallow depressions, usually less than 1m in depth, which hold flood water and stay wet for most of the year. Stone Town Council funded the creation of two such scrapes at Crown Meadow in 2008 which was pivotal in providing the right conditions for a wider range of flora and fauna. Crown Meadow is part of the Trent Valley flood plain and the scrapes help to alleviate floodwater and slow down the river when it overtops its banks.

In recent years the scrapes have been increasingly invaded by hundreds of willow saplings which have reduced the effectiveness and biodiversity of the scrapes. To address this, our contractor has cut back selected willow trees that shed seed into the scrapes and has removed the unwanted saplings from the scrapes. In an effort to reuse the saplings, some were taken by Stafford Borough Council and planted further upstream where they are needed.

The work carried out by the contractor can look rather destructive but it is essential for the longer-term ecological health of the scrapes. Nature soon bounces back after the works have been completed as visitors to Crown Meadow during the summer months will have seen. Conditions in the scrapes are already improving for a variety of native plants, insects, and bird species.

Wildlife Wonders: Crown Meadow's Summer Visitors

Summer is the time of plenty when our flora is at its most lush and insects their most diverse. There is plenty to see at Crown Meadow and below are a few of the more obvious species you might notice as you walk around.

The flowers of Butterbur occur in the spring, we are now left with their large distinctive leaves; mainly by the Scotch Brook. The grassy area of Crown Meadow is covered with Common Sorrel; a member of the dock family.



Buttercups



Meadowsweet



Himalayan Balsam

Where the winter floods have receded, the ground is covered in Creeping and Meadow Buttercups. Meadow Buttercups are taller, with deeply cut leaves while Creeping Buttercups generally are lower growing and, as gardeners know, spreads by runners! It may be considered a weed in your lawn, but buttercups are a valuable nectar source for insects.

There are a number of flowers collectively referred to as umbels as they have an “umbrella-shaped” flower head. In spring we get the Cow Parsley or Queen Anne’s Lace but in summer its place is taken by Hogweed – have a sniff of the flowers; they do indeed smell of pigs! It grows up to 2.5m. Umbels are magnets for insects so it’s always worth having a look at them closely.

Tansy is a plant grown in gardens for its attractive yellow flowers and its foliage has a strong scent when rubbed. It grows on the riverbank.

Meadowsweet, with its pretty cream flowers, is an attractive species of damp habitats. Gardeners will recognise our only native Iris species, the Yellow Iris. It likes more permanently wet areas.

Another plant associated with waterways these days is the Himalayan Balsam which spreads rapidly and chokes out native vegetation. In winter when it dies down, it leaves the riverbanks exposed to erosion. Volunteers organised by Stone Town Council have started a program to reduce and contain the Himalayan Balsam over the next two years.

Crown Meadow and the River Trent attract a variety of bird and insect visitors. The Trent attracts Goosanders while Mute Swans have on occasion bred on the meadow. Other wetland bird species that you may see are Kingfisher, Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Mallard and Moorhen.

The River Trent is home to the attractive Banded Demoiselle, a large and colourful damselfly species which you may see flying over the river when the male’s blue spots on its wings are very noticeable. They often perch on bankside vegetation.



Banded Demoiselle



Mute Swans

For more information on Crown Meadow
Visit www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk/about

Crown Meadow – Anglers Car Park
What 3 Words - resembles.goggle.originate
Sat Nav - ST15 0GY

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

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





Stone Ramblers call in at Moddershall

"Walk of the Month" From The Stone Ramblers

Well, three heatwaves in one summer, that is amazing! Here at the Stone Ramblers, the heat hasn't deterred us from walking, including an extremely hot walk up to Mam Tor and an overnight stay in Castleton! We've continued to walk twice a week and as usual have walked in many beautiful places.

We have recently celebrated 30 wonderful years of walking together and birthday celebrations took place at the beautiful Boar Inn in Moddershall. We're now looking forward to the next 30 years!



Stone Ramblers taking a well earned break in the heat

Walk of the Month - Stone - Pirehill - Aston

Distance: Approx 5 miles

This walk goes through Walton, with an easy section and a more strenuous return leg, across fields to Aston by Stone, ending along the Trent and Mersey Canal. Be warned there are several stiles! It is approximately 5 miles and should take approximately 2.5 hours.

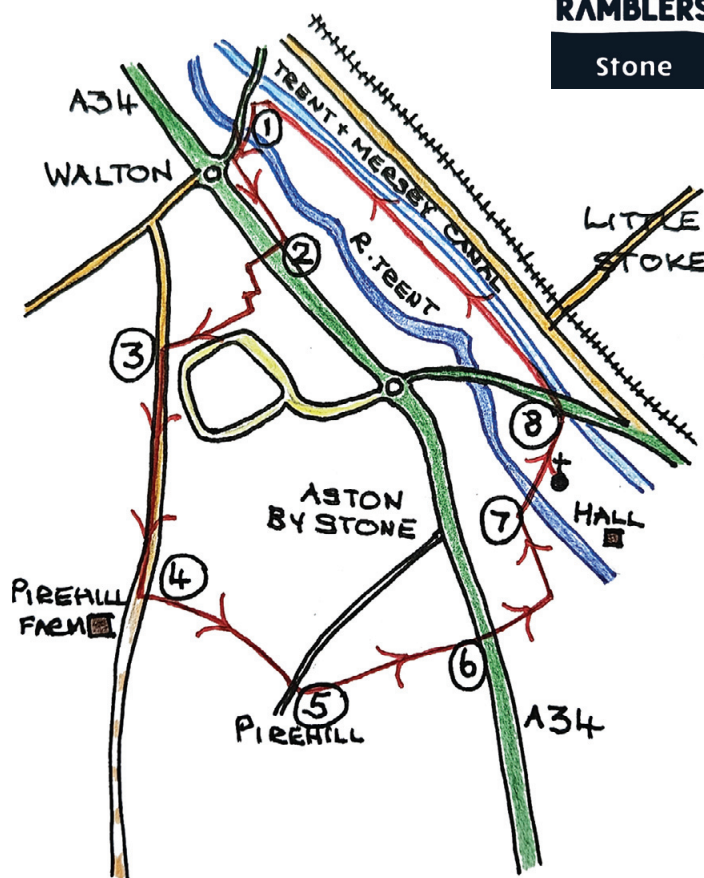
1. Walk from the Sports Centre across the field to the gate to the right of the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club. Turn left and cross the River Trent by the old road bridge. Keep to the left-hand path in front of the cottages and turn left into Stafford Road and continue ahead until you meet the A34.

2. Cross the dual carriageway by the footbridge and continue on the asphalt path to Tilling Drive. Turn left and in 100 metres, turn right into Beacon Rise. In 200 metres turn right at the safety barrier into the end of the cul-de-sac with three bungalows on your right. At the end of the bungalows, turn right into Hill Crescent and keeping to the left, find the path between two houses on the right-hand side at the top of the cul-de-sac. Follow the path until it meets the boundary fence of Walton Priory Middle School. Continue uphill past a bus shelter to a T-junction on to Pirehill Lane.

3. Turn left and follow Pirehill Lane, continuing uphill past Oak Farm and then New House Farm on the left. Pass the barns and farmhouse of North Pirehill Farm and immediately look for a footpath on your left and cross the stile.

4. Walk down the middle of the field to the gate in the hedge at the bottom. Ahead of you are Staffordshire Fire and Rescue buildings. At the gate, bear left to the bridge in the corner of the field. Cross and turn

Stone - Pirehill - Aston



right up the hedge 20 metres to the double stile in the hedge on your right. Cross and walk up the field with the hedge on your left to the stile. Admire the views across to Stone on your left. Cross the stile and proceed straight ahead to the stile and onto the tarmac track.

5. Cross the stile opposite and walk diagonally left to a stile in the fence, crossing into the next field diagonally left to the gap between two adjacent trees. Cross into the next field and keeping the hedge on your left, proceed into a grassy lane, which leads to the A34 and the old Crown Inn.

6. Cross the A34 with great care and go down Aston Lane. After 200 metres turn left into Bowers Lane. Pass Willowdale and bear right and then turn right into a small close of houses. At No.2, turn left and follow the path to the right and cross the rickety stile bridge and stile into a field. Bear left to a kissing gate. Cross the field ahead to the far corner, a brick wall around Aston Hall. Observe Aston Farm on your left. Turn right and with the wall on your right, follow to the gate in the corner. Go onto the road.

7. Turn left for 100 metres, passing the old Aston School and turn right passing the entrance to the church. Cross the River Trent and after 100 metres turn right round a barn conversion onto the Trent and Mersey canal towpath.

8. Turn left after Bridge 90 and follow back to Westbridge Park, passing under the A51 road bridge and canal bridges 91 and 92.

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

If you would like to join us, please have a look at our website www.stoneramblers.org for more details and come along! We have had several new members joining us recently, which is fantastic.

Once again, thank you to our wonderful volunteers and happy walking!

Penny Meakin
Chair, Stone Ramblers



Rail Replacement At Stone Station

There is no prize for working out the top story for Stone Station in August. From August 2nd to 22nd there have been no trains calling at the station on weekdays, and people living near the main line will have wondered where all the express trains to Manchester have gone to (and the answer to that question is "Wilmslow").

The line between Stoke, Macclesfield and Manchester was out of use while a big infrastructure project was being carried out at Stockport. Network Rail took the opportunity to carry out other improvements at the same time, which answers the next question as to why work at Stockport causes suspension of train services at a Stone.

One criticism made locally has been lack of advance information. Jon Heal, chair of the local rail user group NSRPG, comments, "I only learnt about the extent of the engineering works ten days before it was due to start. There were no clues at the station at all, and even at Stoke Station, which lost most of its train service for three weeks, there were only two posters put up a few days before the disruption started."

NSRPG were able to put up a few posters of their own, which fortunately were then posted on 'A Little Bit of Stone' to help the word get round. If that wasn't sufficient to alert local people, the closure of the Meaford Level Crossing by the Station drive certainly was.

By chance, NSRPG held a meeting in the station the day before the drive was closed off, and by another lucky chance they had booked Geoff Grant, Stakeholder Manager for London Northwestern, to come along. Geoff was able to go into detail about the disruption expected.

On days when trains were suspended, there were rail replacement buses. The best source of information was on www.nationalrail.co.uk which also shows that replacement buses stop at Granville Square for Stafford and on Crown Street for Stoke.

Fortunately the first week's work was completed on time and the replacement buses, as far as we know, ran successfully. On the second Saturday, August 9th, trains were running but a fallen tree at Kidsgrove added another level of disruption.

The work at Stone Station involved lifting up and replacing the rails on both lines at the junction.

Jon Heal mentions a conversation with one of the Network Rail staff. "He explained how over time the sleepers had slipped away from the platform, and so the rails needed to be relaid in the correct position. We had been pointing out that the step out on to the train has been getting harder, especially for older people, so we hope that this has helped to improve things. Fingers crossed!"

Further work has involved replacing three Level Crossings in Stone. The most problematic was on Church Lane which is the only route into the Coppice Estate. Network Rail did put on a consultation meeting at which the issues were discussed. The Meaford Crossing was done first and completed on time on August 12th.

NSRPG are keen to receive comments about the way in which the works have been done and their impact. Alternatively, councillors can be asked to raise points.

The next NSRPG meeting will be on Thursday 25th September in the Quaker Meeting House, Miller Street, Newcastle at 6.30pm. All are welcome. For further info contact: jhnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk

The other news is that the roadworks in front of Stoke-on-Trent station were completed on time on August 10th. After being removed this time last year, Josiah Wedgwood returned to stand a bit closer to the entrance. There are new bus stops, but otherwise the layout looks similar.

UPDATE: Engineering work causing the 3 weeks of disruption was completed on time, and trains were running again on 23rd August - as promised!

**From Jonathan Heal
North Staffs Rail Promotion Group**

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Gazette

NEWS IN BRIEF

Food Support Fund

The Community Foundation for Staffordshire & Shropshire are excited to announce the launch of the Food Support Fund 2025, in collaboration with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership.

Funding is available for voluntary and community groups providing crisis or preventative support to Stoke-on-Trent households struggling with food costs.

Full details about the fund and how to apply are on our website at staffordshire.foundation/grants/staffordshire-organisations/food-support-fund/

Jelly Tots

Looking for a welcoming space where your little ones can play? Why not come along to Jelly Tots, a vibrant toddler group that meets **every Tuesday at St Michael's Church from 9.30am till around 10.30am.**

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?

Victoria Hall October Organ Prom

The next Organ Prom is on **Saturday October 18th** at noon. It will be played by our regular and most entertaining player from Birmingham Keith Hearnshaw.

The music will be:

*All through the night - Welsh Trad. Arr C.Curly,
Grand Choeur in D - A.Guilman, Salut d'Amour - E.Elgar, Fantasia and Fugue in G minor - J.S.Bach,
Star Spangled Banner - D.Buck, Adagio for Strings - S.Barber, Finale from Symphonie 6 - C.M. Widor*

Price is £12 (Concessions £10.50) Includes Coffee/Tea & a Programme. Tickets available at the door or from www.atgtickets.com (fees apply)

Promoted by Stoke-on-Trent Theatres Ltd & the Victoria Hall Organ Proms charity with support from the Harding & Dronsfield Trusts and other donors.

Save The Date For A Feast Of Family Fun At Stone Food & Drink Festival 2026

Following the success of the 2025 Stone Food & Drink Festival, we wanted to let you all know the dates for our 2026 Festival.

It all takes place on **Friday 8th, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th of May**, at Westbridge Park, please visit stonefooddrink.org.uk for up to date details.

CU@4

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

CU@4 takes place on the **third Sunday of each 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 21st September and then 19th October and 16th November.

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!

A Day Of Fun With The Lions At Foxfield

Without a doubt, one of the most enjoyable days for members of Stone Lions Club (CIO) is the Annual Fun Day, organised by fellow Lions from clubs across North Staffordshire, which takes place at Foxfield Railway in Caverswall and is provided for youngsters with additional needs and their immediate families.

The event, which first took place in 2004, is provided for families completely free of charge, with plenty of games, activities and entertainment throughout the day, including a ride on one of Foxfield's beautifully restored steam trains!

The sun shone brightly for all who attended this year with an amazing 604 visitors throughout the day - one of the largest numbers on record. All were treated to a great day out, made possible by the 57 Lions and Friends of Lions who were there to make sure all went as smoothly as possible.



made their way off site - "Just look at all those smiling faces - that's what makes it all so worth-while."

If you have supported any of the fund-raising activities organised by Stone Lions in the past and wondered how the money raised is spent, then look no further - as far as Lions are concerned, every penny counts! If reading this has inspired you to help 'make a difference' in our community and you would like to know more about Stone Lions Club and their other projects, please phone 0345 8338478 for an informal chat - it could change your life!

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AED Donate's Jamie Richardson with Jim Williams, director of Midlands FRS, and one of the Fire Engines that will be on display during Emergency Services Day

Stone High Street Event To Celebrate Blue Light Heroes

Sunday 14th September will see Stone High Street taken over by blue light vehicles of all shapes and sizes, as the town comes together to celebrate our brilliant Emergency Services.

Alongside browsing the vehicles on display – which will include ambulances, fire engines, police cars and fire boats there will also be the chance to meet and greet representatives from Stone First Responders, Midlands Air Ambulance and Staffordshire Police.

The free event is part of the popular 'Sunday Series', run by Stone Traders' Group in partnership with the team behind the Stone Food & Drink Festival with the aim of bringing visitors into town to help bolster high street businesses – and was masterminded by Jamie Richards, CEO of Stone-based defibrillator charity, AED Donate, which will be doing free CPR demonstrations throughout the day. Jamie says: "Following the popularity of the Four Wheel Fest and other transport events in the town over the past few years, I had the idea of bringing together our local emergency services to give people a chance to find out more about what they do and get up close to their vehicles.

We're hoping it will provide a fun, informative day out for the local community and also get Stone High Street bustling on a Sunday – there will be lots of local businesses, bars and eateries open on the day to support the event. Who knows, it may even help inspire the next generation of Blue Light workers!"

The event will take place on **Sunday 14th September from 10am – 3pm and is free to attend.**

Future **Stone Sunday Series** events include a **Family Halloween Fest on Sunday 26th October** and the ever-popular **Stone Christmas Markets on Sun 23rd November and Sunday 14th December.**



Lion Mike Ward, in the center, receiving his trophy from Lion Glenys Sanders

Stone Lions Are On The Ball!

On Wednesday 23rd July, members and friends of Stone Lions Club (CIO) met at Stone Crown Bowling Club to compete for the highly prized Bob Faulkner Bowls Trophy.

This competition takes place annually and is fiercely contested every year!

This year's winner was Lion Mike Ward, who was proud to receive the trophy which was established in memory of the late Lion Bob Faulkner, a former member of the club and a keen bowler himself.

Those attending would like to thank Lion Graham Garner who was Organiser in Chief for the event and the members of Stone Crown Bowling Club for their hospitality and support throughout the evening.



Where it all started - Ron in 1985 at Blythe Bridge office, (the red mark over the building is an exposure error in the photo)

Celebrating 40 Years Of Jeffries Property Buyers (JPB)

Congratulations go to Jeffries Property Buyers who this month proudly celebrates its 40th anniversary as one of Staffordshire's most trusted and longest established property buying firms. In 1985, Ron Jeffries started buying properties in and around Staffordshire with a simple ethos: treat people fairly and keep your word. Four decades on, Jeffries Property Buyers (JPB) is still proud of the way it does business.

Ron's first property deal was done over a handshake, and while times have changed, the Jeffries approach hasn't. "We've always believed in looking after people," Ron told the Gazette. "Whether it's helping someone move on quickly from a property they no longer need, or making a stressful situation easier, we're here to help." Ron remembers back in 1985 being one of the first local businesses to buy a mobile phone. At the time although this was a huge investment, his vision was to be contactable anytime, anywhere, providing a quick seamless service. This quick service is something the company is still proud to continue.

Many of their customers come through word-of-mouth recommendations – a sign of the trust they've built over the years. One recent client from Stone shared: "Ron and his team made everything so easy. They were honest, straightforward, and I always knew where I stood. It was like dealing with friends, not a company."

For JPB, it's not just about bricks and mortar. It's about understanding that selling a property can be personal. They've supported people facing everything from sudden relocations to inherited homes, and also complex commercial property acquisitions. They have built up an excellent reputation to prove that they can move quickly when someone needs a fast, certain sale.

JPB have extensive experience in purchasing a wide range of properties, including residential, pubs, care homes,



Ron & Julie Jeffries outside the Stone office

warehouses, shops, banks, offices, and various small to medium-sized plots of land with or without planning permission.

For commercial clients, JPB are pleased to offer a bridging loan facility designed to provide quick cash flow, allowing businesses greater flexibility to downsize or upsize their operation. Additionally, they can facilitate buy-and-rent-back agreements for most commercial properties.

JPB are also committed to giving back to the local community. The last couple of years they have proudly supported the Gingerbread charity which has helped many young families facing homelessness and difficult situations. They also support Tri Services Newcastle Staffs providing them with land for their veterans retreat.

If you or someone you know is thinking about selling – whether it's a house, commercial property, or something a little different – you can make an appointment at the Stone office or arrange a visit for a no-obligation offer.

They are based at Unit 14d Part 2, on the Whitebridge Estate in Stone. For more information visit their website at www.jeffriespropertybuyers.co.uk



What's On at Hilderstone Village Hall *Life's Little Victims*

We've booked a live theatre company who will present 'Life's Little Victims', a comedy by Stephen Powell, that cleverly breaks the fourth wall to engage the audience.

Join Vicky and Tom, a middle-aged married couple, as they navigate through life's daily challenges. This play is recommended for audiences who are 16 years old and above.

Directed by Kelly-Marie Singleton, this show received rapturous welcomes at both Tittensor and Fulford Village Halls. Please join us to give this comic duo a real, genuine, Hilderstone welcome!

Act One: Tom's grand idea of whisking Vicky away on a two week holiday in France with a caravan in tow goes awry. Cue the comedy of errors: an out of date passport, an overbearing mother-in-law, a death, and even a robbery! Poor Vicky is left exasperated and with a journey she won't soon forget.

Act Two: When you've been hitched as long as Tom and Vicky, the spark can dwindle. But after an awkward chat where some jaw-dropping secrets were spilled, the couple decided to add some sizzle to their love life. Unfortunately for Tom, he discovers it's not just the conversation that's awkward, leading to some hilariously uncomfortable moments.

Where - Hilderstone Village Hall, Sandon Rd,
Hilderstone, Stone ST15 8XS

When - Saturday 6 September 7:30pm.

Tickets are £12 each from

<https://buytickets.at/hilderstonevillagehall1/1493704>

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Local Community Group Awarded Grant

Stafford Community Food Distribution Hub CiC is celebrating after receiving £6,500 from the Severn Trent Community Fund.

The money will help towards the cost of providing food free of charge to the six member organisations, all of whom operate a foodbank in Stafford Borough, who are Elim Church, Stone Community Hub, Holmcroft Community Centre, House of Bread, Signposts Services Food Bank at Rising Brook and Staffordshire Women's Aid.

This local community group has been running since 2022 and is staffed by up to 10 volunteers. It was founded after Stafford Borough Councillor Jeremy Pert recognised that there was a need for additional food to support the local foodbanks because of the increased demand.

The council have financially supported the organisation since its inception, during which time the food hub has distributed over 40 tonnes of food to local foodbanks, equivalent to nearly 100,000 meals.

The new funding from the Severn Trent Community Fund: Core funding, which awards grant money to maintain three elements of community wellbeing - people, places, and environment - means the organisation has additional support to run for the more than the next 12 months.

Mike Court, one of the founders of CiC, says: "We are delighted that the Severn Trent Community Fund Core Funding has recognised our work in this way. We are very thankful for the funding so that we will be able to continue to obtain food from FareShare Midlands and provide this free of charge to the local foodbanks."



Collage Café

In the July session we talked about the key events in the life of Joseph including the quarrel with his brothers, his slavery in Egypt, interpretation of dreams, the famine and eventual reconciliation with his family.

We focussed on his multi-coloured coat as the subject for a collage. Group members employed a wide range of fabrics, ribbons, decorated card and 'gemstones' etc. to produce 'designer' items.

There was a holiday break in August.

The next Collage Café will be at Stone Library on **Thursday 11th September from 10.00am till 12.00 noon.**

Future dates are **9th October, 13th November and 11th December.** All materials are provided free of charge and there are refreshments.

For further information please contact Jill on 07491 311832. Everyone is welcome.



Art In The Park

The new Skate Park, part of the recent redevelopment of Westbridge Park, is becoming a very popular place for youngsters to meet up, socialise and have fun, but unfortunately it had begun to attract some less than artistic graffiti, which had generated negative comments from other residents and park users.

Members of Stone Lions Club recognised the problem and looked for a way to turn what could have quickly developed into an eyesore into an item of artwork that could be enjoyed by young and old alike.

The members felt that those best suited to effecting the transformation were the young people who would be the main users of the area and, after receiving an enthusiastic response when speaking to a group of youngsters in the park, made an approach to Christchurch Academy to sound out their interest in joining forces. *The ball had started rolling!*

CCA Head of Art, Delal Fares, is a long-standing friend of Stone Lions,

a year after the initial planning began, but it was really worth waiting for!

Two Street Artists, Martin and James, arrived on site and were joined by Ms Fares, plus 10 Year 7 pupils, and a number of spectators who were interested in seeing the work progress.

The youngsters seemed quite surprised when they learnt how involved they would be in actually decorating the mural, and were soon fully engaged with what they were doing. Without exception they were all delighted with their experience, as can be gathered from some of their comments.

"Looks really cool."

"Looks nice and it's good to have something different."

"Fun, relaxing, creative, looks good."

"It was really fun and just makes some places look good."

"Really good and it was great doing more than we expected to do."

"Really cool, a way to express ourselves. Therapeutic and enjoyed doing it."



having played an active role in encouraging students to take part in the annual Lions Clubs International Peace Poster Competition for many years. She was really excited about the project and proved to be invaluable in moving things forward, having an awareness of what was really needed to produce a successful result.

She very quickly identified a Street Artist, based in Ormskirk, who was willing to produce a design and, more importantly, work with a group of youngsters to deliver a piece of artwork that would be a credit to the town.

After a lengthy period of obtaining planning permission, designing the mural and coordinating diaries, work actually took place on 14th July, just over

Street Artist Martin was extremely impressed by the attitude and behaviour of the pupils, saying it was one of the nicest groups they had ever worked with.

As a bonus, the youngsters were encouraged to decorate one area of the wall to their own design, without adult intervention.

This impressive community project was supported by Stone Lions with money raised through their fundraising efforts in the local community.

It is already attracting a lot of positive comments (people especially like the bees and ladybird) and it is hoped that the result will be enjoyed by many residents over the years to come and, who knows, may possibly lead to similar projects in the future.



What's On at St.Dominic's Community and Church Combined Social Centre

St Dominics social centre is the hidden gem of Stone, recently refurbished to a high modern standard, it has 3 rooms, and 2 licensed bars, making it the perfect venue to host a whole range of events, here's some of the regular activities, along with one or two special events, a highlight being the upcoming Irish Night in October, if you've not been to one of their Irish nights yet, you really should, it's the best night out in Stone!



Bible Group

Every Monday at 10.30-11.30 in the Garden meeting room



Winter Soup Day

£4 per person Inc soup roll and cake
Starting 12-2pm In the Lounge bar
Every other week on Thursdays on Oct 9th and 23rd Nov 6th and 20th Dec 4th and 18th
Then in 2026 January 8th + 22nd Feb 5th + 19th March 5 + 19th



St Dominic's Catholic Youth Club

New leaders Megan Mcl & Courtney A
Aged 8-11yr olds
Friday 6.30-8pm
Sept 19th, Oct 17th, Nov 14th



Church Coffee Cafe

Open 11.30-1pm
Hot drinks and food in the Lounge bar
Sundays only 5th Oct, 9th Nov, 20th Dec



St Dominic's Irish Night

Irish Night Oct 10th

The Blarney Stone Band
In the Ballroom
tickets £10 online or at church
Inc hot bap. Bar open



Christmas Fayre Nov 15th 12-3pm

Gifts and tombola stalls
Bar, hot drinks and food
For one day only - Meet Santa in his Grotto

Christmas Carols Sing Along Dec 6th 6pm - 9.30pm

Tickets inc Hot food are £12.50 and available online or at church

St.Dominic's Social Centre Station Rd, Stone ST15 8EW
More updated Information on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/StDominicsSocialCentre> and outside the St Dominic's venue on the notice board.

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Commemorating
VE & VJ Days
in Poetry and Prose

Lest We Forget



by
The Eccleshall Poets

Poetry Group Commemorate VE and VJ Day

Eccleshall Poetry Group are pleased to announce their latest collection of poems are now available. Written to commemorate both VE and VJ Day, 12 members of the Group contributed especially written poems which reflect some of the many aspects of the war, from both memory and imagined.

Please pop into one of their poetry meetings or contact Thelma Whitfield - 01785 760017 - for more information about the Group and to purchase your own copy of 'Lest We Forget' at the special introductory price of £3.00.

It's all about...

Buddy
A Solo Tribute To
BUDDY HOLLY

&
The Paul Birch
Rock and Roll Show



Saturday 25th October
Tickets £10
7.30pm Start

Buddy Holly And Rock And Roll Night Show

Woodseaves Village Hall, on High Offley Road, Woodseaves are delighted they have the Paul Birch 'Rock and Roll Show', with a special tribute to the late 'Buddy Holly', on the evening of **Saturday 25th October**, 7pm for a 7.30pm start.

They have a licensed bar for the evening. Entry is by prepaid* Ticket and they can be secured by phoning Sandra on 01785 284273 / 07810 501495 or Lois on 01785 284787 / 07969 457071.

Tickets can be delivered to you and payment collected, if necessary and you live in Stone or Eccleshall. A great night out is assured.



What does the future hold for Yarnfield?... and how will the Parish Council help shape it?

I have lived in Swynnerton and Yarnfield for ten years, since I was six, and over those years, I've seen just how much the little village Yarnfield has grown - not just in size, but in spirit too. Thanks to the work of the Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council, there has been a real boost in community energy lately, and it's been lovely to be a part of it.

One of the biggest highlights for me last year was the Parish Picnic on July 14th. It was such a family-friendly celebration that brought the whole village together - it really felt like a proper showcase of what makes Yarnfield so special.

Another standout moment was the work experience day we had with young people from Walton Hall Academy. They got stuck into helping out with community projects, like the council-run lunch club, and absolutely loved being involved. The lunch club itself is a huge success too. It ran weekly from September to July, offering a warm, friendly place for people to chat and enjoy a meal together - and I'm happy to say **it's coming back in September!**

And who could forget the Christmas Party on December 21st? It was full of festive cheer and fun. Events like these really show the council's commitment to making Yarnfield a vibrant, welcoming place for everyone.

But it's not just about looking back - we've got big plans for the future too!

The Parish Council has set out four key priorities: improving communication, protecting our environment, strengthening governance, and keeping our community safe. Personally, I'm especially excited about the plans to improve the local environment, particularly the spaces that children and young people use the most.

A big focus is on the playing field in Yarnfield Park. After hearing from local residents, the Parish Council has an ambition to take it into their ownership, which means they could work with sports clubs to make sure it's put to good use. With so many children and families living nearby (especially thanks to the amazing Springfields First School!), this space has loads of potential.

There's also a big upgrade planned for the village green playground. With

funding of up to £41,800, improvements are set to be finished by March 2026, and planning has already started. The aim is to replace some of the old play equipment with safer, more modern options and make the whole area more accessible, attractive and fun for kids. They're also planning to swap out the open-top bins for enclosed ones to help keep things cleaner and more hygienic. It might seem like a small change, but it'll make a big difference!

Speaking of safety, I'm really glad the council is doing something about road safety in the parish. A £2,000 budget has been set aside to reduce speed through Cold Meece and improve road signage - especially on Yarnfield Parkway and Brookvale Drive. A lot of people don't seem to realise it's a 20-mph zone, which is worrying because those roads are used by lots of children walking to school or catching the bus. Better signs should help remind drivers to slow down and keep everyone safe.

Another important improvement is happening in Cold Meece, where the bus shelter will be getting a much-needed refresh. With £400 going towards refelting the roof and general repairs, it'll be a much nicer (and drier!) place to wait - especially when the weather turns bad.

And finally, I've got to give a big shout out to the Community Action Group who continue their amazing work, from planting spring bulbs and summer flowers to organising clean-up events around the parish. They're also the team who look after our defibrillators, which are such important bits of life-saving kit. Right now, they're even fundraising for a brand-new defibrillator to go on Ford Drive - which would be a brilliant addition to our village.

All in all, there's so much happening in Yarnfield and Cold Meece - and as someone who's grown up here, I couldn't be more excited to see what's next.

Don't forget to get involved with the **Parish Picnic on the 14th of September 2025** and the **children's Christmas party on the 20th of December 2025!**

*Thank you for reading
By Matilda Brett*



Stone Division Girlguiding at Magical Midlands

Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers from in and around Stone, converged on Uttoxeter Racecourse (on one of the hottest days of the year) at the Girlguiding event, Magical Midlands.

They joined with some 7,000 other Girlguiding members from across the Midlands region to take part in an incredible variety of activities.

These included : zorbing, bangra dancing, steel band drumming, crafts galore, trampolining, circus skills, fair ground rides , archery and all ending with an incredible grand finale on stage of Disney Princesses, 'Abba' and even 'Taylor Swift!'.

Jane West, a local Rainbow leader, told the Gazette, "It was an amazing day full of fabulous activities for the girls to take part in. It was also wonderful for the girls to see that Girlguiding is a national as well as an international movement".



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Sketch In Stone Success

Hello Dan,

I wanted to say a very big thank you for the articles you put into both the Stone Gazette and My Village Voice.

Many, many people have commented on them so they have been seen, which is good feedback for you. Both the exhibition on cubism and the Sketch in Stone.

The Sketch in Stone event has been hailed a success. We had a lot of positive feedback. People that we didn't know came through the doors which is what we set out to do.

We raised £140 for Man Time – a local charity supporting men's mental health.

Best regards and thank you
Sue Chatterton

Objections To Housing Developments On Eccleshall Road

Dear Dan,

please see letter detailing our objections to the proposed housing developments on and around Eccleshall Road.

We will be making our case and opposition to the Borough Council during the formal consultation period, the first of which will be the Bloor submission for 500 houses.

If any Gazette readers believe these developments will impact negatively on their quality of life, then I urge them to please make their views clear to the Borough Council Planning Committee, and your local councillors.

As you are aware there are currently three proposals for housing developments on or around Eccleshall Road, which we believe would have an adverse impact on our quality of life. Therefore, we as residents of Bankside have penned together our objections outlined below. We trust that the majority of residents in Walton and Stone would be supportive of our objections as the developments if passed will impact on everyone.

Since 2019 there has already been 2 housing developments on land adjacent to Eccleshall Road. In fact, this work is still ongoing and will result in the building of 592 new homes. The Plan For Stafford Borough (PFSB) 2019-31 requires the building of 1,000 new homes in Stone, this has already been surpassed with 6 years to go! Additionally, the proposed developments cannot be seen in isolation as there are proposals to build 505 new homes from Udall Grange to Micklow Farm, 240 opposite Udall Grange and 140 new homes off Marlborough Road a total of 885 new dwellings in this immediate locality. This is on top of smaller developments taking place and 120 proposed for the old GEC site. Therefore, given the current quota in our neighbourhood of 592 we are totally against anymore new developments in or around Eccleshall Road. Over recent years we have suffered from significant disruption to the quality of our life due to almost incessant roadworks, significant increase in traffic both heavy and light, air pollution, noise and the downgrading of the local environment.

With regards to traffic on Eccleshall Road the PFSB acknowledges that there are already congestion issues on the A520 and similarly the B5026 from Eccleshall which takes traffic from the Walton residential areas to the A34. "Alleviation of this congestion is a significant concern to local residents, particularly as Walton is currently accommodating an expansion of 592 houses." It is also anticipated that the Walton roundabout will be operating over capacity by 2031 without any new housing developments taking place! The answer to this from the Bloor development is enlarge Walton roundabout fill in the subway and install pedestrian crossings. We cannot see how this would alleviate traffic issues all it would achieve is the blocking of the roundabout. Pedestrians do get knocked over on crossings don't know of any accidents in subways. Has there been a survey of footfall using the subway? During the daytime the subway is constantly used by all age groups from school children to elder citizens. Additionally, given the experience of Redhill roundabout in Stafford how long would this take 1 month, 1 year, 2 years? If there were to be road improvements would that be the financial contributions from all the proposed developments?

Given that Stone is also highlighted as having an oversupply of 4 and 5 bedroom houses which statistically results in high proportion of 2+ cars per family, any significant new build will put an intolerable burden on a road system that is evidenced as suffering from congestion. Therefore 885 new builds could see an additional 1,500 cars converge onto Eccleshall Road. The ongoing disruption and associated issues of pollution, noise with the current developments would be extended by many more years if your project and the others secured planning permission. The problem of traffic would be exacerbated during the building of houses with heavy goods vehicles, more traffic disorder and roadworks. We have already had 6 years of this another 6 would

be completely unacceptable.

Transport is not the only infrastructure issue it is noted that in the Stone Neighbourhood Plan that electricity and water are both critical. Is the drainage and sewage adequate? Eccleshall Road has already been dug out once to improve drainage for Udall Grange. We suspect that current drainage and sewage would be inadequate to support another 885 houses. Primary healthcare in Stone is also under severe pressure, Mansion House no longer does health checks. The capacity concern is highlighted by the numerous texts we receive from the surgery requesting that we do not attend because of staffing issues and illness. The answer would be a new surgery but this needs resources which are scarce and limited given the shortage of GPs.

Schools and safety. There are 3 schools in the immediate vicinity of Walton: Manor Hill, Pirehill and Walton Priory Middle School. Over 75% of pupils when leaving the two primary schools go to WPMPS. Traffic on Manor Rise, Pirehill Lane, Tilling Drive and Eccleshall Road is horrendous at pick up and drop off times. In an attempt to alleviate traffic issues schools have encouraged walking buses. However, for a large number of children and adults this requires negotiating and manoeuvring across roads when the risk factor of an accident is extremely high. Currently there is just one crossing on Eccleshall Road and one on Pirehill Lane. Then there is the question of the capacity of schools to be able to cope with the increased demand. For example, the number on roll in year 5 at WPMPS is 144 just 6 below the threshold for that years intake. The proposal from Bloor homes for a new first school does this include the building of a school or allocation of land for a school.

We acknowledge that the current Government wishes to encourage house building however they have also stated that they will review boundaries to prioritise brownfield and grey belt for development. 67% of the public oppose any green belt housing policy. Also, we are not NIMBY's as we have the current development of 592 houses still in progress. It is also highlighted in the PFSB that Stone has an over supply of 4 and 5 bed roomed houses. "There is a pressing need for more affordable housing to meet current and future demand". It is noted that the Richborough development proposes 30% affordable houses and Bloor homes 40%. Acknowledging that the National Planning Policy Framework has doubled the number of homes Stafford Borough need to deliver is now 749, there is still a disproportionate number being placed on Stone and Eccleshall. Since 2011 Stone has seen an annual increase in population of 0.53% compared to Stafford 0.4%. The largest increase in population of any ward in Stafford Borough both proportionately and absolute over the past 20 years is Walton with a growth of 1,600 since 2001. This is predominately caused by housing development.

There is also the question of local democracy. The Localism Act of 2011 was designed to empower communities with greater control over the planning of their areas. This is protected by relevant legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework. The Stone Neighbourhood Plan has a powerful and robust democratic base having been voted for by the citizens of Stone in a referendum in May 2021 and adopted by the District Council making it a statutory document. Any developments above and beyond the neighbourhood plan undermines a clear, transparent process reflecting the interests of Stone. Therefore, we believe that these three proposals are disingenuous to the integrity and wishes of the people of Stone.

**From Kim Jones, Gwynneth Jones
and Dave Chetwyn, all Bankside residents**

Reply To Thank-you Letter In July/Aug Gazette

Dear Dan,

Would you kindly forward our heartfelt thanks to Simon and his father Alan for their extremely kind letter.

It was a privilege to help them and we were so glad Alan was OK.

Kindest regards

Bob and Tracey Price

Kiwi Fruit (Keep Going!)

Good morning

After reading your page 3 headline, don't give up on the above.

Yes it does grow extensively, but it will produce. The fruit won't ripen on the plant but if you bring them inside when they look ripe, put them in a bag with a banana, wait a while and hey presto very tasty fruit. Ours grow well, alongside a grapevine and further along a fig tree.

Regards

Kate Jackson



Send your letters to dan@stonegazette.com



Angela Moore with Tina Divers

All Thanks To Stone History Snippets

In January this year Tina Divers posted an entry in Stone History Snippets (a Stone history page on Facebook) which she described as "Just a stab in the dark". She was trying to find the family of her father Arnold Divers navigator Bill Belcher and attached a picture. They flew/crewed together as part of 487 Squadron flying Mosquitos in 1945.

Tony Dennis saw the entry, and knowing of the family of Bob Belcher from Stone, checked the picture and confirmed it was the same person. With the help of friends Tony was able to make contact with Bob's daughter Angela.

Tony messaged Tina giving her the good news and said "If it's not too late I can ring you with more details" to which she replied "It's 10.46 am here, I'm in New Zealand"

487 Squadron which was part of Bomber Command was primarily made up of New Zealand airmen with just a few British airmen, of which Bob was one. Tina has written a book about her fathers experiences during the war and features a picture of him and Bob on the front cover.

Tina visited the UK in August and she and Angela were able to meet, 80 years on from their father's time together. She also

visited the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln to do more research into 487 Squadron and her father Arnold Divers DFM, who was presented with his honour by King George VI at Buckingham Palace.

After the war Bob Belcher worked as a Surveyor for Stone Urban District Council and Stafford Borough Council gradually working his way up to Senior Building Control Officer. His wife Monica was very well known in the town being involved in many organisations and the writer of 'Monica's Diary' for the Stone and Eccleshall Advertiser. Bob and Monica were founder members of Stone Swimming Club and campaigned for the building of the viewing area of what is now the old swimming pool at Alleyne's.



Bob Belcher and Arnold Divers

New St Dominic's and St Joseph Memory Support Café

A new Memory Support Café will take place in the lounge bar and garden of St Dominic's social venue. The sessions are scheduled to begin on October 3rd, and the café will be held **every two weeks on a Friday, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm.**

This initiative, a collaboration between St Dominic's and St Joseph, aims to provide support to individuals affected by memory-related illnesses and their families.

The café will prioritise small, meaningful events and positive interactions, with music playing a central role in relaxation and emotional connection.

Support for carers and families is equally important, recognising the emotional toll of caring for loved ones with memory loss.

By sharing experiences and compassion within the parish, the café hopes to strengthen the faith and resilience of all involved.

A range of activities will be offered for café attendees, facilitated by volunteers: including

Gardening, Dominos Games and Art, Occasional Tai Chi Sessions, Chair-Based Dance Exercises, Tea And Cake, Music And Singing (Gentle Guitar - Volunteers Are Welcome) Calm Conversation Time, Sharing Pastimes and Stories, Football Photos, And Fun Activities, Chime Sensory Therapy And Relaxing Hand Massage Therapy, Dog Therapy Visits

The café also benefits from a roster of dedicated volunteers, and visiting professionals, including doctors and occupational therapists, mortgage advice, pharmacy and prescription guidance, funeral arrangements and



procedures, and a solicitor (with advice on power of attorney, welfare, and finance).

The parish priest, Father G Doyle, will oversee the project, with safeguarding managed by Marilyn Welsh and operational organisation by Michele Mcleod. This is voluntary based, and a café, not a clinic (limited attendees).

Attendance will be limited to approximately 12 patients, plus their families, volunteers, and visitors, to maintain a safe and calming environment.

Anyone who would like further information, or you'd like to volunteer and assist at the café, you can contact Michele on 07917 824625 or via email at mcleods@live.co.uk

Tea and cakes will be available for a small donation, but you can bring a packed lunch if you wish.

The upcoming dates - every other Friday from 11.30am-1.30pm
3rd Oct, 17th Oct, 31st Oct, 14th Nov,
28th Nov, 12th Dec . 2026 January
16th Jan 30th Feb 13th feb
27th March 13th March 17th

Olly Owl Presides Over 'Creative' Event At Shallowford House

Olly Owl was just one of the crafty creations at Shallowford's annual four-day residential summer event.

15 people, young and old, ladies and gentlemen, local, and from further afield, came together in the last week of July to enjoy the beautiful house and gardens of Shallowford House near Norton Bridge.

The weather was kind enough to allow walks around the lawns, flower-beds, vegetable gardens, orchards and woodlands of the 9 acre estate.

Peacocks strutted their stuff while the resident alpaca, Bruce, enjoyed frequent rambles on a lead, thanks to the many willing guests. Miss Piggy, some miniature goats, and other small animals completed the popular petting zoo.

Indoor activities included clay-work, jewellery-making, collage, and all sorts of needle crafts, helped along by capable tutors. We were entertained each evening with games and quizzes before retiring to bed with a hot chocolate - or something stronger from the bar !

Accommodation and food was of the highest quality, thanks to the hotel-standard housekeeping, and a professional chef in the kitchen.

Spiritual inspiration was provided throughout by a visiting clergyman using a short bible reading each day for anyone wishing to attend. He also enjoyed admiring our creative work, and sharing lunch with us, and remained available for individual chats with anyone who might require one.



Our last evening was spent around the fire-pit, telling stories, reciting comic ditties, playing games, singing, and toasting marshmallows.

From Bel Crawford

For further information on this and other open events at Shallowford visit the website **shallowfordhouse.org** or you can call 01785 760233.

Gazette Motoring

'Sun God' Syd Taylor Chooses His Chariot... The Audi A5 Avant 2.0 TDI



When Audi decided that as a mark of distinction they should not produce anything as common as an 'estate' car, they designated an estate variant as an 'Avant'.

Having put the A5 Avant 2.0 TDi to the test, it has to be said that Audi hit the bullseye. To use refined language, the £48,850 A5 2.0i Avant is a 'belter'. From the moment one sees its prepossessing, panther-like profile, one knows that here is a machine contrived to make men out of mice and ladies out of lettuce leaves. It doesn't just 'sit' on the road - it squats like a purposeful beast with a purity of form that mirrors elegant engineering.

The interior offers top comfort and there's a feeling of assurance that tells you all is well with the world.

With room for five to stretch out and for six if you must, plus a large luggage area that, with the seats down, would have a Welsh dresser banged to rights. There's no better car for the busy executive or for the family holiday. You'll love the concatenation of everything from user-friendly providers of music and information to ambiance enhancing equipment systems. The finest Bose sound system, the three touch screens (yes... three. One for the flight engineer in the front passenger seat), the 'head up display... the list goes on. There's every adjunct to modern technological motoring that you can think of. And standards of construction are so high that you won't find a spot of mediocrity anywhere.



Driven by the latest 204 PS 2.0 litre diesel engine with mild battery assistance and driving through the dual clutch automatic gearbox to the front wheels, there is whopping torque at low revs and enough power to reach 150mph. All is delivered unobtrusively. You slip

through the air with so little turbulence, thrusting forward in a motion that is more 'willed' than mechanically contrived. At the same time, diesel consumption, for me, was about 55/60 mpg. Which meant that this Audi could have a range of near 700 miles - so it is the perfect long range express.



Sniff the open road, apply featherlight pressure to the throttle and - lo and behold - you are a 'Sun God' in a chariot, belting along with the alacrity of a raging torrent of technological might. With almost neutral handling it goes where it's told, and rides beautifully too. This is a load carrier that feels like a sports car. A luxury tourer that takes off like a rocket, and clings with the talons of a tiger.

It is a lovely car that's as smooth as a single malt and as surefooted as a Chamois, letting you enjoy the silky sweet serendipity of serenity.





Classic cars under scrutiny

DVLA Policy Changes That Support The Future Of UK Historic Vehicles

The Historic and Classic Vehicles Alliance (HCVA) welcomes a recent announcement of pragmatic DVLA policy changes that bring much needed clarity for the repair and restoration of the UK's historic and classic vehicle fleet.

The HCVA has been working with politicians, the DVLA and government for many years to bring certainty to the vehicle registration process, which has not been changed since the 1980s. In some instances, treasured classic cars were losing their original identification after restoration, and some were even refused registration.

These efforts were finally rewarded in 2024 when former Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, announced a Call for Evidence while speaking at an HCVA hosted event on May 9th at Bicester Motion, a world-renowned automotive centre of excellence. This call encouraged the classic vehicle industry, owners, and enthusiasts to have their say on the previous DVLA system, and over 1350 responses were received in less than eight weeks.

As a result of the extensive evidence submitted, the DVLA reviewed the matter in depth, working with government officials including Minister for the Future of Roads, Lilian Greenwood, and has confirmed a major update to some of its vehicle registration policies, making it significantly easier for industry and enthusiasts to register repaired, restored and modified vehicles. Two new sets of guidance that will apply to all vehicles, regardless of age, have been announced with key changes, including:

- Like-for-like repairs and restorations will no longer require notification to the DVLA, providing the vehicle's appearance is the same as when it was originally manufactured and there are no changes to the log book (V5C)
- Vehicles that have been subject to significant structural modifications will be able to keep their original Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and registration number, but the registered keeper must notify the DVLA of the changes.
- Vehicles that have been converted to electric will also be able to retain their original identity, but the registered keeper must notify the DVLA of the changes.

Dale Keller, CEO of the HCVA says: "The policy changes by the DVLA encapsulate how industry and government working collaboratively can deliver better outcomes. It is testament to the hard work of the HCVA, and others, that the government has listened and acted with pragmatic changes that place the retention of historic identity at the forefront of registration policy, a move that will be welcomed by all historic vehicle specialists, owners, and historians."

The DVLA should be applauded for its engagement and commitment to deliver new policies that now recognises new technologies, techniques, and improved materials.

The positive impact these changes will have should not be underestimated in how they will support specialists and owners in protecting the UK's historic vehicle industry, enabling over three million historic and classic vehicles to be kept roadworthy, relevant, and enjoyed by future generations."

The vibrant UK classic vehicle industry not only keeps classic vehicles on our roads to be enjoyed by everyone, it keeps valuable skills alive in a sector supporting over 100,000 quality jobs and is also an export success story. The announcement confirming the new policies, which come into effect on Tuesday 26th August 2025, can be seen as a significant achievement for the entire classic vehicle industry.



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Suzuki's Wagon R Series Achieves Accumulated Global Sales Of 10 Million Units

Suzuki Motor Corporation's Wagon R series has achieved accumulated global sales of 10 million units* by June, 2025. This milestone was achieved 31 years and 9 months after the product was launched in Japan in September 1993.

The Wagon R was developed as a semi-bonnet style mini wagon. It is a model that represents Suzuki and is loved by many customers in Japan as a comfortable and easy-to-use car that puts the rider first.

In addition to models exported from Japan, they were produced in India, Hungary, Indonesia, and other regions, and have continued to evolve to meet local needs. We have developed the technologies that have been honed in accordance with the standards for minicars around the world in the form of the Wagon R series.

To date, the Wagon R series has been sold in more than 75 countries and regions around the world, including Japan, India and Europe.

We have continued to improve economic efficiency, environmental performance, and ease of use to provide new value. For example, CNG specifications that offer higher fuel efficiency and economic efficiency than gasoline-powered vehicles are introduced in India, and Wagon R Smile, which features sliding doors are



introduced in Japan.

Suzuki will continue to promote manufacturing from the perspective of customers around the world and strive to provide valuable products that meet local needs.

President Suzuki said "We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the many customers who use this product. The Wagon R was recognized for its innovation and high practicality as a mini wagon, and became one of the leading models not only for our company but also for minicars."

Team Suzuki will continue to develop products tailored to the needs of customers in the sales area and work as one to continue to support daily transportation."

*Based on Suzuki research (including Wagon R Wide, Wagon R+, Wagon R Solio)

The 200th Anniversary Of The Railway

By Philip Leason MBE

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway with the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on 27th September 1825, and so this month I thought we would look at a little of the history of the railway in Stone.

In the late 1830's a proposal was made to build a railway line from Stone to Rugby and another from Manchester to Stone. Lord Harrowby opposed the line because it would pass through his Sandon estate. However "upwards of 600 influential persons" supported its development and the necessary Bill passed through the Parliamentary Committee stage but progressed no further due to the dissolution of Parliament.

It was not until July 1846 that the Royal Assent was given to the Bill for the construction of the North Staffordshire Railway. This railway consisted of a line from Macclesfield via Harecastle into the Potteries; branch lines from Kidsgrove to Crewe and from Stone to Colwich (where the line joined the Grand Junction Railway) and from Stone to "at or near" Norton Bridge where it joined another branch of the Grand Junction Railway.

Once the Bill was passed work started immediately. On 11th February, 1847 the first sod for the Stone to Norton Bridge branch line was dug by Viscount St. Vincent in a field adjoining the Gosdales (the name of a farm) near to where Stone Golf Club is today. The Viscount used a specially produced spade and wheeled the first sod away in an oak barrow. Both of these items were apparently displayed in the entrance at Meaford Hall.

Building the railway in Stone was not an easy task as the town lies in a valley. This necessitated: *The building of an embankment and a bridge over the road at the Fillybrooks.*

An embankment and viaduct over the Trent off Trent Road. Embankments and a bridge over the road and the canal on Newcastle Road. A cutting where Kings Avenue and Granville Terrace are today. A bridge over the entrance to the Mill in Mill Street and an embankment and bridge over the Scotch Brook.

We can only wonder at how many tons of earth and rock were needed to build the various embankments etc. The spoil from the cuttings was transported by horse and cart to where the embankments needed to be built.

The line from Stoke to Norton Bridge was completed by the end of March 1848. The first train to come to Stone arrived on the morning of 3rd April and was planned as being a low key affair; however railway staff placed detonators on the line and as the train passed over them they made a loud bang and made the townspeople aware that the "railway age" had come to Stone.

For the first fortnight only goods were carried but on the 17th April 1848 the first passenger train ran to official open the line from Stoke to Norton Bridge. The locomotive used to pull the train was engine No 1 "Dragon."

An account of the opening states that the journey started from a temporary platform in Stoke as the station that was being built in Winton's Wood (now Winton Square) was not yet completed.

The account is too long to copy the whole article here and so I will just quote the section referring to the arrival of the train in Stone.

"The whistle now notifies that we are near a station. Rush the train goes past Field House, over a girder bridge thrown across the canal, and we halt at a temporary station at the entrance to the town of Stone, where the arrival of "the first train" is hailed with satisfaction by a very numerous assemblage of admiring spectators.

The stoppage for a few minutes to take in passengers enables us to step out, and see what progress the railway works are making in the neighbourhood. We find the main line is only complete as far as the junction with Norton Bridge branch, upon which we have entered. Preparations are being made to erect a handsome station near the point of the junction.

Like most other stations on the main line, the building will be in the Elizabethan style. There will also be corn and cheese warehouses, sheds, shunts for cattle, coal yards and every appurtenance required by the commerce of the extensive agricultural district of which Stone is the chief mart. The temporary station is erected close by the ornamental stone and girder bridge, with handsome balustrade, which crosses the Newcastle Road. It is gained by two flights of steps. The platform commands a view of the town and neighbourhood."

It is interesting to note that the steps referred to are still there by the Newcastle Road Bridge (on the Tennis Club side) although they have been repaired over the years and a handrail added to easy access to the track by railway workers.

The opening of the line was very much "low key" and there were no major celebrations. This was because since the cutting of the first sod there had been a major trade depression in the Potteries for several months. A large proportion of the workers were unemployed and there were soup kitchens in the streets in Stoke-on-Trent and the Relief Committee were raising money to buy food for the people. In addition there was an outbreak of cholera and indeed six victims had died in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The directors of the Railway therefore voted unanimously to donate £250 to the relief of the poor and destitute and to dispense with the usual opening festivities.

The line from Stone to Colwich was opened on 5th May, 1849. An account of the opening states "The distance from Stone to Colwich is 11+ miles, or 19 from Stoke, -- The running of three trains daily to Colwich, in addition to those to Norton Bridge, the means are afforded of communicating with the metropolis six times within the twenty-four hours."

Having looked at the lines or the "iron road" let's move onto the station.

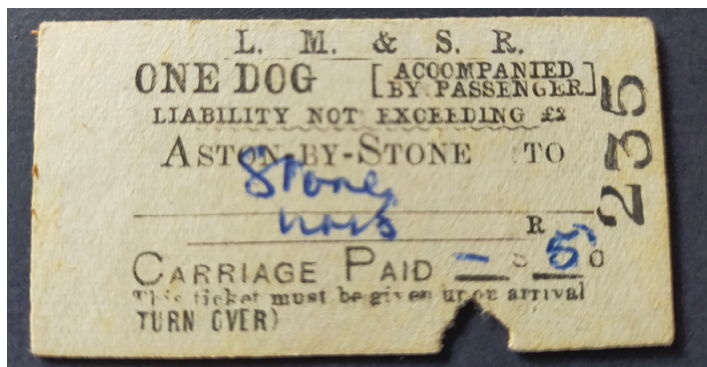


Stone Railway Station in 1909

Stone station was designed in the Jacobean style (not Elizabethan as stated in the account earlier) by Sir Henry Arthur Hunt, who designed many of the buildings on the North Staffordshire Railway (including Stoke station). He also designed the North Staffs. Hotel in Winton Square at Stoke.

As mentioned earlier that station had not been completed when the first train ran and it was not fully opened until 1st May, 1849. As well as the buildings mentioned earlier there was a booking hall, waiting rooms for first class passengers and separate waiting rooms for ladies. In addition there was a house for the Station Master. In the Station Approach there was a bicycle shed and a stall selling newspapers etc. As well as the Station Master the staff included several porters.

Trains ran regularly to destinations throughout the district and as a result Stone became a popular place to live for some of the pottery manufacturers and business leaders of the Potteries who wished to escape the pollution and grime of the "Six Towns."



A railway ticket for a dog from Aston by Stone station (located by the level crossing at Little Stoke) to Stone.

The station also handled a great amount of freight. Bent's brewery used the railway to transport their beer to Liverpool where the majority of their customers were. Joules also used the railway for distribution purposes. One of the pubs which they supplied was the Black Lion at Consall Forge in the Churnet Valley where before the company had a permit to use a private road the beer was delivered by rail.

There were first, second and third classes of carriages. First class carriages were "cushioned and handsomely fitted up." As well as tickets for passengers there was a charge for bicycles and even dogs.



The Railway Bridge over the River Trent at the Fillybrooks

On the 15th January, 1847 the North Staffordshire Railway formally acquired the Trent and Mersey Canal Company under the North Staffordshire Railway (Pottery Line) Act 1846. The takeover was partly intended to mitigate opposition from the canal company to the railway's planned line from Stoke to Liverpool. The sale eventually resulted in the headquarters of the canal company moving from Westbridge House in Stone (on the site where Westbridge Park is today) to Winton House in Stoke. It is interesting to note that the Railway used boundary markers for distinguish their land by the canal and there is one such sign near Workhouse Bridge off Crown Street in Stone which can still be seen today.

In the days of the old steam trains one of the problems during the summer months were grass fires caused by the sparks from the engine. This could cause delays to the trains. In Stone the sides of the embankment (the batters) alongside Granville Terrace were occasionally the victim of such fires and the trains would be stopped while the fire brigade using beaters extinguished the blaze.

The First World War

At the start of the First War many members of the town's Territorial Army volunteered for Foreign Service and the station was no doubt the scene of many tearful departures as the men said goodbye to their families and loved ones.

Soldiers employed by the North Staffordshire Railway were guaranteed their jobs on their return at a wage or salary on a scale to which they would have been entitled had they strayed at work.

The need to move both men and equipment to the ports to be shipped to France resulted in the increase in the volume of trains. During the first six months of the war the "Knotty" carried some 70,000 men and 2,860 horses and as they stated "without a scratch."

During the war a hospital was opened in St. Joseph's Hall (now St. Dominic's Social Centre) and by April 1917 402 wounded soldiers had passed through. Many of these were brought by special ambulance trains to Stone Station and then transferred to the hospital.

The End of the "Knotty"

The North Staffordshire Railway Company (nicknamed "The Knotty") was amalgamated with the London North Western and other companies in 1923 to form the L.M.S. under the terms of the Railway Act of 1921.

Many readers may remember the interpretation of the history of the North Staffordshire Railway in the two productions of the musical documentary by the Victoria Theatre at Hartshill, entitled "The Knotty."

The Second World War

In the Second World War the railways were again extensively used. The railways with reduced staff got through a tremendous amount of work. At Stone Station the number of passengers increased from 86,041 in 1938 to 124,182 in 1944 and in this year 50,000 troops travelled to and from Stone on warrants. Goods traffic in 1945 doubled that of 1938.

Many of the troops arriving at the station were Americans who had landed at Liverpool and where brought by train to the town and transferred by road to their base at Yarnfield.

Another of the reasons for the increase in passengers numbers were those travelling from the potteries to work at the Royal Ordnance Factory at Swynnerton. Special trains ran to fit in with the workers shift pattern. Details of these trains, times etc., never appeared in any time table for security reasons.

Another "top secret train" was that which carried King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on a visit to R.O.F. Swynnerton. On the return journey the train made a brief stop in the cutting at the Filleybrooks to talk to members of the Stone Home Guard.

Another Royal Visit

On Wednesday 2nd November, 1955 Queen Elizabeth II accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh visited the Barlaston factory of Josiah Wedgwood and Sons. The couple travelled by train and groups of school children stood on the platform of Stone station to see the Royal Train pass through. Other children stood at Barlaston station to see the Royal couple arrive.

Excursions from Stone Station

In addition to the regular services throughout the years there were occasionally special excursions run from Stone, including day trips for the workers of Jowles Brewery, the Juvenile Oddfellows and members of the Congregational Sunday School.

Special excursions we arranged for certain events. For example on Saturday 30th June, 1951 there was a tip from Stone going to the Festival of Britain in London. Departing at 8.08 a.m. it cost 28s/3d.

The 2nd June, 1953 was the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II and a special excursion calling at Stone was organised. Leaving at 1.30 a.m. and returning from London at 1.15 a.m. on the 3rd June at a cost of 29s/6d. Apparently despite the early start "the few passengers at Stone waited with great excitement and we sustained with coca provided by the wife of the Station Master."

Day trips were organised for local attractions such as the Green Bower in Lichfield, cricket matches (for example on 23rd, 25, 26th May 1953 to the Minor Counties XI v the Australians at Stoke -return fair 1s/3d), and Stoke City Football matches both home and away.

During the summer holidays day trips were operated to the sea side. For example during August in 1951 a train ran Monday to Friday going to Chester, Prestatyn, Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno (fair to Rhyl 15s/6d and to Llandudno 18s/9d.) During the autumn there were day trips to Blackpool to see the illuminations.

Some trains were chartered by groups for fund raising purposes. For example, on such group were Stone & District Scouts chartered at train to London Saturday 10th December, 1983.



Volunteers waiting for a train at Stone Station in 1914 to take to join the army

Electrification

In the 1960's it was decided that the railways were to be modernised with the introduction of faster electric trains. This meant the installation of overhead equipment and the rebuilding of some bridges to give clearance of the wires. The Stone to Colwich line was closed for conversion on 7th September, 1964 and reopened on 6th March, 1967. Work at Stone Station included the removal of the concrete footbridge and replaced with the metal bridge in use today.

Improvements were also made to the signalling and a new power box opened at Stoke-on-Trent on 17th July, 1966 to control the line from Stone to the junction at Colwich therefore making the signal box at the Meaford Crossing redundant and it was subsequently demolished.

Decline

With then increase in car ownership and the decline in rail services available as a result of the Beeching Report (published 27th March, 1963) passengers using the railways started to decline.

In the late 1960's the Stone to Colwich line was threatened with closure and it was feared that the station would close. However on 3rd October, 1970 British Rail announced, "Detailed investigation had proved that this section of track was needed for passenger and freight services and as a diversionary route." The line and the station were saved. However manning of the station was reduced and eventually withdrawn altogether.

Part of the station was let to a taxi company but when they moved out the building stood empty. There was a proposal that the building was going to be converted into a brewery but this was eventually withdrawn.

In 2004 the Town Council were deeply concerned about the state of the building and a feasibility study was conducted to see if it could be taken on for community use. This proved successful and the Council were able to negotiate a lease and convert into a community centre and the building was officially opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire on 17th May, 2005.

Earlier in November 2004 it was announced that then refurbishment work had won that years Modern Railway Restoration Award and the Town Mayor, Cllr. Geoff Collier was presented with a plaque by the Duke of Gloucester at a ceremony in London. The plaque is now displayed on the station.

In 2005 it was proposed that trains would no longer stop at Stone. The fight to retain railway services for the town was taken up by the M.P. Bill Cash (with the backing of all political parties) and the "Stone Newsletter" organised a petition.

It wasn't until 2008 that trains started to stop at Stone again. The first train to stop was the 12.08 Crewe to London train on Sunday 14th December. The event was marked by stalls set up in Station Approach and the production of special limited edition mugs and plates. The train was greeted by the Town Mayor Cllr. Mark Green and both he and his wife boarded the train and travelled down to Atherstone.

Today there are typically about 19 trains per day that stop at Stone. The London North Western Railway for example operates a service stopping at Stone in both directions between Stafford and Crewe which means that you can catch trains for onwards travel.

The North Staffs. Rail Promotion Group and the M.P. for Stone Sir Gavin Williamson are continuing to fight for more trains to stop at Stone and start a new chapter in the history of the railway in the town.

I hope that this article has brought back memories to some readers and been of interest to others.

Finally as part of the **200th Anniversary there are to be displays in the Station and in the Heritage Centre on Saturday 13th September**. There will also be a historical walk starting from the Station which has to be pre-booked. Details will appear on the Town Council website.

Please help us to keep the heritage of Stone alive for generations to come. If you have any photographs relating to the anything mentioned here please contact Staffordshire Past Track. All photographs will be treated with the utmost care and returned safely to their owner after they have made digital copies.

Philip Leason



Oh I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside

It was a lovely way to celebrate the summer with a seaside themed session at Jelly Tots: with a paddling pool, plastic beach balls, wearing of flower garlands, a plastic duck hunt in the pews, a seaside craft and lots of bubble fun outside!



Jelly Tots is a friendly and vibrant baby and toddler playgroup that meet **every Tuesday from 9.30 am onwards in St Michael's Church**. Everyone is welcome to attend.

A mum who attends regularly, commented that, "Both my son and I value our visits to Jelly Tots. Jen and Cath have created such a warm and welcoming space, that provides creative play opportunities for the children and the chance to meet other parents/grandparents and carers, over a brew and a biscuit."

It also provides children with the chance to explore the building with freedom (Easter Egg hunts and a plastic duck hunt have taken place in the pews!). There are also craft, play opportunities and themed events."

From Jane West



Stone Choral Society travelled to Sheffield to sing in St Mark's Church

Busy Times At Stone Choral Society

Stone Choral Society have had a busy and fruitful time since their Spring Concert. Their first performance after this was at the VE commemorations and beacon lighting in Stone on the evening of Thursday 8th May. The choir sang a couple of numbers that were apt for such an occasion. Many Stone residents turned out on a cool evening to mark the occasion.

The Summer Concert was next; this was a different venture this time and involved a joint concert with Hallam Choral Society.

The concert was first performed in Eccleshall at Holy Trinity Church when the Hallam Choral Society joined as the visiting choir in early July. The visit was reciprocated a week later when Stone Choral Society travelled to Sheffield to sing in St Mark's Church in the city. The theme for the concerts was Sounds of the Sea.

The main work was Charles Stanford's "Songs of the Fleet"; this is a lesser-known piece than his "Songs of the Sea" but it is a beautiful and evocative cycle of five songs for a baritone soloist and choir. The soloist was both performances was

"The Drunken Sailor".

Harriet Johnson directed Stone Choral and Kate Thompson directed Hallam; for joint items the directors shared the conducting; it was great to be able to have this experience. Jennifer Hames accompanied in Eccleshall. She also



provided the accompaniment to the young soprano soloist, Lydia Osbourne, she sang a set of three very different songs, some Mozart, Weill & Gershwin and Roger Quilter. We wish Lydia all the best as she starts her BMus at the RNCM this September.

Over the summer the choir have enjoyed a workshop with many other local choirs and musical groups; they joined Harriet Johnson and Lifeworks in fundraising effort, and some members attended a workshop and concert alongside Florence Brass Band. The music was a departure from the usual repertoire and had lots of singing of popular songs. It was good fun and raised a considerable amount of money for Lifeworks and their work.

Saturday 16th August the choir had their annual barbecue in Oulton Village Hall; good food and company were on offer alongside a



great raffle.

Peter Taylor; his voice was totally suited to this song cycle and the choirs loved singing with him.

Other items in the concerts included works for double choir and works that were sung by each choir as well as joint items; all pieces had links to the sea; some more obvious than others. There was a wide range of pieces to suit all tastes; starting with both choirs singing the traditional "Dance to your Daddy" to Hallam's rendition of "Skye Boat Song" and Stone's version of "Lovely on the Water." The repertoire was wide and included current and past composers, male and female composers too. Ola Gjeilo's "Across the Vast Eternal Sky" as well as Eric Whitacre's "Seal Lullaby" were particularly beautiful. The concerts culminated in Stone's Stuart Johnson's arrangement of

great raffle.

Please look out for our autumn concert too; this will be on **Saturday 1st November 2025** and it will be our first one in The Crown Wharf Theatre.

The main piece will be "Stone Circles"; this is a revival of a specially composed work for Stone Choral's 30th Anniversary in 1998. It explores Stone's rich history, community resilience and local spirit. Come and hear this revival performance. Alternatively, if you would just like to join us, please email info@stonechoral.org.uk; we meet on **Thursday evenings from 7.30pm to 9.30pm in Walton First School, Walton, Stone. Our first rehearsal is 11th September 2025.**

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



Tough Angels!

August At Aston-By-Stone W.I.

What do Vera Brittain, the Countess of Sutherland, E.M. Forster and Agatha Christie have in common? We found out during an interesting and informative talk by Marion Armstrong, who spoke of the V.A.D. (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurses who did such wonderful service during WW1 and continue to do so today.

Some 126,000 V.A.D.s "did their bit." Some were killed, others wounded or mentioned in despatches.

V.A.D. was set up after the Boer War to help the vast number of wounded returning soldiers. During WW1 they served not only in France and Belgium, but further afield, in the Baltic States, Egypt and Gallipoli.

Conditions were often terrible. These tough ladies, with their floor-length skirts and long hair, soon learned to shorten both in the name of hygiene, thus influencing fashion into the 1920s, and paving the way to eventual women's emancipation. Two motor-biking nurses who took their machines overseas were given the nickname "Angels of Pervyse".

Marion herself had been a V.A.D., and showed us her medals. She told us of the movement's fund-raising achievements and activities.

Tea, cakes and conversation followed, in true W.I. manner. There were sales tables for produce and donated items, all part of our monthly meetings.

In September we will welcome Amanda Siegert to speak about stained glass design and repair; November brings Kevin Reynolds on the subject of "Bats – dispelling the myths".

Meetings take place on the **second Wednesday of the month**: why not join us on **10th September**? Visitors are always very welcome.

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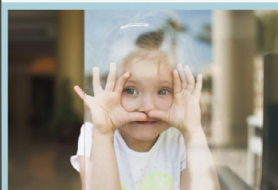
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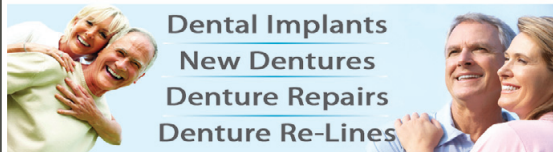
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