

THE STONE & ECCLESHALL Gazette

MAY / JUNE 2026



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CONTENTS



NEWS

- Stone Food & Drink Festival
- Stone Carnival All Events
- Stone Old Alleynians FC Deliver £2.6 Million in Annual Social Value
- Capula Expands In Stone
- Villages To Get Improved Bus Services
- £4000 donation to Stone Town Football Club following a recent act of vandalism

IN PICTURES

- Bunnies and Scooters
- Stone Heritage Centre – What's On?
- The People Who Preserve the History of Stone
- Scooter Club Support Alzheimer's Group
- Stone Flower Club Meetings
- Heritage Activities At All Saints' Church



HERITAGE

- Saving Christ Church (Stone) And Celebrating It's 150th Anniversary
By Philip Leason MBE
- Local Football Teams Throughout The Years
By Chris Copp of Staffordshire Archives & Heritage

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ECCLESHALL NEWS

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

What A Great Show Of Community Spirit

Welcome to the May/June edition of the Gazette, it seems to have come around quickly this time, though that might be all the days I've skived off to be out in the sunshine.

It's that time of the year for partying, and with Stone Food & Drink Festival and Stone Carnival coming up, you can! Staffordshire's much-loved gastronomic gathering, the Stone Food & Drink Festival returns in style, taking over Westbridge Park from 8-10 May, celebrating their 21st year with an irresistible three-day showcase of flavour, flair and feel-good festival vibes.

Then from Saturday 30th May – Sunday 7th June, Stone Carnival provides us with a full week of energy, laughter, and proper community spirit.

From the Grand Parade and thrilling funfair, to arts and crafts stalls, live music, and interactive activities, Stone Carnival Week promises an unforgettable experience for everyone.

Congratulations go to Stone Inner Wheel Club, who in March celebrated their 80th Birthday, and to the Rooftop Dance Teams, who celebrated recent competition success in Liverpool with wins for all their teams.

Congratulations also go to Alison Donaldson, on her 20 year anniversary with Barchester Healthcare, and Julian Jones who celebrates 40 years at William Jones Motors.

Well done to local businesses StairBox and Wooden Windows, who recently gave a £4,000 donation to support the recovery of Stone Town Football Club following a recent act of vandalism, that caused significant damage to the club's

facilities. *What a great show of community spirit. Well done both.*

Good luck goes to Liam Herbert, a father from Stone, who, as I type this, is competing in the iconic London Marathon, to raise vital funds for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, a charity that has had a life-changing impact on his profoundly deaf son, and a positive influence on his whole family.

Feeling fit yourself? The annual Stone St Michael's 10K Road Race returns on Sunday 21 June, sign up now to avoid disappointment, as it's been growing in numbers year on year.

Stone Town Councils Heritage Centre (*have you visited yet?*) have some fantastic exhibitions and talks coming up including; Knowing Your Onions, a touring exhibition which explores the history of food in Staffordshire.

Then a real treat is an exhibition by Craig Summer, a local artist, based in Oulton, who after 30 years as a highly successful designer in the pottery industry, now paints full-time, and has had his work displayed across the Midlands and internationally. His paintings look incredible, so photographic, but with an ethereal twist, I can't wait to go along and see them up close, in person.

There are many concert and music listings to go to in this edition, however one we recommend highly is Oulton Village Halls Summer Rock & BBQ, with live music this year from The Kilns, it's always a brilliant night, and the burgers are absolutely delicious!

Until next time, enjoy the sunshine, and see you in July...

Dan Mitchell 26/04/26

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Please contact Lisa for any further information 01538 758916
Email: lisacogger@ericwhitehead.co.uk
Visit: www.ericwhitehead.co.uk



The Great Tommy Sleepout

The photo above shows members of the Stone Branch of the Royal British Legion who took part in the Great Tommy Sleepout Event, held in Stone on Saturday 28 March.

The participants slept outdoors for the evening to raise funds to support homeless veterans access safe housing, mental health support, and employment.

Those taking part in the Stone event included: Sgt Trevor Tanner (far left), Cory

Grimes, Tracy Hall Branch Secretary & Poppy Appeal Organiser, Tina Johnson Branch Treasurer, Councillor Jason Metters Stone Town Mayor, Sgt Craig Lightfoot Branch Vice-Chair, Major (Retired) Dougie Craig Branch Chairman, and Amber the dog.

The event raised over £1100 from donations, thank you to all those who donated.

The Inner Wheel Club Of Stone Turn 80!



The Ceilidh for St Patrick's day in March was enjoyed by members and friends dancing to the very enthusiastic local band 'The Blarney Stone'.

The funds raised at this event will be given to local Stone Charities.

On March 18th Stone Inner Wheel celebrated their 80th Birthday with District



21 Chairman Nesta Williams as our guest. The speaker for the evening was Julie Brailsford who involved all members in 'Seated Exercises' which caused much hilarity and enjoyment.

During the past year two new members have joined the club and we are looking forward to welcoming two more in the coming year. If you wish to find out more about our Club please contact Elaine on 01785 812438



Two of Rooftop Studios' triumphant Street Teams - RTG and RTK

Rooftop Dance Teams Celebrate Competition Success in Liverpool

Young dancers from Rooftop Studios enjoyed an outstanding day of success at the 'Calling You Out' Dance Competition in Liverpool, bringing home multiple trophies and medals.

Street dance teams from both the studio's Stone and Leek branches competed across team, solo and duo categories, with the teams RT Rascals, RT Rebels, RTG and RTK all securing first place in their respective team divisions.

Several individual dancers also achieved top results, with Holly Joy from the Stone studio winning the Under 10 category, while Georgia Campbell from Leek was crowned Under 6 champion.

Further success came from Freya, who took 1st place in the Under 16 Set Solo, and Lillian, who secured 1st place in the Under 16 Freestyle Solo.

Studio director Laura Keeling said: "We're incredibly proud of all our dancers. Competitions like this are about so much more than trophies – they build confidence, resilience and teamwork. Watching the dancers support each other and celebrate each other's achievements was really special."

She also praised Miss Antonia, who prepared the teams for the competition, as well as the studio's supportive dance families.

"The dedication from our students, teachers and parents is amazing and days like this really show what a fantastic community we have at Rooftop Studios."

For more information about dance classes at Rooftop Studios visit www.rooftopstudios.co.uk



Oulton Village Hall's 100 Question Fun Quiz Night

Oulton Village Hall held their popular 100 Question Fun Quiz Night on Saturday 18th April.

The village hall was full of teams trying out their general knowledge against

each other, the evening was a great success and enjoyed by everyone, roll on the next one!

Photo from Martin Robinson

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Bunnies and Scooters

Members of Stone Alzheimer's Club have been busy this month, celebrating Easter in style with a grand party and members joined the Stone Scooter Club on Easter Monday at their car and bike show in support of the Stone Alzheimer's Club.

The traditional Easter Party is always a fun morning at the Club and members were joined this year by popular entertainer Damien. The room was packed and members first enjoyed tea and biscuits before a free raffle and then the entertainment. Chief bunny Sandie aided by assistant bunny Diane were in charge as they hopped around the room entertaining the members. Sandie even stopped traffic on the main road when she hopped over to pick up some "very none bunny" bacon butties!

Chief bunny and Lead Volunteer Sandie McQueen said: "The volunteers really excelled this year, organised a special party and all the members had a great time."



gesture by the members of the Stone Scooter Club. It will make a huge difference to what we are able to do to support our members.

The support of a local club for the work that we do is so welcome and very much appreciated. We look forward to working with the Stone Scooter Club at their future events."



Entertainer Damien's music encouraged members and volunteers to get onto the dance floor and even his infamous jokes were well received! At the end of the morning each member was given an Easter egg as they left. Members of Stone Rotary Club supported this year's Easter party with ninety-five chocolate Easter eggs along with prizes for the free raffle.



It was a great afternoon and the Club members ran a tombola stall and collected donations from the crowd. The afternoon raised in excess of £150.00 for the Club from public donations alone and this will be put to good use in the coming months. Thank you, Stone Scooter Club, for your amazing support.

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 at:

stone_alzheimersclub@btinternet.com



On Easter Monday, Stone Scooter Club sponsored by Xtraweld Services Ltd held a car and scooter show raising money to support Stone Alzheimer's Club and some of the volunteers went along to help. The Scooter Club are going to raise money for the Stone Alzheimer's Club throughout the coming year. Sandie McQueen said: "This is an amazing



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A Splendid Centenary Year

At our annual meeting on March 11th, Aston-by-Stone W.I. reflected on a happy and successful year when 100 years of W.I. friendship were celebrated.

We looked backwards to the Afternoon Tea in April 2025, to a Garden Party hosted by member Anita Murphy, and to a day's outing to Shrewsbury.

We also looked forward to a visit to the House of Commons to meet our M.P., and to bursaries for members to follow an educational course of their choice, enabled by fund-raising efforts over the past year.

President Pam Lowe and Secretary Nikki Walker spoke of our many and varied activities: meetings, art, poetry, walking and theatre/cinema visits. Many thanks to the organisers of all these.

The Competition Cup was won by Terry Milward for all her beautiful entries in our monthly themed competitions.

A special moment was the presentation of gifts and flowers to two long-serving members of the Committee who were relinquishing their roles after many years of loyal service. Well done, Anita Murphy and Kay Jackson.

After all the business it was refreshment time; something different this month, with a bring-and-share buffet to accompany our cup of tea. A beautiful spread, in true W.I. tradition.

A Musical Trip Down Memory Lane

Then on April 8th, we started the meeting, as usual, with *"Jerusalem"*, and *"Happy Birthday"* to those celebrating in April. It was our W.I. birthday, too: 101 years old and still going strong!

The cake was made by Anita Murphy and beautifully decorated by Chris Connolly. Activity group events were listed, and Chris Payne showed the lovely patchwork from a course she attended at Staffordshire W.I. HQ.

Our Speakers, Pamela and Jonathan Baddely, then took us back to the 50s and 60s, playing and singing hits from those years. What memories were revived! Dancing round our handbags in clubs, buying the top 10 discs, watching *"Stranger on the Shore"*,



the theme tune of which Jonathan played on clarinet.

Pamela sang hits by the female singers of the time: Doris Day's *"Que sera, sera"*, and Dusty Springfield's *"I only want to be with you"*. We revisited trad jazz, skiffle, and hits by Marty Wilde, among others. Jonathan accompanied everything on saxophone and banjo.

Contrasting with the love songs there was an evocation of George Formby, with his *"Little Stick of Blackpool Rock"*, and *"When I'm Cleaning Windows"*, the song banned by Auntie BBC,

but reinstated by the Queen (later the Queen Mother), as she and the Princesses loved George Formby's songs.

There was no dancing, but lots of joining in the choruses and memories galore. A truly happy evening, and the final song *"Happiness"*, as sung by Ken Dodd, summed up the mood for the whole evening.

Four members were awarded certificates for 20 or 30 years' membership of the W.I. The usual tea and cake, raffle and competition results drew the evening to a close.

Next month, **on 13th May**, Ian Bradford will speak about the Limestone Brewery here in Stone. We meet at 7.30 at Aston-by-Stone Village Hall, and Ladies, all are welcome, so why not join us?

Like to know more? Email secretary.astonbystonewi@gmail.com



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National Trust Staffordshire Centre Talks

The Staffordshire Centre's programme of talks at Walton Village Hall in Stafford continues on **May 12th**.

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.

The Staffordshire Film Archive 12th May A Presentation by Ray Johnson MBE

Ray Johnson founded the Staffordshire Film Archive in 1980 and has been developing it ever since.

Alongside thousands of original archive films are many hours of complementary material generated by Ray to inform and enhance the films; interviews, relevant audio/visual materials and complete documentary video productions – several broadcast on television here and abroad.

The collection footage of the industrial background and social history of the Staffordshire area. Included in the collection is rural footage from around the County and footage of many of the local trades once found in the locality. Ray will be showing a series of film and video clips of many of these with a particular emphasis on the Stafford area.



The History of Sweets 9th June A Talk by Martin Peet

Martin Peet is descended from generations of confectionery shopkeepers dating back to 1891. He is the lucky man who has realised every kid's dream of owning his own sweet shop. Martin founded Mr Simms with a vision of celebrating the best of British sweet shops from times gone by.

The first Mr Simms Olde English Sweet Shoppe was born in 2004 with a unique combination of nostalgia, warmth and childlike wonder that was an instant hit. Whether it is due to nostalgia on the part of older customers or curiosity on the part of younger ones, retro sweet shops have enjoyed considerable success and may now be found in most towns.

It quickly became a franchise business and within 15 years, had grown to over 60 stores in the UK alone, plus a handful overseas and is a story that is still evolving. As part of his presentation, Martin will be bringing along samples of sweets to be given to those in the audience. He presently runs The Chocbox sweet shop in Eccleshall.

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/>



Stone St Michael's 10K Road Race Returns Fast, Friendly, and Fun

Runners across Staffordshire and beyond are lacing up for the return of **Stone St Michael's 10K Road Race, taking place on Sunday 21 June 2026**.

As one of Stone's most cherished summer events, the race brings together runners from across the region while raising vital funds for two important causes: St Michael's CE (C) First School PTA and Friends of Kididima, supporting children at Kididima School in Mombasa, Kenya.

Now in its 21st year of charitable impact, the event continues to be organised entirely by volunteers and supported by generous local sponsors.

With a **9am start from St Michael's First School, Weavers Lane, Stone (ST15 8QB)**, this much-anticipated race promises speed, scenery, and a powerful sense of community.

A Fast Course Through a Beautiful Canal-Side Town

This is running at its best: fitness, fun, and meaningful impact. Known for its **flat, fast, and PB-friendly route**, the Stone 10K winds through the picturesque streets and waterways of Stone - a town cherished for its friendly atmosphere and vibrant running community. Whether you're chasing a personal best or enjoying a sociable run with friends, this course delivers. A 2-lap, fully marshalled course that is notably flat, making it ideal for fast times.

Running for a Purpose – For 21 years every step taken support's two fantastic charities:

St Michael's CE (C) First School PTA, helping enrich opportunities for local children

Friends of Kididima, supporting Kididima School in Mombasa, Kenya - strengthening educational opportunities for children who have so little and have

been given the opportunity to shine because of the link created in 2009.

The event is proudly supported by the **Stone Master Marathoners**, and - in true Stone tradition - is organised entirely by volunteers. Their dedication ensures a safe, welcoming, and professionally run race year after year.

Runners Can Expect Chip timing for accurate results

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- NSRRA League Race status
- A friendly, inclusive atmosphere for runners of all abilities

The Event is Generously Sponsored By

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Their support helps keep the race affordable while maximising funds raised for the two very worthwhile charities.

Limited Places - Don't Delay Enter Now. Closing date 17th June.

Entries are now open at www.stone10k.co.uk.

With limited places and a reputation for selling out, runners are encouraged to secure their spot early.

Whether you're a seasoned athlete, a charity runner, or taking on your first 10K, the Stone St Michael's Road Race offers a memorable morning of community spirit, athletic challenge, and shared purpose. Join us on 21 June 2026 and be part of something special.





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Stone Town Council Heritage Centre – What’s On?

The Heritage Centre was established to showcase the history of Stone and to celebrate its residents, past and present.
Over May and June visitors to the Heritage Centre will be able to see -



History Of The Nuns At Oulton Abbey

On **Saturday 27th June** Christine Westwood joins us to talk about the "History of the nuns at Oulton Abbey".

Her talk takes a fascinating look at the 400-year history of the Benedictine Nuns of Oulton Abbey, Stone; starting with their beginnings in Ghent in 1624 and covering their journey and subsequent life in Oulton.

The talk is free to attend but places should be booked via Eventbrite – www.eventbrite.com/e/the-history-of-the-nuns-of-oulton-abbey-tickets-1980993357459?aff=ebsdoporg profile

Knowing Your Onions

Knowing Your Onions is a touring exhibition from Staffordshire History Centre which explores the history of food in Staffordshire.

The display includes a recipe book written by a family living in Stone along with objects and images from the Staffordshire collections to look at the different uses of ingredients, favourite foods and recipes and kitchen utensils.

The exhibition will be available to view until Saturday 30th May.

Visitors can see a selection of items excavated by Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeological Society (SOTMAS) from the Old Hall field at Hilderstone Hall. The everyday and personal items discovered give a fascinating insight into the building and also the people who lived there. SOTMAS continues to explore this area in the hope of discovering



more interesting artefacts and confirming theories of the Hall's early occupation. Visitors can scan QR codes to find out more information about the artefacts.

The artefacts are currently on a long-term loan to the Heritage Centre with no agreed end date at this time.

The Heritage Centre is open to the public Thursday – Saturday from 11.00am – 4.00pm at 13 Newcastle Street, Stone ST15 8JX



Local Artist Craig Sumner

Craig Sumner is a local artist, based in Oulton who after 30 years as a highly successful designer in the pottery industry now paints full-time and has had his work displayed across the Midlands and internationally.

The Heritage Centre will host an exhibition of Craig's paintings of Stone and the surrounding areas from **Thursday 21st May**.



Councillor Rob Kenney, Chairman of the Council's General Purposes Committee said

"Stone Heritage Centre celebrates Stone's rich history and the people who have shaped our community.

The scheduled events bring that story close to the community, from fascinating exhibitions and local artwork to engaging talks and archaeological discoveries, there is something for everyone."

Win **£20,000 CASH** when you replace your glass!

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Stone Food & Drink Festival 2026: A Feast For All The Senses...

Staffordshire's much-loved gastronomic gathering returns in style this spring, as the Stone Food & Drink Festival celebrates its 21st year with an irresistible three-day showcase of flavour, flair and feel-good festival vibes.

Taking over Westbridge Park from 8–10 May 2026, this year's event promises more of everything visitors love - plus some exciting new additions.

From big-name chefs and buzzing live music to street food sensations, artisan producers and family-friendly fun, it's a weekend designed to be savoured.

Star Power In The Kitchen

Food lovers are in for a treat as a stellar line-up of celebrity chefs and top local talent takes to the stage across the weekend.

Expect inspiring demonstrations, expert tips and plenty of culinary charisma from familiar faces including Great British Bake Off favourite Nelly Ghaffar, and award-winning chocolatier Paul A Young on Saturday, with ITV This Morning baking expert Juliet Sear headlining Sunday.

Whether you're a seasoned home cook or just love watching the magic unfold, the cookery theatre is always a festival highlight - offering insight, entertainment and plenty of "I'll try that at home" moments.



Juliet Sear



Paul A Young



Nelly Ghaffar

The Talks & Tastings Tent, meanwhile, is set to be a hub of interactive foodie fun, with everything from cocktail masterclasses and cake tastings to quirky biscuit dunking competitions and expert-led beer tastings.

Great Live Music – And A Silent Disco!

As the sun sets, the festival soundtrack comes alive. The main stage will host a packed programme of live music, with headline acts supported by an eclectic mix of talented bands and performers throughout the weekend. The main stage will be headlined by crowd-pleasers Sonic Boom Band on Friday, high-energy dance favourites House Jammerz on Saturday, and the ever-popular The Lack of Commitments bringing the weekend to a rousing close on Sunday.



New for 2026, the acoustic stage brings a more laid-back vibe - perfect for those looking to unwind with a drink in hand while discovering emerging artists and stripped-back sets.

And for those who like to dance from day into evening, the ever-popular Silent Disco returns - offering a high-energy, immersive experience where festival goers can choose their soundtrack.

Street Food Heaven & Gourmet Finds

Follow your nose and you'll discover a world of incredible street food, with traders serving up flavours from across the globe. From indulgent comfort food to vibrant international dishes, the street food village is a feast in itself.

Whether you're craving something savoury, sweet or a little bit of both, there's something to tempt every appetite - perfect for grazing your way around the festival.

Beyond the hot food, the festival is a paradise for foodies looking to



shop, sample and discover. Carefully curated stalls will be brimming with high-quality artisan produce - from cheeses, pies and charcuterie to handmade cakes, preserves, pickles and more.

It's the perfect opportunity to meet the makers, uncover new favourites and take a taste of the festival home with you.

Put Your Best Bake Forward!

Back by popular demand, the Great Stone Bake Off invites budding bakers of all ages to get involved. Free to enter with a festival ticket, participants can bring along their best bake and compete in daily heats, with expert judges - including Nelly Ghaffar on Saturday - crowning standout creations.

With 2027 festival tickets up for grabs and a grand champion announced on Sunday, it's a fun, inclusive celebration of baking talent and creativity.



A 'Secret' Dining Experience

For those looking for something truly special, 2026 introduces an exclusive pop-up restaurant experience from award-winning local chef Cris Cohen's H I D D E N concept.

Tucked away in a secret location on site, this immersive dining experience offers a five-course tasting menu designed to surprise and delight. With limited spaces and a menu that won't be repeated, it's set to be one of the festival's most sought-after experiences. *Advance booking for this exclusive experience is essential.*

Fun For The Whole Family

The festival isn't just for food lovers - it's a fantastic day out for families too. Highlights include a Panic Family Circus shows and skills workshops in the Big Top, a fun Kids' Disco on Friday after school, free children's cookery classes on Saturday and Sunday, hands-on craft and sensory activities, and a Farm to Fork area designed to inspire young minds.

Add in a pay-as-you-go funfair, face painting and family-friendly live entertainment, and there's plenty to keep little ones entertained while grown-ups soak up the atmosphere.

Don't Miss It!

Whether you're visiting for the food, the music, the shopping or the family fun, the Stone Food & Drink Festival 2026 offers an unforgettable weekend packed with flavour and entertainment.

Book your tickets online now to save money and beat the queues - this is one event you won't want to miss.

www.stonefooddrink.org.uk



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Stone Carnival Week

Saturday 30th May – Sunday 7th June

Stone Carnival isn't just a day, and it's definitely not just a weekend... It's a **FULL WEEK** of energy, laughter, and proper community spirit.

From family fun to interactive events, live entertainment to moments that bring everyone together - there's something happening every single day.

This vibrant, week-long celebration brings joy and excitement to the Stone community and beyond. With a diverse range of events, there's something for everyone - families, friends, and festival-goers of all ages.

From the Grand Parade and thrilling funfair to arts and crafts stalls, live music, and interactive activities, Stone Carnival Week promises an unforgettable experience.

Join us in celebrating community spirit and creating lasting memories together!

For all the latest details visit <https://www.stonecarnival.org/>



Stone Carnival Week Launches New Remembrance Walk to Honour Loved Ones

As part of this year's Stone Carnival Week 2026, the community is invited to come together for a moving new event - **The Remembrance Walk** - a heartfelt celebration of life, love, and togetherness.

Taking place on **Saturday 6th June**, the walk offers a gentle and reflective route through some of Stone's most scenic surroundings, giving participants the opportunity to remember those they have lost while sharing support with others.

The event begins at Westbridge Park, with registration at the sponsors' tent open from 2:45pm. This registration is only required for youth groups and under-18 participants who wish to take part in the sponsored walk element and submit their names and sponsor forms.

All other participants are welcome to simply turn up and join the walk - no registration is required.

If people would like to walk in groups, or in specific colours representing their own "in memory of" or wear t-shirts with photos on of their lost loved one, we encourage them to do so. A photo wall will be placed by the sponsor tent entrances for those who wish to place photos, to be on display for the weekend of the carnival too.

The walk will officially begin at 3:30pm, starting with an uplifting warm-up led by local favourite Trish Hill at 3.00pm, whose energetic line dancing performance promises to lift both body and spirit. While participation is optional, it's a fantastic way to show support and soak up the atmosphere.

Participants will then make their way from Westbridge Park through the starting arch, leading into rustic woodland paths and out towards the meadows - with local wildlife often spotted along the way, including magpies and kestrels. The route continues along the peaceful riverbank before looping back towards the meadows and returning to Westbridge Park.

The main walk covers approximately 1.07 miles and is designed to be safe and accessible underfoot, taking around 15 minutes to complete at a comfortable pace, with clearly marked marshal points in place throughout for guidance and safeguarding.

For younger participants, a dedicated youth sponsored walk will take place over a 1.2km route, consisting of three laps (each less than half a mile) and expected to take approximately 30 minutes to complete at a comfortable pace.

All under-18 participants must be supervised by an authorised adult leader at all times.

This structured format allows young participants to take part in a meaningful way, contributing towards fundraising efforts while enjoying a safe, supportive, and engaging experience. Youth groups will also have the opportunity to compete for the Charity Award of the Year Shield.

The walk concludes back at Westbridge Park, where participants will be welcomed by the uplifting sounds of the 80s Rock Choir, led by Bev Mason, followed by a live performance from local band "Poke the Jokers", bringing the day to a powerful and memorable close.



- Location: Westbridge Park, Stone
- Registration (youth groups only): 2:45pm
- Walk Start: 3:00pm
- Main Walk Distance: Approximately 1.07 miles
- Youth Walk: 1.2km (3 laps)
- Free dove ribbons for all participants
- Dog-friendly with water stations
- Live performances after the walk

This inclusive event is open to everyone - families, children, dog walkers, individuals, church groups, bereavement groups, community leaders, youth organisations including Scouts and Guides, and local sports teams.

Dove ribbons will be provided free of charge to all participants as a symbol of remembrance, alongside additional touches including wildlife spotting, balloons for children, water stations for dogs, and donation points supporting local charities, including Katharine House Hospice.

Michele McLeod for Stone Carnival Week said: "This walk is about community, connection, and remembrance. It's a chance for people to come together, support one another, and honour those who will always remain in our hearts."

"Forever In Our Hearts"

Come and join us in a powerful walk of remembrance, support, and community spirit.

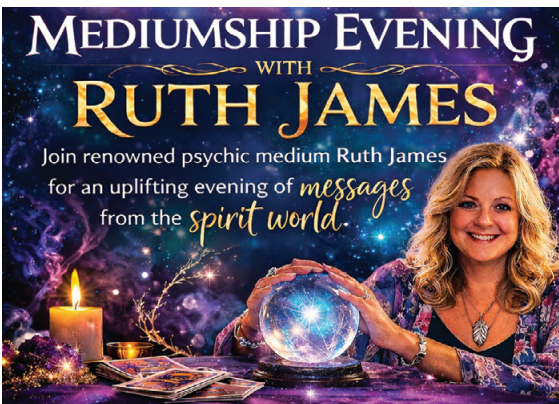


Elvis Tribute Evening

A Night with the King Get ready for a night of pure rock 'n' roll nostalgia as the legendary Elvis Presley is brought back to life by acclaimed tribute artist Mark Clay.

Taking place on **Saturday 30th May** at St Dominic's Social Centre (Upper Ballroom), this high-energy evening promises iconic hits, powerful vocals, and a buzzing dancefloor atmosphere.

Doors open at 7pm, with tickets priced at just £10, including a raffle entry. With limited availability and a reputation for selling out quickly, organisers are urging attendees to secure their places early via Eventbrite and Salon 36, Walton, Stone.



Mediumship Evening

An Uplifting Spiritual Experience For something a little different, Stone Carnival Week will also host a special Mediumship Evening with Ruth James on Wednesday 3rd June at the Crown Wharf Boardroom.

This unique event offers guests the chance to experience an evening of connection, reflection, and spiritual insight. Whether attending out of curiosity or personal belief, audiences can expect a powerful and memorable experience.

Doors open at 6:30pm, with the event beginning at 7pm. Tickets are priced at £12.50 and are also available now on Eventbrite. Supporting the Community Both events form part of the wider Stone Carnival Week celebrations, with proceeds helping to support local groups and community initiatives.

Organisers are proud to continue the tradition of bringing people together while giving back to the town. A Week to Remember With a programme that blends entertainment, community spirit, and something for everyone, Stone Carnival Week 2026 is shaping up to be one of the most exciting yet.

Tickets for both events are on sale now via Eventbrite. Early booking is strongly advised.



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STONE CARNIVAL WEEK 2026 FULL EVENT SCHEDULE

SATURDAY 30TH MAY Stone Carnival 5-A-Side Tournament Stone Old Alleenians Elvis Tribute Evening St Dominics Social Club	SUNDAY 31ST MAY Stone Carnival 5-A-Side Tournament Stone Old Alleenians Tractor Run George & Dragon	SATURDAY 6TH JUNE Stone Carnival Parade Through Stone Day of Activities Westbridge Park Remembrance Walk Westbridge Park Warwick's Funfair Westbridge Park
TUESDAY 2ND JUNE 2 Wheel Tuesday Stone High Street	WEDNESDAY 3RD JUNE Mediumship Evening with Ruth James The Crown Wharf	SUNDAY 7TH JUNE Carnival Sunday Westbridge Park Westbridge 5 Westbridge Park Local Artists' Art Exhibition St Dominics Social Club Warwick's Funfair Westbridge Park
THURSDAY 4TH JUNE Carnival Treasure Hunt Stone Town Centre Warwick's Funfair Westbridge Park	FRIDAY 5TH JUNE Carnival Quiz Night St Dominics Social Club Warwick's Funfair Westbridge Park	

www.stonecarnival.org



Stone & District u3a Welcomes Summer

Did you see that? I think it was blue sky, which must mean that summer is almost here.

Here at Stone and District u3a we believe that it's time to shake off the winter blues and start thinking about how we can get outside in the fresh air.

Here's a few suggestions for you....

Croquet is a sport which involves hitting a ball with a mallet through hoops embedded in a grass playing court or lawn. Individual players or teams take turns striking the balls, scoring points by knocking them through the hoops.



The game ends when a player or team reaches a predetermined number of points. The game can be played by singles, pairs or teams.

It is a very old sport and has changed over the years. In the 17th Century the rules of Croquet's forerunner paille-maille were slightly changed and the new game was called "Croquet" after the crooked stick used to hit the balls through the hoops. It then migrated to Ireland where it was called "Crooky". From there it came back to England where it supplanted "pall-mall".

In 1865 Lewis Carroll featured a nonsense version of the game in the popular children's novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: a hedgehog was used as the ball, a flamingo as the mallet, and playing cards as the hoops. We don't agree with using animals as equipment in real life!

There are many great reasons to take up croquet, but here are the main ones.

1. It is a fun sport that is quick and easy to learn.
2. As long as you can swing a mallet, you can play croquet!
3. Playing croquet is a good way to keep active and get outside.
4. Croquet has been proven to benefit mental health and well-being as it challenges the mind and is very social.
5. Men and women play together, both socially and competitively, making it a very inclusive sport.

Our Croquet Group meets at Stone Cricket Club on Wednesdays between 10.30am and 12.30pm during the summer.

Pétanque is a specific, popular type of boules game, where "boules" is the general term for all games involving throwing balls towards a target. Pétanque is played by two teams, each comprising one, two, or three players.

Players or teams play their boules/balls towards a target ball. A player draws a circle and throws the jack (6-10 meters away), then throws their boule, aiming to get it near to the jack. Opponents try to place their boules closer all while standing inside the circle with both feet on the ground. The game was originally called "pieds tanqués" (hence the name "pétanque," meaning "feet anchored" in Provençal).

The jack was originally called "cochonnet" (literally



"piglet" in French).

Playing pétanque helps develop a wide range of motor skills:

- Coordination and balance, thanks to the precision of the throws.
- Accuracy and fine motor skills, through control of technical movements.
- Endurance and flexibility, through repeated movement and sustained focus.

Our Pétanque group meets at The Stone House Hotel every Wednesday during the summer between 2pm and 4pm.

Crown Green Bowls is a form of bowls played outdoors on a grass or artificial turf surface known as a bowling green. The sport's name is derived from the intentionally convex or uneven nature of the bowling green which is traditionally formed with a raised centre known as the crown. The aim of crown green bowls is to roll a set of two bowls from the hand towards a smaller target bowl known as the jack.

The aim is for a player to finish with their own bowls closer to the jack than those of the opponent. For each bowl that is closer than those of the opponent, a player scores one point.

Crown Green Bowling began as a derivative of flat bowling, and it's thought that the two quite different sports came about as those who could afford it and who owned large gardens made bowling alleys on their lawns, flanked by hedges. These areas were well kept and flat. The less affluent played on rough, common ground and parks close to inns and taverns, which were the forerunners of the crown greens built adjacent to pubs and hotels.

Bowling is a gentle way to keep fit. You don't realise how much walking you have done by the end of a match. It may be in short sessions and not very far at a time, but it can all add up to around three miles! Your upper body also gets a workout as you perfect your bowling technique. Bowls truly is the sport for all, regardless of age, sex or physical ability.



There are four groups for Crown Green Bowling run by Stone u3a. **They meet on Mondays and Tuesdays each week at Stonefield Park, Stone**, from the middle of April onwards. Take a look at our website (stone.u3asite.uk) to find the group that suits you and contact the group leader for more information.

Other Groups for Summer Fun

Of course, these sports (above) may not be for you, but that doesn't mean that you'll have to miss out on summer fun. Stone & District u3a also have outdoor groups for **Allotments, Hawaiian Canoeing, Walking and Strolling**. These groups continue all year.

If you are interested in any of our groups, or would like to volunteer to run a group yourself, please take a look at our website Stone (Staffs) and District - Keep active (*in mind and body*), enjoy socialising, for those who are retired or not in full time employment.

Now is a great time to join us, as first time members can benefit from half price membership as our membership runs from the Beginning of September.

Membership costs just £50 per year and this allows you to attend as many groups as you like. That equates to less than £1 per week*. *Some groups may request a contribution towards refreshments.



Donna T. (Stone Branch Manager), Rob and Lianne (Care Worker)

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

— Service user’s family, Stone branch



AMG Stone
Homecare.co.uk, 2026

Supporting our community

When Rob’s mobility needs changed, accessing the right support became more challenging, making everyday trips into the community increasingly difficult. Wanting to make a meaningful difference, the staff at the Stone branch came together with a shared goal, raising £400 through a collective team effort. As a local, family-run care provider, AMG Nursing & Care Services continues to play an active role within the Stone community, offering support that goes beyond everyday care.

The funds raised have gone directly towards an electric wheel attachment for Rob’s manual wheelchair, allowing him to get out more safely and with greater ease. As a result, his day-to-day mobility has improved, helping him stay connected with others, enjoy social activities, and maintain his independence with renewed confidence.



Image for illustration purposes only

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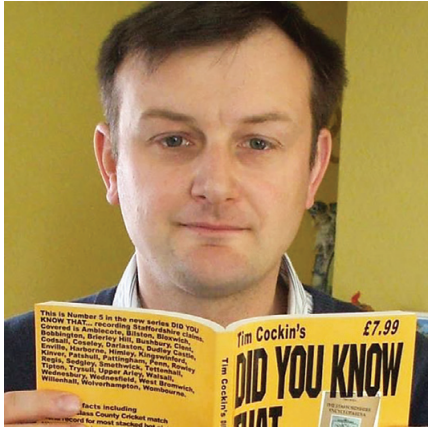
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The People Who Preserve The History of Stone

There is a particular form of history that does not reside solely in the archives. It gathers instead in boxes in attics, in the passing of photographs, and now, in the intangible architecture of a Facebook page. It is something more intimate than the grand history of monuments, more individualised. Memories long forgotten are restored. Moments that time has metronomically blurred are reborn and published for the eyes of both the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The people who preserve the history of Stone navigate between remembrance and loss, where the past is continually reassembled by those willing to look closely enough.

Tim Cockin began with a simple thought. He had already started a local history page for Barlaston in 2015, drawing together fragments of village life, when he noticed something missing in Stone. The town had images shared by the public, but not a dedicated place where its older photographs and stories could settle.



Tim Cockin

By the summer of 2020, when the world had contracted into homes and screens, he decided to begin Stone History Snippets.

(On Facebook search for Stone History Snippets) It was, in his words, a kind of natural step. But it was also something more instinctive. A response to isolation. Tim could assure the town has flourished, acknowledging that a place is not only what it is but also everything it has been before.

Old photographs, he explains, are meeting points. A way of telling

history that brings people together. The right image or detail opens a moment, allowing different voices to gather around it and recognise something shared.



Stone History Snippets

Public group · 8.9K members



Invite Share Joined

The Stone History Snippets Facebook page

The group itself, he says, has no real plan or scheme. It moves instead by accumulation, by the steady generosity of people who bring what they have found in drawers and albums. It is deliberately free to view, a decision that reflects their ideology. History is not a possession. It is shared.

There is something magnanimous about platforming a town that might otherwise slip past wider notice. Places like Stone are often absent from the larger telling of history, often reduced to passing mention. Yet within these smaller geographies are lives no less vivid, no less complex. In looking back, people find moments of warmth that cut through both the hardships of the past and the weight of the present. A gentler way of holding time. A reminder that there has always been something worth keeping.



Stone High Street of old, from Stone History Snippets page

Tim speaks of others who have shaped the page alongside him. Philip Leason, his co-administrator. John Jones, who helped bring people in at the beginning. And many others who have acted as guides, contributors, steady presences in the ongoing work of assembling Stone's visual memory.



Philip Leason

What emerges from this process is not only preservation. When asked what people gain from seeing these old photographs, Tim believes they bring an abundance of social and personal benefits, including camaraderie, surprise, delight, and a sense of well-being.



John Jones

Beneath those words is something reflective. An assurance that the place resided has depth, a comfort that the town continues to mean something to people.

The sources of images are varied. Private albums brought forward by families. The work of photographers such as Philip Dutton, whose early twentieth-century images captured Stone in ways that might otherwise have been lost entirely. Postcards, press cuttings, directories, aerial photographs. Later decades appear, too, especially through the work of Douglas Piggott, documenting a town in transition.

And yet, there is something more profound being suggested. Tim speaks of making sense of a district for its people and its future generations. It sounds practical, but it is also idealistic.

Why do small communities matter, Tim is asked. His answer is direct. "Because they allow for the recording of a shared past for those who belong to it, and those who will come after. There is no embellishment in the response. But there does not need to be. The weight of it lies in its clarity."

Perhaps what underpins all of this is a subtler belief. That lives merit persisting beyond their immediate moment. That a photograph of a street, a shopfront, a group of people gathered without knowing they are becoming history, carries within it a kind of permission. To remember and to be remembered. Normality can be captured, kept, and live on to one day become admired.

In the end, the appeal of preserving these small, everyday memories may be exactly that. They allow people to hold something of the past without glamourisation. To see themselves as part of a continuation of a place that has meaning. And that is what Tim, along with his group, has achieved. Their work has provided knowledge, inspiration, and positivity.

Here, something is restored. Not the past as it was, but the fondness and the nostalgia of a forgotten time.

By Charlie Key



Manor Hill school Christmas party 1966 from Stone History Snippets page

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Stone Scooter Club Event To Support Alzheimer's Group

Fuel and Flavour, with Stone Scooter Club took place on Monday 6 April at Xtraweld, The Boatyard, Newcastle Road, Stone, bringing together cars, scooters and bikes for a day of fundraising in support of the local group.

It was as a great day for vehicle enthusiasts and local residents alike, with Stone Scooter Club encouraging people to bring along friends and family.

The day started at 10 am, giving people a chance to see the great range of vehicles on display, and there was also a tombola to help raise funds.

All money raised on the day will go to Stone Alzheimer's Group, which supports people living with Alzheimer's and their families in the local area.

Photos from Martin Robinson





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Stone Ramblers Walk of the Month

Walk of the Month - Coombes Valley

Length: 4.5 miles / 7.2km and it should take you about 3 - 4 hours

Ascent: 1043 feet / 318 m – there's quite a lot of up and down!

Refreshments: The Boat Inn in Cheddleton or one of the many pubs and tea rooms in Leek.

Coombes Valley is near Leek on the A523 just south of Bradnop, on the Leek to Ashbourne road. Car parking is £4 or free if you are an RSPB member.

1. Start from the Visitor Centre, join 'Young Woodland Loop' path left of the noticeboard. At the split, keep left to the junction and here join 'Valley Woodland Trail' ahead left, down into wood pasture. Cross footbridge over Coombes Brook then in 20m turn left (hand gate) on the main Valley Woodland Trail (not shortcut) up steps. At a substantial stone plinth, turn right. In 100m (mossy wall and barbed wire on the right) up tree hidden steep steps. Then descend right (some steps later boardwalk) to fingerpost junction near old cottage.

2. Turn left, cross footbridge and rise to waymarked junction. Go left (Public Footpath) climbing steadily to eventual woodland-edge stile. Cross pasture towards detached pine, then down to a nearby stile (in rail fencing). Cross the yard, then advance past walled Sharpcliffe Hall on the right on a tree lined driveway to its end at gates and house.

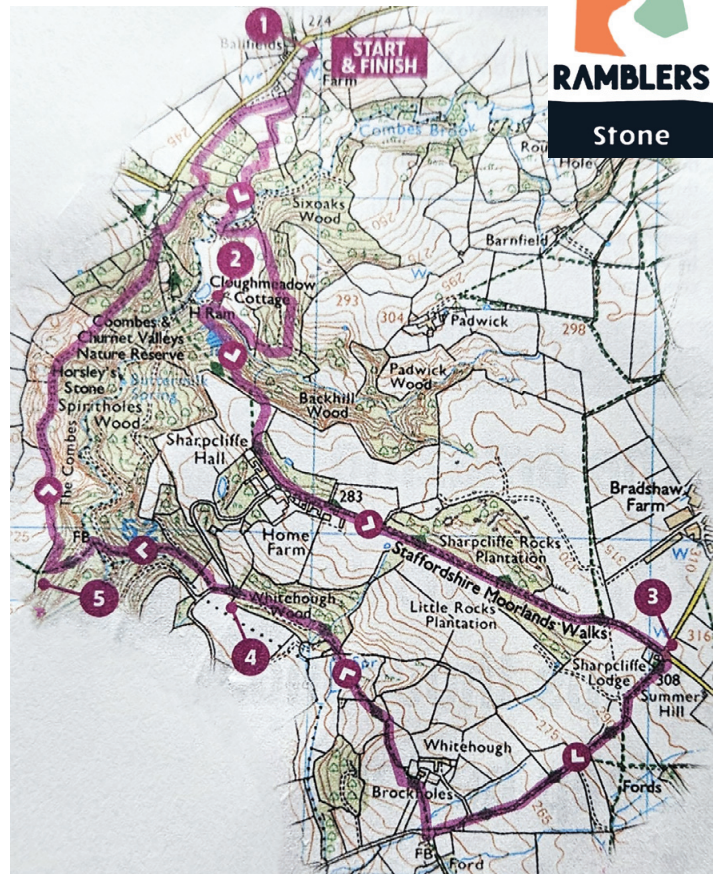
3. Turn right down the track for Whitehough Farm. At the junction for the farm, fork left to the gateway before secluded house. Turn right into a well-marked path through squeeze stile and over footbridge. Drift right towards house, looking left for waymarked gap stile by telegraph pole. Cross diagonally right over driveway (stile), reach stone gazebo. Use stone stile immediately beyond, then turn left on grassy path, shadowing old wall. At lower corner, use waymarked stile on the left. Then aim 25m above small barn to a remnant stone stile (near waymark disc on huge tree). Head slightly right on cattle oath looping up, then shortly down across narrowing scrubby pasture. Step across large limestone slab, then head half left to seek tumbledown, well-marked stile into woods beyond the in-field beech (pass left of) and b. Go left of a bramble patch and then left on a wide track. In 50m, use the stile on the right onto a path deeper into the woodland. This clear, occasionally boggy path reaches a fenced, grassy pasture-side track at a 'Private Access Only' gate. Turn left.

4. In 40m use the waymarked stile on the right. Head straight across the sloping pasture to waymarked stile in woods, (RSPB post). Accompany path to fingerposted junction; take 'Woodcock Trail' downhill (not right). Cross the footbridge in this delightful dell, then rise to reach the handgate. Turn right within the woodland edge on the 'Nature Trail'.

5. Trace this rooty path to the fingerpost (500m). Keep ahead on the right on the 'Woodcock Trail' undulating through the woods. Presently, (700m) pass through two kissing gates (bracketing the Len Wakefield memorial bench). Then immediately turn right (handgate) on the 'Nature Trail@'. Beyond the wooden railing on the right, in 400m turn left on gravelly path (Parking 450m) back to the start.

Once again, changes can occur to footpaths, so please let us know if you spot any. **On Saturday 2nd May we've got a stall at the Farmers' Market in Leek.** Please come along for a chat and find out more about the Stone Ramblers. We would love to see you.

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



I am writing this as the Stone Ramblers begin a fabulous week, walking in Northumberland with HF Holidays. We do get around a bit! Yesterday, we caught the train to Nottingham and did a five-mile walk taking in the city, Wollaton Hall and the Deer Park.

This month's walk is a little further away. The reason that I have chosen this, is that we did this very walk a few weeks ago and it was utterly beautiful! It's at the RSPB reserve at Coombes Valley, near Leek. It's not too far away and if you are an RSPB member, you can park there free.

The other reason is, that I've taken this walk from the Ramblers magazine, which you get several times a year if you join the Ramblers. One of the many perks of joining.



Penny Meakin Chair, Stone Ramblers



The Cubs had an amazing time at Keele Observatory

Cubs Are Left Star Struck

Cubs from 1st Oulton Scout Group had an amazing visit to Keele Observatory, where they spent an exciting time exploring the wonders of space!

During the visit, the instructor shared a huge amount of fascinating information and was more than happy to answer questions and pass on his knowledge. The children were completely engaged as they learned about space, stars, and the universe around us.

They also had the fantastic opportunity to get hands-on with the experience, making the visit even more memorable and inspiring. Seeing their curiosity and excitement as they discovered more about space was wonderful to watch, they absolutely loved every minute of it!

A brilliant experience for our Cubs and a great opportunity to learn something new together. Thank you to everyone involved for such an enjoyable and educational visit!

Beavering Away To Success

A huge congratulations to Noah and Arthur at 1st Oulton Scout Group, for achieving all of their Beaver Scout badges, including their Challenge, Activity, Staged, and Core badges!

What an incredible achievement!

Over the years, they have both shown amazing dedication, determination, and enthusiasm in everything they've done. From their time at Beavers to the effort they've put in at home, they've worked so hard



to learn new skills, take on challenges, and always try their very best. Their commitment and positive attitudes have truly paid off, and their progress has been fantastic to see.

They've grown so much on their Beaver journey, building confidence, teamwork, and resilience along the way. The hard work, perseverance, and passion they've shown should make them both extremely proud, it certainly makes us proud!

Well done to both of you, we can't wait to see your next achievements.

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Sylvia being presented with her Award by Councillor Cindy Yip, Mayor of Royal Sutton Coldfield

Local Winner Of Buddy Bags Charity Annual Awards

During December 2025, The Buddy Bag Foundation celebrated their 10th Anniversary, which was an amazing achievement for a small charity relying solely on volunteers.

The charity based in the Midlands, packs and supplies buddy bags of essential clothing, toiletry and comfort items to children of ages ranging from babies to teenagers - who have been taken to refuges and emergency accommodation throughout the UK after fleeing, sometimes at a minutes notice, away from domestic abuse.

The BBF 10th Anniversary event was celebrated at the Charity's Annual Award Ceremony held recently in Sutton Coldfield, with many BBF Ambassadors, Supporters, Trustees and Company Sponsors in attendance, alongside local dignitaries who presented the Awards.

Sylvia Keris, from Eccleshall, was shocked and delighted to receive the **"Volunteer of the Year"** Award, as she knew there were so many worthy candidates for this award.

The Award was given in recognition of Sylvia's 7 years of fundraising events for the charity, which includes her now famous "Elf challenge" every December (whereby she dresses as Buddy's Elf 24hrs a day, from 1st to 25th December, and gets up to Elf mischief to promote the charity and raise funds through collections and online.)



Elf being 'arrested' behind bars in Stafford Police Station and fishing in potholes in Eccleshall

And also for collecting in and labelling up 1000's of hand-knitted teddies, and hand sewn toiletry bags throughout the year, and delivering them to the buddy bag packing sessions. To date the charity has packed some 72,000 Buddy Bags to comfort vulnerable children in refuges and emergency care.

The photos show Sylvia being presented with her Award by Councillor Cindy Yip, Mayor of Royal Sutton Coldfield; with other pictures showing some of her cheeky Elf antics during December, during which she will have raised over £1500 in total, by the time the BBF Elf fundraising page is closed.

All Elf pics can be viewed on the **Facebook page named: Buddy's Elf.**



Liam with Josh and Kimi

Stone Dad To Run The London Marathon For Hearing Dogs

Good luck goes to Liam Herbert, a father from Stone, who, as The Gazette goes to print, is set to take on the iconic London Marathon (**on April 26th**) to raise vital funds for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, a charity that has had a life-changing impact on his profoundly deaf son and a positive influence on his whole family.

Liam, 49, who lives locally with his wife and three sons, has seen first-hand the difference a hearing dog can make. His middle son, Josh, 14, is profoundly deaf and has autism.

Despite neither Liam nor his wife Leah being deaf, both carry a recessive gene which has meant that Josh, his twin brother and his older brother were all born profoundly deaf.

As Josh grew older, and his deafness caused new challenges, including difficulty sleeping and feelings of isolation, the family thought a hearing dog might provide him with crucial support.

Deaf children often struggle to get to sleep because when they take out their hearing aids or cochlear implants, their world is totally silent.

Liam added, "Josh had trouble getting to sleep because when they take out their hearing aids or cochlear implants, their world is totally silent."

Liam also explained, "School is a very noisy, busy environment, and the effort of having to concentrate on listening to teachers and friends all day leaves him exhausted."

In October 2024, Josh was partnered with Kimi, a calm and affectionate Labrador who has had an incredible impact on his daily life. Her presence has brought confidence, independence and reassurance - not just to Josh, but to the whole family.

Kimi supports Josh by alerting him to important and life-saving sounds, including the fire alarm and alarm clock. But beyond practical assistance, her emotional impact has been remarkable.

"His sleep has improved dramatically," Liam said. "Almost as soon as Kimi arrived, he settled much more easily and slept through."

Kimi has also boosted Josh's confidence and social interactions. "She's an icebreaker," says Liam. "When we're out, people come over to talk about Kimi, and

Josh opens up. It's helped him connect with others in a way he found difficult before."

Hearing dogs are specially trained to alert deaf people to important sounds such as smoke alarms, intruder alarms and even baby monitors, while also providing companionship, emotional support and a sense of security - helping to reduce the isolation that many deaf people can experience.

"Whatever sort of day he's had at school, you can see his mood lift instantly when Kimi greets him at the front door," Liam added.

Inspired by the charity's life-changing work - and aware of the significant time and cost involved in training each dog - Josh's father decided to take on the ultimate endurance challenge.

"I wanted to run a marathon before I was 50," he said, "so when I got the opportunity, raising money for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People felt like the perfect fit. It's a way of giving something back."

It costs around £40,000 to fully train a hearing dog and support them through their life, and every penny raised will help more hearing dog puppies go on to transform the lives of deaf people and their families, just as Kimi has done for Josh."

Balancing family life with training, Liam runs three times a week, with long runs on Saturdays - his current record is 19 miles. While his wife is encouraging him to simply enjoy the experience on the day, he admits to having a competitive edge, with a target time of under four and a half hours.

"I'm really looking forward to the atmosphere," he said. "The crowds at the London Marathon are meant to be incredible. I just want to soak it all in - but I'll have to be careful not to get carried away!"

The family will be there to support him on race day, cheering Liam on as he takes each step towards the finish line - and towards making a difference for other deaf people and their families. He plans to mark his achievement with a celebratory couple of beers on the train on the way home.

Anyone who would like to support Liam's fundraising efforts for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People can visit: <https://events.hearingdogs.org.uk/fundraisers/LiamHerbert>

Peter Bowers
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Stone Lions Mobility Scheme Still Active - Nearly 40 Years On!

In 1988, Stone Lions Club helped a local resident with mobility problems and, realising the huge difference this made to his life and well-being, decided to start a scheme to help others in need of similar assistance. The Stone Lions Mobility Scheme was born!

Over the years, this service project has grown and undergone a few changes and sadly it is no longer possible to provide motorised equipment due to increasing insurance restrictions. **However, the scheme can still provide a variety of mobility aids for long or short-term use, including:**

- Wheelchairs
- 3 and 4 Wheeled Shop Walkers and Rollators
- Zimmer Frames
- Dining Trolleys and Tables
 - Bed Rails
- Shower Stools
- Toiler Risers
- Commodes



The equipment has mostly been donated by residents who no longer have a need for it and is in a clean and serviceable condition. There is no charge to borrow any piece of equipment although donations are always appreciated to help with the cost of equipment repair and running the scheme. There is no time restriction on the length of the loan and it makes no difference whether you need a wheelchair just to transport someone to a hospital appointment or require it for a longer period.



The quickest way to request assistance, is by **contacting the Mobility Team on 07929 010152**, preferably on Monday to Friday between the hours of 10.00 – 16.30.

The scheme is managed entirely by unpaid volunteers who do their best to respond as quickly as possible to requests for help, but if your call is not answered straight away, please leave a message and we will respond as soon as possible.

The members of Stone Lions Club (CIO) would like to offer their heartfelt thanks to Gary Swift of Hill and Swift Motors for kindly providing storage for the equipment for many years, and to Stone Town Council for providing the current Mobility Store.



Stone station awaits the first London Midland train to London Euston, Photo taken on 14th December 2008

NSRPG Group Celebrate 30 Years Of Campaigning For Improved Rail Services

North Staffs Rail Promotion Group soon celebrates 30 years of campaigning for improved rail services.

The high point must be 14th December 2008 when we welcomed the first London Midland service from Stone to London Euston. Stone Town Band played as the train departed. (see photos)

NSRPG chair Jon Heal comments, "In 2026 trains going south only reach Stafford before a change is required. This doesn't feel like progress!"

Jon Heal comments, "The railways are in more uncertainty than has been the case for 30 years of NSRPG's existence.

Legislation now going through parliament will create Great British Railways but details are still sparse! And the sad story of HS2 remains unresolved!"

Charlotte Eccles explained the contribution of local volunteers to making stations welcoming to rail users.

The growing band of Stone Station volunteers were commended at a recent



The current train company who run the London Northwestern Railway service were renationalised in February, and so are now run from the Department for Transport with the title of "WM Trains Ltd"

They were recently named Train Operator of the Year, despite our issues with the quality of the service. They have invested heavily in new trains and train depots.

At the recent AGM in Stone the top two in members' wish lists were direct trains to Birmingham and a coat of fresh paint for the station building!

The AGM was attended by over 20 railway users, who were given very informative updates from Geoff Grant of WM Trains and from Charlotte Eccles of North Staffs Community Rail Partnership.

Geoff explained the situation with the route change hoped for in December 2026. The train company have bid for a route between Birmingham New Street and Manchester Airport that would be the one calling at Stone. At the moment it has not received final approval.

Community Rail gathering in Derby.

In fact, they brought along a table decoration with fairy lights from the event which earned its keep when a power cut plunged the meeting room into darkness!

The other timetable issue results from East Midlands Railway changing its service last December. For travel from Stone to places such as Uttoxeter, Derby or Nottingham, the connection at Stoke now is now nearly an hour. One job for GBR must be more coordination. EMR managers came to Stoke Station to meet with Jon Heal so that they are now clear where travel does not work well! Comments are welcome.

The next NSRPG meeting is on Thursday May 28th at 6.30pm.

A new venue is being used as the Quaker Meeting House is no longer available. It will be St. Barnabas Church, Caudon Avenue, Bradwell ST5 8QH

All are welcome. Any enquiries to jhnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk

Northgate Healthcare is a family-run residential care provider whose owners and managers want to foster that ethos of family care in all aspects of the way we support our residents.

We aim to provide care and service that is professional and of the highest quality. We also uphold one belief: we are making our home, your home.

Northgate Healthcare is committed to providing care in the most modern and comfortable environments available today, supported with the best services to make the lives of residents enjoyable and fulfilled.



Autumn House

Autumn House Nursing Home is an attractive modern nursing home located in Stone, Staffordshire. It is a well-established nursing home that can accommodate up to 65 clients with varying nursing and residential needs.

We take pride in the quality, cleanliness and comfort of our accommodation. All our residents' rooms are en-suite, and there are two comfortable lounges.

Residents enjoy individual care, supported by a personal care plan

designed to meet their personal needs and interests. Respect for the individual is central to our approach.

We also have a full-time activities co-ordinator who organises events and activities for residents to enjoy, stimulating interest and physical wellbeing.

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Meadowfields Care Home is a 65 bed en-suite care home situated in the picturesque area of Great Haywood, Stafford. Situated between Rugeley and Stafford (roughly 5 miles each way), it has lovely views of the surrounding fields and countryside.

We encourage visits to see the quality of the care that residents receive while residing in our homes.

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looking after the individual needs of each of our residents.

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This personal plan underpins all the care we provide, so residents can be confident that they are always treated with respect and dignity.



T: 01889 270565 meadowfields@northgatehealthcare.co.uk www.northgatehealthcare.co.uk



Julian Celebrates 40 Years At William Jones Motors

This year is the 40th anniversary of Julian Jones working at William Jones Motors, on Longton Road, Stone.

To celebrate, family, friends, and over one hundred and fifty customers gathered at the Butcher's Block, on Station Road in Stone. 'Close Up Chris' (formerly known as 'Magic Chris'), provided the entertainment and guests enjoyed excellent pub food. It was a wonderful tribute to Julian, the service he has provided over many years and his commitment to the Stone community.



Julian began work at William Jones Motors in 1986, on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) placement. William Jones Motors had opened in 1978. For 20 years he worked in partnership with his Dad. Bill did car sales and Julian developed the service, MOT and repair side of the business. In 2006 Bill retired, but sadly died six months later. Julian continued to grow the business and the customer base.



The garage before it became William Jones Motors

William Jones Motors is a close-knit team. Pete has been a loyal member for 25 years, Tommy, who was Julian's apprentice, returned in 2026. In 2016, Lucy joined the team, 'keeping the books'.

Lucy and Julian married in 2017 and in 2018 William Jones was born and for a little while William thought his name was 'William Jones Motors! No oily fingers for William's big sister, Evie, who has ambitions to become a teacher.

Julian and Lucy would like to thank everybody for coming along and for their generous gifts and best wishes! There were certainly no calls for Julian to take early retirement!



Stone Flower Club Meetings and Dates

We can't believe how fast this year is going.

We have already had some great nights of flower arranging with inspirational ideas. Several visitors from last year have returned and become members having enjoyed the evenings.

At the AGM we agreed to keep the costs of membership and visitor's fees the same again this year.

We felt mindful of the fact that the cost of living keeps going up, but also that we want to provide a space for people to enjoy a good night out. Although it does cost a lot to put on an evening with flower costs and demonstrator fees going up.



looks forward to returning. She is well known around the area for growing her own flowers and doing workshops. A night not to be missed as Pam will always bring some fantastic ideas.

The club is held at Walton Community Centre, Whitemill lane, Walton, Stone ST15 0EQ

The doors open at 6.45pm and the evening starts at 7.30pm

Cost of Membership is £45 for the year or just come along as a visitor for £8.

If you are looking for something new to do or want a night out in pleasant company, come along and meet new friends. We pride ourselves on being a warm and friendly club and relaxed atmosphere.

The following are the coming month's demonstrations

April 30th Jane Pugh whose title is **A walk on the wildlife.** Very popular lady and a welcome return to Stone.

May 28th Elizabeth Bishop whose title is **Six of the Best.**

June 25th Pam Mosley whose title is **The Longest Day.** Pam has had close links with the club for many years and always



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By Stone Scribblers Creative Writing Group

Ostara; the goddess of the radiant dawn

Dawn breaks. Red-hot bonfires blaze incandescently across the fading indigo skies. Folk are called from their slumbering winter beds. Dancing flickering flames sparkle and sing of the promise of the awakening earth. One by one, old and young, start to gather. Mothers, children hanging around their skirts, fathers carrying barrels of fun on their backs, fractious farmers, village healers, old crones, young maids, butchers, bakers and even candle stick makers are all called to celebrate this early pristine spring day.

Hearts bursting
Eyes shinning

Heads full of intoxicating blossom and hope.

In heady spring meadows all across the land people gather to place scented flowers on make shift altars to evoke the deity and banish the bitter darkness, returning health and happiness to life.

So I rise to serve once more from my long cold slumber beneath the winter snows. From the underworld I come to awaken the soul on this spring equinox. All gather joyfully to celebrate and give thanks as they have done for millennia.

Cleansing bonfires blaze. Young women dance in white gowns studded with delicate spring flowers their bodies emanating fertility. Young men watch expectantly. Eggs, colourfully decorated lie hidden in the grass for children to gleefully discover.

Violet, periwinkle, hyacinth and forget-me-not thread their hues of blue through the burgeoning green shoots of the new grass. Daffodil and hellebore softly push through the hardened earth to mingle with catkins and pussy willow. Celandine and wood anemone neighbour under the naked branches of an old oak tree.

Birds sing
Rabbits romp
Hares jump

Long latent trees burst forth with verdant explosion

Mead and hot cider flow drunkenly while mirth roars merrily and joy spreads like fire. Faces glow, reflecting embers. Fires and souls are fed until the first full moon appears. Then my name is celebrated.

I have been loved and worshipped down all the long festive spring ages.

I have had many names on this earth; Persephone, Brigid, Sita, Lada, Flora, Idunn, Eostre to name but a few. But my chosen name in this land of the Ancient Brits is Ostara. I appear clothed in a simple white gown with a woven sash of vibrant spring green stems and leaves, my long flowing chestnut hair adorned with a garland of fragrant lilac. All worship me for I bring hope after the long barren chills of winter. I spread warmth and healing dew on the sleeping land. I awaken the slumbering flora and fauna.

Life begins again.

I may not exist according to the Venerable Bede but Grimm knows that I am the goddess of the radiant dawn, of spring and fertility and rebirth. I serve to breathe new life into the world.

All loved and celebrated me until a dead man on a cross was reborn as divine enabling the men of Nicaea to spread their narrow patriarchal doctrine sweepingly across the globe. People subjugated.

Old order usurped.

New order falsely acquired, mandated.

And in the final domineering destruction of the old I became Easter.

They kept the rabbits and hares and colourful eggs, but me? I was silenced.

Censored

Suppressed and stifled.

Relegated to the underworld for eternity, or so they thought.

But I am still here. I am the true eternal genesis and some still celebrate me.

So, next time you see a leveret leaping gracefully across a new sweet wild meadow, or decorate an egg for Easter, or watch as the sun shines on a new world which turns green and hopeful once more, think of me, remember me and the true meaning of the Spring Equinox for I will never forsake you.

by Melanie Baines

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



Stone Old Alleynians FC Deliver £2.6 Million in Annual Social Value New Report Highlights The Power of Grassroots Football

Stone Old Alleynians Football Club has today released its 2026 Social Impact Report, revealing that the club generates an impressive £2.6 million in social value every year through football participation, volunteering, and community programmes.

Working with Staffordshire FA to complete the Social Impact Calculator as part of The FA's Club Programme, highlighting the wide-reaching benefits the club delivers for players, families, volunteers and the wider Stone community.

'A Club at the Heart of Its Community'

The report shows that 8,991 people engage with Stone Old Alleynians FC annually - from players across youth, adult, female and disability teams, to volunteers, staff and members of community programmes. Key impact figures include:

Football Participation

611 youth players supported across 65 teams

108 adult players involved across 10 teams

25 adult disability participants

120 walking football participants

Youth participants alone generate £453,000 in combined economic, social, and health value - including reductions in obesity, anxiety and depression, and juvenile crime.

Adult participation contributes £331,900 in wellbeing gains, healthcare savings and local economic activity.

Volunteering: The Club's Social Engine

Stone Old Alleynians' 273 volunteers, from coaches to committee members to grounds teams, collectively contribute:

£974,000 salary-equivalent value

£806,000 wellbeing value

Together, this creates an extraordinary £1.8 million of volunteer impact. Volunteers report higher happiness, stronger community connections and improved confidence and employability - demonstrating that giving time benefits the giver as much as the club.

Community Programmes Reaching 7,654 Residents

The club runs a wide variety of community programmes, utilising 28 facilities to deliver physical activity, social connection and community engagement to 7,654 people across Stone and surrounding areas. From recreational football to outreach initiatives, the club continues to expand its role as a local wellbeing hub.

A Vision for Continued Growth - Alex Scott (Staffordshire FA) - "This report confirms what we already knew - that Stone Old Alleynians Football Club is about far more than football. They are a community anchor, a pathway for young people, a home for volunteers and a club that brings people together. We're proud of

the impact Stone Old Alleynians makes and excited for the future."

A Model for Grassroots Impact:

The FA's Club Programme emphasises the importance of evidence-led development in grassroots football. Stone Old Alleynians' impact helps demonstrate how clubs can address societal challenges such as health inequalities, youth inactivity and community isolation.

Club Chairperson Richard Jones has praised the extraordinary contribution of volunteers following the publication of the club's latest community impact report.

Describing the report as "a fantastic document," he highlighted the dedication of the many volunteers who give their time to support the club and the wider community.

"This report is the outcome of hundreds of volunteers giving countless hours of their time, all coming together for the shared benefit of the community," he said.

"We encourage everyone to read it - the impact is staggering, and everyone involved should be incredibly proud."

Alongside the report, the club has released a four-part documentary, filmed by Staffordshire FA, showcasing the wide range of day-to-day activities that take place across the organisation.

The film highlights not only football related programmes, but also the club's broader community work.

The documentary explores initiatives ranging from veterans' bowling and pickleball sessions to volunteering and partnerships with other local community groups.

Richard also emphasised the importance of two areas he believes are sometimes overlooked within the club.

"Our real strength - and sometimes the most overlooked part of the club - is our veterans and disability sections," he said.

"Our veterans are involved in activities every single day and regularly reach out to support others who may be less fortunate."

The club's disability football programme is also continuing to grow, with ten teams currently operating across a wide range of disabilities.

Looking ahead, he said the club hopes to expand its provision further while working towards a major milestone.

"We hope to continue increasing our range of opportunities in the near future, and we have an exciting year ahead as we work towards completing our new stadium and clubhouse."

Report Access: The full Stone Old Alleynians 2026 Social Impact Report and launch video are now available at

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:eu:23dc8716-02cf-4e99-99f4-b8becf8f0ec8>

And <https://youtu.be/q9MYup8uGhk>



The Royal British Legion – Stone Branch

The Royal British Legion is the UK's largest Armed Forces charity with 180,000 members and 110,000 volunteers, and a network of partners and charities; helping us to provide support wherever it's needed. From expert advice and guidance to recovery and rehabilitation, through to transitioning to civilian life, the Legion exists to support members of the Armed Forces and their families.

You may not be aware that Stone has its own branch of the Legion. We are a group of Stone residents who are committed to ensuring that the local community continues to show appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, particularly our local heroes, both active and retired. If you know of any veterans in our community who need direct support, please contact the Legion on 0808 802 8080 or email: info@britishlegion.org.uk

We also wanted to let you know a little about the Battle Back Centre based in Lilleshall which exists to support wounded, injured and sick service personnel via various tailored recovery programmes including supporting the Invictus Games. If you know anyone in your community who may benefit from this type of help, please contact the Centre on 01980 656753 or email: helen.thorogood322@mod.gov.uk

One of our key activities is the local coordination of the Poppy Appeal to

raise funds to help the Armed Forces community. The red poppy is a national symbol of Remembrance and hope, and wearing a poppy is one way to show our respect for our Armed Forces, past and present.

This year the Branch has thrived, and we have managed to double the local contributions to the Poppy Appeal. Thanks are due to Morrisons, Marks and Spencer, Aldi and Moto Services for their support for the initiative, and in particular to you – the residents of Stone who dug deep to support the cause. If you would like to help with the Poppy Appeal this year, please contact either the Royal British Legion directly to register your interest at: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/volunteering-roles/poppy-appeal-volunteers/application-form> or our Poppy Appeal Organiser Tracy Hall by email at: Tracyhall65@outlook.com or Stone.secretary@rbl.community

New members are always welcome to come and join our branch; you don't have to be a veteran or serving member to join. You simply need to be committed to our cause, friendly, and willing to give up a few hours of your time.

If you would like to know more, please contact either Major (retired) Dougie Craig Stone.Chair@rbl.community or Tracy Hall Stone.Secretary@rbl.community



The Kilns Coming To Oulton Village Hall

Oulton Village Hall present a **Summer Rock & BBQ Event** with live music from The Kilns.

It takes place on **Saturday 27th June** with BBQ from 7.00 pm. to 8.00 pm and the Band on stage at 8.30pm.

There will be a bar for all drinks, with

card payments accepted.

The event is advanced sales only and tickets are £20.00 (which includes the BBQ & Strawberries with Cream) and are available from Elaine Robinson 01785 812438.

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Great Fun Had By All At Jelly Tots Easter Egg Hunt

Looking for a welcoming space where your little ones can play? Why not come along to Jelly Tots, a vibrant toddler group that **meets every Tuesday at St Michael's Church from 9.30am till around 11.00am.**

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

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



Free Tudor Music Concert

There will be a Free Coffee Concert at **St Saviour's Church, Aston-by Stone, on May 30th at 11 am.**

A feast of Tudor Music & Dances awaits you, including the 'I Soffiatori' Recorder Consort.

Listen and join in with the dancing! Refreshments will be available afterwards. All welcome, just pop along and join us. A retiring collection in aid of church funds.



St Michaels' Colouring Competition

When Rev Rob, Nichola and I visited St Michaels' First School to tell the Easter Story, Rev Rob set a colouring competition with the offer of prizes.

On the first day of term (Mon 13th April), Nichola and I went to school with the prizes. As there were 10 entries, we were able to give 8 entrants a prize of a "Real Easter Egg."

The other two entrants we thought were outstanding, so they each had a book token.

The winners were Rosie, Grace, Heidi, Joe, Bethany, Tamara, Freddie and Alice. The book tokens went to Hattie and Robyn.

From Dennis Abbott

St Michael and St Wulfad, Stone and St Saviour, Aston



left... Beaver Scout Leader (Ottawa) Nichola Abbott right... Cub Scout Leader (Akela) Gill Knight preparing to bury the time capsules

Camp For Beavers And Cubs

Aston & Little Stoke Scout Groups Beaver and Cub sections gathered at Sherratts Wood CampSite over the weekend of 10th - 12th April to celebrate 40 years of Beaver Scouts and 110 years of Cub Scouts.

Along with their leaders and with help from Explorer Scouts they enjoyed a weekend of outdoor fun and games combined with learning the basic skills of scouting such as fire lighting, den building and camp fire songs.

The programme needed altering as the weekend progressed due to the inclement weather which ranged from warm sunshine to hail, thunder, cold winds and torrential rain (*although not as bad as when we camped there in August 2024 when we had to abandon the camp during vicious rain and thunderstorms which overwhelmed the tents and washed away part of the road near the site*)

The camp concluded with the burying of two time capsules containing scouting memorabilia, along with newspapers of the day.

We hope to be around when the capsules are opened in 20 years time to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Beavers and 130 years of Cub Scouts.

Beaver Scouts are ages 6 - 8

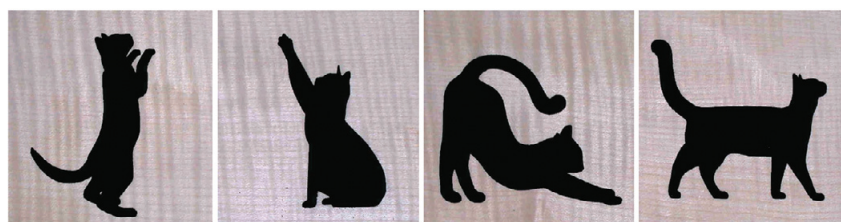
Cub Scouts are ages 8 - 10.5

Explorer Scouts are ages 15 - 18 (*also referred to as young leaders when they are attached to a scout groups section.*)

Ottawa was the name Nic chose when she became a Beaver Scout leader as Beaver scouts originated in Canada. Akela is the traditional name for a cub scout leader and comes from the name of the leader of the wolf cub pack in Kiplings "Jungle Book"



The commemorative plaque



Beginners Marquetry Course

Staffordshire Marquetry Group warmly invite you to their Beginners Marquetry Course.

To be held over three weeks on Wednesday 6th May, 3rd June and 1st July 2026, 7:30~9:30pm At the Methodist Church Hall, 7 Stone Road, Eccleshall, Stafford, ST21 6DL

Cost is £30 for the three sessions, which will include all materials, a beginners toolkit and Membership of the Staffordshire Marquetry Group for 2026.

Light refreshments will be provided. Suitable for ages 12 and over, under 18s must be accompanied by an adult.

Marquetry is a heritage craft creating images and patterns cut from wood veneer.

Over three weeks you will learn about the basics of Marquetry, and be guided

by expert tuition through the process of making a decorative coaster. You will leave with the tools and skills to continue Marquetry either at home or in a club.

Membership to the Staffordshire Marquetry Group is included, so you will be welcome to join us at our **regular club meetings on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, between 2~4pm**, at the address above.

For further details please contact Quentin Smith qjsmarquetry@gmail.com (01785) 850614. Full payment is required to secure a place.





On the dam at the far end of Tittesworth Water – 21st March
 Rev'd Terry Bloor, Rev'd Rob Icke, Dennis Abbott, Mary Babb and Jill Leavett

Christian Aid Sponsored Walk

Well done to Dennis Abbott from St Michael and St Wulfad, Stone and St Saviour, Aston, who raised £210 by completing the Christian Aid Sponsored Walk at Tittesworth Water.

Dennis said "I am very pleased to report that we were very lucky this year, we had

lovely sunny weather!

Thank you very much to everyone who sponsored me. This money goes to helping some of the world's poorest people through the work of Christian Aid. Thank you."

The church members group total was £835, a fantastic result!



CU @ 4

The theme for the March service was Christian Aid as the day before the annual sponsored walk had taken place at Tittesworth Water.

Dennis gave a PowerPoint presentation about the work of Christian Aid and included some photos taken on the sponsored walk. The children then completed individual displays as a reminder of the scope of the charity's activities. Adults and children together enjoyed a quiz covering facts and figures about Christian Aid.

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

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

The next CU@4 is **4.00pm till 5.00pm on Sunday 24th May and 28th June**. Come along and enjoy a relaxed, welcoming environment where you can connect, learn, and grow in faith together. We can't wait to see you there!

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Oulton Spring Fayre Helps To Raise Vital Funds

The annual Oulton Spring Fayre, which took place on the 18th April at Oulton Village Hall, proved a great success with a huge turnout for this event held at the Village Hall.

Entertainment was provided by the CK Choir and Oulton First school choir. Thank you to all who attended and helped to raise the magnificent sum of £1,000 for St John's Church.

The Church has been raising money for some time now and have already completed and paid (following generous donations) for first two parts, of the three-stage plan of essential work required to eradicate rainwater ingress and related damp issues.

The first two stages involved major roof repairs and rectification to the outside stonework of the West Wall. The final stage to the project is to renovate the badly damaged internal section area of the West Wall and re-plaster the whole area at a cost of £15,000.



Oulton Church - The photo shows just a small section of major damp issue

The marvellous result from the Spring Fayre has helped towards this final target, but there is still a good way to go.

If you can help us in any way to reach this final target, please get in touch with St John's Church Wardens Ruth - 07805 723974 or Simon - 07985 662076



Brown Recycling Named Lead Sponsor For 2026 Stone Food & Drink Festival

The Stone Food & Drink Festival is proud to announce Brown Recycling as Lead Sponsor for its 2026 event, marking a special partnership milestone as both organisations celebrate landmark anniversaries.

As the Festival celebrates its 21st year, Brown Recycling - a long-standing supporter and the Festival's official Sustainability Partner - marks an incredible 100 years in business, making this year's collaboration particularly meaningful.

Brown Recycling is the leading independent provider of total waste management and recycling services to businesses across Staffordshire, Cheshire and the Midlands. With ten decades of expertise, the company operates to the highest standards of safety, compliance and customer service. It is committed to sustainability best practices through continuous investment in its facilities, its fleet and its early adoption of the very latest legislative changes which filters down directly to its customers.

The company has supported the Stone Food & Drink Festival for over a decade, delivering comprehensive waste management solutions and playing a key role in helping the event minimise its environmental impact. Since becoming the Festival's official Sustainability Partner in 2024, Brown Recycling has worked closely with organisers to drive forward greener practices across the event.

Catherine Haigh, Sponsorship Lead for the Stone Food & Drink Festival, said: "We are absolutely delighted to welcome Brown Recycling as our Lead Sponsor for 2026. It feels incredibly fitting that as we celebrate 21 years of the Festival, Brown

Recycling is marking their 100-year anniversary - a fantastic achievement and a testament to their longevity, expertise and commitment to their industry.

We are hugely grateful not only for their continued sponsorship, but also for their invaluable role as our Sustainability Partner, helping us to reduce our environmental footprint and deliver a greener Festival year on year."

Mitch Brown, Co-Managing Director of Brown Recycling, added: "Stone Food & Drink Festival has always been a highlight in our calendar, but this year it is even more significant for us. As we celebrate 100 years in waste management, and with our roots firmly in Staffordshire, we're incredibly proud to be named Lead Sponsor for 2026.

As ever, our unique skip-seated booths will be available for guests to relax and enjoy the atmosphere, and this year there will be a couple of exciting new centenary edition booths to check out too.

I encourage everyone to do their bit to help keep the event clean, safe and tidy for fellow attendees by using our designated waste containers provided all around the festival. This ensures everyone has the best time possible and we do our utmost to leave the site exactly as we found it."

The 2026 Festival promises another vibrant celebration of food, drink and entertainment, bringing together top chefs, artisan producers, street food, live music and family-friendly experiences in the heart of Staffordshire. It will take place at Westbridge Park, Stone, from **Friday 8th to Sunday 10th May**.

To find out more about Brown Recycling and their services, visit: www.brownrecycling.co.uk

For Festival details and to book tickets, visit: www.stonefooddrink.org.uk

Oulton Abbey Care Home Open Day

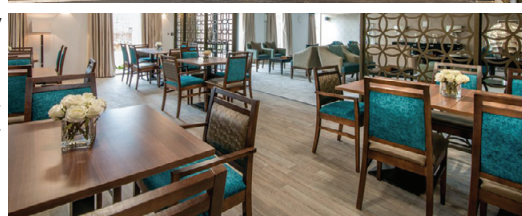
We warmly invite you to join us at Oulton Abbey Care Home for our Open Day on **Tuesday 16th June**.

Explore our welcoming home, meet our friendly team, and discover the high-quality care we provide in a comfortable and supportive environment.

Open Day Times are 10:00am - 11:30am and then 2:00pm - 3:30pm at Oulton Abbey Care Home, Kibblestone Road, Oulton, Stone, ST15 8UW

Whether you're considering care options for yourself or a loved one, we'd be delighted to show you around and answer any questions.

We look forward to welcoming you!





Adbaston May Concert

Adbaston Community Concert Society proudly present their May Concert, with Manchester Camerata Principals, playing works by Beethoven and Meredith.

It takes place on **Sunday May 3rd at 5.30 pm** at St Michael & All Angels Church, Adbaston, ST20 0QE.

With the support of The Harding Trust, tickets are just £10 at the door or you can pre book in advance (recommended) via Pam Trafford on 01785 280373 or email trafford.pam@gmail.com For any more extra information please visit www.adbastonccs.org.uk



Collage Café

In the April session we read through the 23rd Psalm – 'The Lord is my shepherd,' and selected verses to illustrate such as 'green pastures,' 'quiet waters' and 'the valley of the shadow of death.'

Further sessions will be on Thursday 21st May (a week later than usual) and 11th June from 10.00am to 12.00 noon at Stone Library.

All materials are provided free of charge and refreshments are available. For further information please contact Jill on 07491 311832.



Capula Expands Its Staffordshire Presence With New Office And Production Facility

Capula is reinforcing its long-term commitment to Stone with the opening of a new office and production facility at Walton Industrial Estate, representing a significant investment in the region and a key milestone in the company's continued growth.

With over 50 years' experience, Capula is committed to helping critical national infrastructure clients across the energy, nuclear and industrial sector to deliver and support low carbon and sustainable solutions. Part of Dalkia UK, Capula is one of the UK's leading technical and energy services providers, at the forefront of delivering net zero solutions.

Located close to Capula's headquarters at Orion House, the new facility provides a major increase in both office and production capacity, adding around 30,000 square foot and 60% more operational space. This expansion supports Capula's strategic ambition to provide modern, flexible and collaborative environments that meet the evolving needs of its teams, clients and project portfolio.

manufacturing and operational excellence: "Investing in this new facility is testament to our commitment to providing modern and collaborative environments for our employees and clients.

These investments help us better support our talented team and create greater opportunities in the Staffordshire region."

The new facility, designed for growth,



innovation and enhanced delivery, will strengthen Capula's operational capability.

The new facility forms part of Capula's ongoing programme of investment in its people, facilities and technology – ensuring the business continues to deliver high quality, safety critical solutions for the UK's critical national infrastructure.

Steve Tellwright, People and Quality Director, added: "The opening of our new facility is another exciting milestone in Capula's growth.

This facility will allow us to scale our production, enhance collaboration and continue investing in the region as we build for the future."

Teams will begin transitioning into the space shortly as part of Capula's phased accommodation plan.



Simon Coombs, Managing Director, highlighted the importance of investing in high-quality workplaces to enable sustainable growth whilst supporting



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Crochet Classes In Eccleshall

Every month, beginners join one of our classes at Eagle House to learn to crochet. Many then move on to our Improvers classes at Eccleshall Library when they choose their own project and receive assistance from Julie, the tutor.

The April Improvers class was completely full, and we were crocheting flowers, scarves, bags, blankets and toys. Some people were quite new to crochet whilst others had been coming to our classes for over two years now.

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

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

Improvers classes are on the second Friday of the month from 12.30pm to 3.30pm. Very occasionally we crochet & chat (and help each other) without a tutor.

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



Rev'd Rob greets Councillor Jason Metters, Town Mayor of Stone

Churches Together

On the 4th of April, St Michael & St Wulfad's and St Saviour's took part in a Churches Together in Stone Easter outreach event along with 4 other churches from Stone and Yarnfield.

We had a stall on the Easter Market where children could enjoy Easter crafts, an Easter themed Photo Booth and families were given a Real Easter egg containing the story of Easter.

There were 210 eggs to give out and all of them were given away to families by the end of the event. To ensure inclusivity, there were also allergen safe eggs to give away with a printed sheet explaining the religious significance of Easter and some Easter themed puzzles on.

The feedback received on the stall and afterwards was very positive and it was lovely to see so many people interacting with the Churches Together stall. Thanks to all those who volunteered to staff the stall.



Heritage Lottery Activities Underway At All Saints' Church Sandon

All Saints' Church Sandon have been very busy with a number of events held over the last few months as part of their National Lottery Heritage Fund Project. The church will reopen fully in June but in the meantime there is still plenty going on.

In February, they held a local history event "Down Memory Lane", to record people's memories of the church and the local area. Visitors to the event were asked if they would participate in an interview to record their memories of the church such as weddings, christenings and general memories of Sandon's past. Clips of the interviews will be used to form an exhibition at All Saints' Church.



In March, the church welcomed professional conservators to speak about the conservation project currently underway.

Three talks were held at the church over the morning, with the conservators discussing the painstaking process of cleaning and conserving the important historic features.

Centuries of dirt and dust had collected on the beeswax varnish which had to be removed carefully by hand, revealing true colours and details beneath.

Also in March, work was underway in the church grounds to plant a new hedge as part of the biodiversity plan for the churchyard.

Volunteers from Oak Tree Farm did amazing work to help plant 120 whips that will eventually form the new hedge. As part of the Biodiversity plan for the grounds, the church will hold a Bioblitz day with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust from 10 till 12 on 26th May, which will be full of nature based activities including trails, crafts, bug hunts and nature spotting.



There will be lots of opportunities for music lovers as well, with a **Midsummer Concert by the Cantiamo Chamber Choir on the 20th June, a Concert with the Heath Chorus and Uttoxeter Town Band on 30th June and the Stafford Military Wives Choir performing on the 12th September**, not forgetting lunchtime recitals at the **Time Travellers event on 1st August and Heritage Open Day on the 20th September!**

We are now taking bookings for groups to have a tour of the church and we plan to open on Sunday afternoons from June for people to drop in.

Please see our website at www.sandonallsaints.com for further details of all our events.



Stone Probus Family & Friends Luncheon

Stone and District Probus held their Family and Friends Luncheon at Trentham Golf Club on Tuesday April 14th.

The speaker was Caroline Speirs from Trentham and her talk was 'My Mum flew Spitfires'.

Caroline's intention was to raise awareness of the 'ATA' (Air Transport Auxiliary), a little-known civilian group which operated during World War 2. The fliers were mainly older or disabled former pilots but 10% ie.167 were women who were recruited and trained to fly unarmed planes with no working radios from the factory or repair facility to operational airfields.

Caroline only discovered the complete details of her mother's wartime activities when she discovered a treasure-trove of information whilst clearing her mother's

loft in 2022.

A film produced by Ray Johnson using this information telling her mother's war time story was shown to members. This film also included original footage taken at Meir aerodrome. The audience left the event with a much greater awareness of the purpose and endeavour behind this largely unknown group of WW2 heroes.

The next Club meeting will be at The Upper House Barlaston on Monday 11th May, the after-lunch speaker will be Judith Hubble on 'The life and times of Patrick Lichfield'.

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

From Martin Robinson

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Quakers in Staffordshire

Stone Quakers meet each Sunday in Stone Station Community Centre at 10.45am.

Not having their own Meeting House with a sign outside probably means that many people in Stone do not realise that Quakers are active here.

In fact many people may not have learnt much about Quakers except for the fact that they are strongly for Peace and oppose all sorts of warfare, surely quite topical at the moment. Officially they are called the Religious Society of Friends, and members are called Friends.

Elsewhere in Staffordshire there are historic meeting houses in Stafford, Uttoxeter and Leek. The oldest one is at Leek, and their building dates back to 1694 (see photos). In fact, it is not far from the site of the Big Mill in Leek that was recently destroyed by fire.

There are currently seven local meetings in Staffordshire, and each one hosts in turn a meeting for all Staffordshire Quakers once a year.

In April, this "Area Meeting" was held at Leek, and some Friends from Stone joined with others to discuss future events.



Leek Meeting House has a history nearly back to the founding of Quakerism by George Fox in 1652. Fox had rebelled against the ways of the Established Church, and early Quakers were seen as rebellious and often persecuted for their beliefs.

In the late nineteenth century the Leek meeting faded away and the building was taken over in 1896 and used as the Leek Labour Church until 1930. This was another group who rebelled against the formality of church services. Despite being a bit radical they gained the support of the Duchess of Sutherland, of Trentham Hall.

New attenders at Sunday meetings in Stone are always welcome.

Magical Musical Moments at Sandon Hall

The Heath Chorus accompanied, by Uttoxeter Town Band, present Magical Musical Moments, In aid of Time for Tea Fund.

It takes place on **Tuesday 30th June 7.30pm**, at Sandon Hall, Lichfield Rd, Sandon.

Tickets, including Canapés are priced at just £15. There will be a Pay Bar, though please arrive early for Interval Drinks. No drinks are allowed in the Concert Hall.

For more information visit www.sandonallsaints.com



Project Hail Mary

Director: Phil Lord & Christopher Miller
Starring: Ryan Gosling

A rare and refreshing entry in modern sci-fi, Project Hail Mary captures a sense of wonder the genre often forgets.

Blending big ideas with genuine heart, it's ambitious and visually spectacular. Not quite flawless, but undeniably entertaining, it proves thoughtful, big-budget science fiction still has plenty of life left.

Rating: **JJ Rating 3/5**

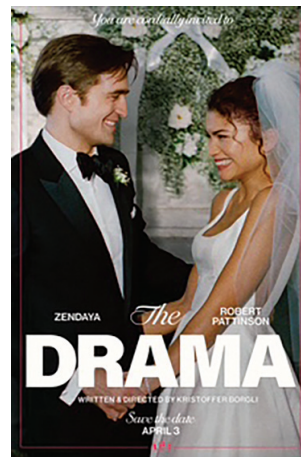
Hoppers

Director: Daniel Chong
Starring: Piper Curda & Jon Hamm

It may never reach the heights of Pixar classics like The Incredibles or WALL-E, but Hoppers is still good fun.

With wholesome character dynamics and surprisingly mature environmental messaging, it delivers heart and emotion in a way that feels true to Pixar's storytelling spirit and charm.

JJ Rating 3/5



The Drama

Director: Kristoffer Borgli
Starring: Robert Pattinson & Zendaya

The Drama absolutely lives up to the hype, delivering a visceral, skin-crawling experience that lingers long after.

Driven by two excellent performances, Robert Pattinson proves his chameleon-like brilliance once again, while Zendaya shines when given material worthy of her talent, making this unsettling film gripping throughout.

JJ Rating 4/5

Lots Of Thanks For Stone Carnival Team

Dear Gazette,

I would like to commend the Stone Carnival team. The 20 plus team are dedicated volunteers, that have all given so much time over this last year to create a bigger and better event than last year. We learned from mistakes, and have added incredible new team members, and some excellent new events. They really all do need appreciation and applause, especially Alex Heaton (Chair) and Tim Joyce, plus all of the team.

Thanks go to all the local businesses that have supported us with advertising in the programme, and with sponsoring this year events. You have all been amazing, and I personally would like to thank you all. Thanks too go to the recent Mayors, and Sir Gavin for their support this year.

St Dominic's Venue have given Stone Carnival free access/route to entertain visitors to the Elvis Evening (with Mark Clay), the Treasure Hunt, Quiz Night (Stone Lions), and an Art Exhibition all week in their amazing venue. All need a massive **THANK YOU!**

**From Michele Mcleod
Stone Carnival Team**

Stone Carnival takes place **30th May to 7th June**, for all event details visit <https://www.stonecarnival.org>

StairBox and Wooden Windows Donate £4,000 to Support Vandalised Grassroots Football Club

StairBox, alongside Wooden Windows, is proud to announce a £4,000 donation to support the recovery of Stone Town Football Club following a recent act of vandalism that caused significant damage to the club's facilities.

Representatives Mark Winter, operations director and Craig Dagg, facilities manager formally presented the donation to Bill Bratt, a dedicated volunteer and chairman at the club. The contribution will help cover funds required to repair the damage, which has been estimated at £12,000.

The vandalism has had a serious impact on the much-valued community club, which plays a vital role in providing opportunities for grassroots football and local engagement. StairBox and Wooden Windows were moved to act after learning about the incident and the club's urgent appeal for support.

"Grassroots organisations like Stone Town Football Club are the backbone of local communities," said Mark Winter. "We are delighted to be able to support Bill and the team during this challenging time and help them get back on their feet as quickly as possible."

Over the coming weeks, Bill and a team of committed volunteers will be working



L-R - Mark Winter, operations director StairBox & Wooden Windows, Bill Bratt chairman Stone Football Club, Craig Dagg, facilities manager StairBox & Wooden Windows

hard to restore the clubhouse and facilities. StairBox has confirmed it will remain in close contact with the club, sharing updates on the progress and celebrating the eventual completion of the repairs.

The decision to support the club follows media coverage of the incident, which highlighted the scale of the damage and the community's call for assistance.

This initiative forms part of StairBox's ongoing "Stepping Up in the Community" programme, which encourages local organisations and charities to apply for support and sponsorship.

Community groups seeking assistance are invited to submit requests via email at: hello@stairbox.com.

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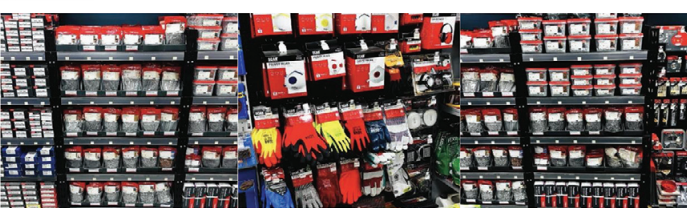
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Kaspars Mikužis - Piano

Newport Music Club Welcomes Multiple Prize Winner Kaspars Mikužis

Newport Music Club is delighted to welcome Kaspars Mikužis, a young Lithuanian pianist celebrated for his artistry and versatility, on **Saturday, May 9, 7pm**, at Cosy Hall, Water Lane, Newport TF10 7LD.

This concert is kindly supported by the Countess of Munster Trust.

Kaspars has performed at some of Europe's renowned venues such as the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Lithuanian Presidential Palace as well as the Eudon Choi show during London Fashion Week 2023.

Named **'Rising Star 2025'** by Classic FM, Kaspars gave his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall in December 2024 and won the Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) auditions in May 2025. He appeared with John Wilson and the Royal Academy of Music Symphony Orchestra as a winner of the concerto auditions at Royal Academy of Music and since 2024 he has been a scholar of the Imogen Cooper Music Trust, and a recital scheme artist with the Countess of Munster Musical Trust. He has released his debut CD, with performances televised on Mezzo TV and broadcast on Lithuanian national TV, radio, and France's Radio Classique.

In 2023, Kaspars made his debut with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra and later that year was invited to perform for the Lithuanian and Polish presidents on Lithuanian Statehood Day at the Presidential Palace. In recognition of his representation of Lithuania on the international stage, Kaspars was honoured with a letter of gratitude from the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Kaspars has performed multiple times at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva and at the EMMA for Peace World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates concert in Warsaw. Other notable appearances include performances at the Purcell Room at the South Bank Centre in London, and the season-opening concert of the Kharkiv Philharmonic Hall with the Kharkiv Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under conductor Yuri Yanko.

A multiple prize-winner, Kaspars is the winner of the Concerto auditions and Duo and Chamber Music Competitions at the Royal Academy of Music, where he is currently pursuing his postgraduate studies with Professor Christopher Elton.

The programme includes works by Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Ravel and Godowsky. Do join us for what promises to be an exciting evening of music!

Tickets: Adults £15.00; Children/Students £2.00; payable on the door by cash.

To reserve tickets in advance, please contact the Newport Music Club at chairman@newportmusicclub.org or phone 07726 959233.

Visit www.newportmusicclub.org for more information.

Our next concert is guitarist Tohi Harada on Saturday, October 10 at 7pm.



Staffordshire Day Celebration Comes to Stafford Town Centre this Bank Holiday

Staffordshire Day will be officially marked on Friday 1st May, however the main public celebration in the county town of Stafford **taking place on 4th May Bank Holiday Monday** to allow more families and visitors to attend.

The event will be held in Stafford town centre and Market Square between 11 am and 3pm, bringing together street food traders, community stalls, live entertainment, displays and activities throughout the day. There will be a real mix on offer, giving people the chance to enjoy the day at their own pace, whether that is browsing stalls, watching performances or simply spending time in the town centre.

Families are well catered for, with a FREE inflatable play park for children, candy floss, sweets and ice cream van, along with Staffordshire Day wristbands and other giveaways available on the day.

We are pleased to confirm that the Lord-Lieutenant for Staffordshire, Professor Elizabeth Barnes, will officially open the event. Visitors are encouraged to make sure you're there in time to see the official opening.

Entertainment throughout the day will include performances and appearances from Dappa Dance, Stafford Morris, The Pole Station, Magic Voices, and music from Trax DJ Mark. Kat K from Vibe 1 Radio will be hosting the event, keeping the day running and introducing performances.

There will also be a wide range of stalls, including everything from pies, cakes, handmade items and samosas; to clothing, charity stands with tombola's and games, businesses promoting their

services including Emery's & Sons bringing along their vintage silver shadow Rolls Royce. Food vendors will be available to eat on site or takeaway, with choices from delicious Greek, Caribbean, burgers, hot dogs, coffee van and full bar, if you fancy a tipple!

Bring along your tables and chairs and make the day into a mini festival.

Lorraine Conkey, Director of Staffordshire Cultural Events CIC / LR Partnership Events, who is organising the event said: "Staffordshire Day is about bringing people together and making the most of our county town."

We've put together a full day that gives people plenty to see and do, whether they're coming in with family, meeting friends or just calling by while they're in town.

It is also a great opportunity for local groups, businesses and organisations to be part of something positive and visible right in the heart of Stafford, please support the local shops, pubs and cafe's while you are in the town centre"

The event is delivered in association with Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council, and local radio station Vibe 1 with sponsorship from Carthy Accountants.

This celebration recognises Staffordshire Day while also highlighting Stafford's role as the county town. It provides a strong platform for local organisations, traders and community groups to showcase what they do and engage directly with the public.

For up to date details go to Facebook page; LR Partnership Events / Staffordshire Cultural Events CIC

Villages Near Stone To Get Improved Bus Services

Bus users in villages near Stone will benefit from improved connectivity with enhanced services from this week.

New contracts have been awarded for services to Yarnfield, Swynnerton, Cold Meece, Norton, Walton and Aston-by-Stone. Operated by D&G Buses, it means new and enhanced connections.

Route 102 will now run directly from Stone to Yarnfield hourly, with buses then returning to Stone via Swynnerton

and Cold Meece or Norton Bridge and Walton alternately. Additional route 102A will see journeys run between Stone and Walton to provide an hourly frequency.

A new service, Route A, will run between Stone and Aston Lodge via Lichfield Road providing five return trips six days a week to an area of Stone that lost its service several years ago.



Stone in the After Hours

Along Stone High Street, the day moves through supermarkets, charity shops, barber shops, cafés, and a few bars. It is a town centre defined by routine circulation rather than destination, where movement is determined by necessity and familiarity.

As evening approaches, that functional rhythm begins to loosen. The environment does not change, but its use does. What was earlier a space of order becomes a space of desire. People remain longer, move more slowly, and occupy the same places with less intention.

Urban theorists have often described this kind of shift as a transition from “instrumental space” to “social space”, where the same physical setting supports different forms of behaviour depending on temporal conditions. Henri Lefebvre’s idea that space is not fixed but “produced through use” becomes visible in small towns like Stone, where there are multiple overlapping versions of itself depending on the time.

This is also visible in how people appear within it.

The same individuals who pass through during the day return later with a different tempo. Movement is slower, interaction is more frequent, and presence is less structured by task. It is not that the population changes, but that the conditions shaping behaviour change. What is revealed is not a different town, but a different mode of occupation.

One way this is often expressed is in how people describe the evening shift in practical terms.

A man, Gareth, when asked why he still comes into town in the evening, put it simply. “It’s just easier to talk to people,” he says. “During the day, everyone’s on their way somewhere. At night, you actually stop.”

This is a breakdown in the daytime perception of busyness. A rest from being in your own head. A chance to open yourself to the wonders of the unknown, the spontaneity of the night. A safe place and good company, alongside the lack of all future daytime commitments, provide a time like no other on the most spiritual of levels.

This reconfiguration becomes more concentrated at Crown Wharf, recently named the Great British Pub of 2025 and selected as the overall winner from a national field. Judges described it as “both modern and comfortably familiar”, a venue shaped during the pandemic using reclaimed materials and designed around a traditional pub identity within a contemporary form.

In spatial terms, its significance lies in purpose. It acts as a point within the evening of Stone, concentrating activity once the high street begins to thin. People tend to arrive later, remain longer, and organise time less strictly. The result is a slower internal rhythm. Social interaction flourishes.

Its position adjacent to the Trent and Mersey Canal reinforces this structure. The canal, part of a wider historic transport system, operates as a parallel layer to the high street. It draws people into slower motion; the canal offers activity without urgency and provides a counter-rhythm to the more clustered social space of Crown Wharf.

What emerges is not a transformation of Stone into something different after hours, but a reorganisation of how its existing spaces are inhabited. The same geography supports multiple temporal logics. The daytime town is procedural and directional; the evening town is spatially continuous and socially open.

Between those states, Stone remains physically unchanged, but experientially distinct, a town that contains more than one version of itself within the same streets.

By Charlie Key

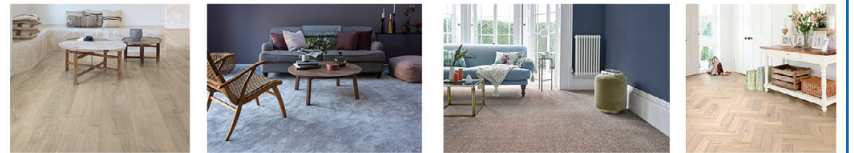


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Hilderstone Care Home Managing Director Celebrates 20 Year Anniversary

Staff and residents at Hilderstone Hall Care Home in Stone are congratulating their brilliant Managing Director, Alison Donaldson, on her 20 year anniversary with Barchester Healthcare.

Alison had a huge surprise on the 18th March when Barchester's COO, Natasha Lazovic, presented her with her 20 years' long service award and a gorgeous cake at a champagne reception in her honour.

Managing Director of Barchester's North West & Midlands Division, Alison joined Barchester in January 2006 as General Manager of Newlands Care Centre in Workington, Cumbria. She was asked to move to Lanercost care home in Carlisle and from there she was promoted to Senior General Manager, then Regional Director, before she was made Senior Regional Director, and now as MD she is in charge of 68 care homes across the North West of England and stretching down into the Midlands.

Originally from Workington, Alison started her career in care at the West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven, Cumbria in the late 80's and became an RGN.

As Alison's career in nursing progressed, she then studied for her Advanced Nurse Practitioner degree whilst working as a General Manager for Anchor Housing, she finished the three year programme just after she joined Barchester.

Commenting on her 20 years with the business, Alison told the Gazette: "I can't quite believe I have been with Barchester for 20 years! It really doesn't feel that long at all but I know that it is because of the culture of the business, the invaluable support from the knowledge and

experience of colleagues and the fact that we always put our residents first, that I've stayed for this length of time.

We always provide the best possible care to our wonderful residents and the best training to our staff. Helping our Regional Directors and General Managers to run our homes to the best possible standard is what motivates me each and every day.

I am proud to be a nurse, I absolutely love what I do and it is a privilege to work alongside my fantastic teams."

Natasha Lazovic added: "I am incredibly proud of Alison's achievements and her dedication to the business, she is always striving to improve her homes and to ensure her residents continue to receive the best possible care.

She is an outstanding nurse, always putting her residents first and she sets an excellent example to her teams.

Thank you for the last 20 years Alison, and here's to many more!"



CROWN WHARF THEATRE PRESENTS

THE HIT COMEDY

JACK ABSOLUTE FLIES AGAIN

FRI 6TH - SAT 14TH NOVEMBER 2026

A RARE BLAST OF SUNSHINE - DAILY MAIL
AN ABSOLUTE RIOT - DAILY EXPRESS

Crown Wharf Theatre Takes to the Skies

Our second in-house production is here, and it promises love, laughter and a touch of wartime chaos.

We had no idea what to expect when we first opened our doors with Shakespeare in Love back in November 2024, but what followed was a hugely successful sell-out run bringing the community together to celebrate Stone's brand new theatre.

Since then, the theatre has gone from strength to strength bringing you a wide variety of events and of course showcasing local talent.

So, it's with real excitement, that we're delighted to announce our second in-house production; **Jack Absolute Flies Again**, a warm and witty comedy by Richard Bean (*One Man Two Guvnors*) and Oliver Chris, originally co-produced by the National Theatre.

The year is 1940. The Battle of Britain is raging. At a makeshift RAF base in Sussex, dashing pilot Jack Absolute has returned from battle, only to discover that his old flame, Lydia Languish has arrived as part of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. What follows is a riot of mistaken identities, romantic rivalries, and the kind of sharp British humour that soars as high as the Hurricanes and Spitfires themselves.

Based on Sheridan's classic *The Rivals*, this is a blend of farce, wit and tender romance and we think it's exactly the kind of show our audiences will enjoy.

At Crown Wharf Theatre, we believe in the power of storytelling to unite, uplift and entertain. *Jack Absolute Flies Again* is a comedy that reminds us to laugh, love and be brave, even when the world is upside down. And right now, we think we could all do with a little of that.

Jack Absolute Flies Again

Friday 6th – Saturday 14th November 2026

£15-£18 (Contains strong language)

Tickets: crownwharftheatre.co.uk

Vintage Football Programmes 'Score' at Auction

Vintage football programmes proved a big hit with collectors when they went under the hammer in the recent Specialist Collectors Auction at Staffordshire auction house Cuttlestones.

Featuring a carefully curated selection of pre-war and post-war matchday programmes, the football memorabilia section attracted strong interest from bidders both in the room and online – with several historic examples achieving impressive prices.

Leading the lineup was Lot 109 – a 1921 FA Cup Final programme for the match between Tottenham Hotspur and Wolverhampton Wanderers, played at Stamford Bridge on 23rd April 1921. The programme, made even more desirable thanks to being autographed by the entire Tottenham Hotspur team along with the manager, sold for an impressive £1,400.

Another standout lot was a programme from arguably football's most famous match – the 1966 World Cup Final between England and West Germany. Rich in historical associations, the lot included signatures from manager Alf Ramsey and ten of the England players who featured in the final, alongside a signed photograph and House of Lords letter from then Prime Minister Harold Wilson, as well as a signed image of legendary commentator Kenneth Wolstenholme. It sold for £750.

Early league football was also well represented in the sale. A West Bromwich Albion v Oldham Athletic programme from the 1921/22 season sold for £170, while a Sunderland v Wolverhampton Wanderers programme from the 1936/37 season achieved £160, further demonstrating the enduring appeal of early matchday memorabilia among collectors.

Cuttlestones is now inviting consignments for future specialist and antiques sales. For a free, no obligation valuation, email valuations@cuttlestones.co.uk, send images via WhatsApp to 07949 603872, or call 01785 714905 to make an appointment.



Staffordshire farm goes **BIG** for 2026 Tulip Festival Launch

A spectacular sea of colour is set to return to Staffordshire this spring as Lower Drayton Farm announces the launch of its expanded Tulip Festival, which opened on Friday 3 April.

Following a successful trial event last year, the family-run farm attraction near Penkridge has gone all out for 2026 - planting over 250,000 tulip bulbs across five acres, with more than 50 different varieties carefully selected to bloom in waves throughout the festival.



Visitors can expect vibrant displays, picture-perfect spring scenes and a relaxed countryside setting, making it an ideal day out for families, couples and flower lovers from across Staffordshire and the West Midlands. The event is also dog friendly throughout, so four-legged friends are welcome to enjoy the tulip fields too.

Guests can also make the most of their visit with delicious refreshments and cream teas available from the Blossom & Bloom Tea Room, offering the perfect spot to relax and soak up the surroundings.

Farmer Richard Bower told the Gazette: "We were blown away by the response to our tulips last year, so we've gone even bigger for 2026. It's hugely exciting to welcome both new and returning visitors to the farm to experience the beauty of nature in full bloom."

For us, it's all about creating special moments and making memories - whether that's families enjoying time together, couples taking in the views, or simply giving people a chance to slow down and enjoy something truly seasonal."

New for this year are a series of twilight opening sessions, where guests can enjoy the tulip fields into the evening with a relaxed atmosphere and licensed bar on site - perfect for soaking up golden hour views.

The Tulip Festival, which opened on Friday 3 April, will run on weekends and selected midweek dates **through to Monday 6 May**, opening hours are typically 11am-3pm.

Tickets are available online from £11 per person, with visitors encouraged to book in advance to save on gate prices. For full details, opening dates and to book, visit: www.tulipsatthefarm.co.uk

www.stonechoral.org.uk

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Gazette Motoring

The Suzuki S-Cross Mild Hybrid Ultra Allgrip Manual

By Syd Taylor

It's difficult to find anything approaching a cross word when appraising the S Cross because this superb 'crossover' is so sophisticated that it tends to induce a rhapsodic mood. I liked it immediately.

I did question the labelling though. Surely 'crossover' implies compromise, I thought. A better label should be found. For seldom have motoring developments been so effectively wrapped into one package of progress. This Suzuki represents today's motoring at its best, doing everything asked of it superbly - so no 'cross words' here.



There's no puzzle as to why it leads its sector. It is such a pleasant, well made vehicle to drive and you will probably fall for the charming looks. There's a 'chumminess' to it - yet with classiness too. And its capabilities are suggested by a more muscular look. The earlier S.Cross looked rather 'anonymous'. Now upgraded, it displays a definite presence on the road.

Beneath all this subjective delight lie facts. There are two equipment grades: Motion and Ultra. The Ultra All Grip tested here has great comfort features plus the latest electronic connectivity - and all safety features you could wish for too. Unfortunately, there's one feature I wish I could be without...forever. (Sadly, on most new cars there's that infernal lane departure intervention that tugs at the steering wheel at the sight of a white line. One day a terrorist will paint a squiggly white line leading to a cliff - and then where will health and safety be?)



There's useful traffic sign recognition, blind spot monitoring and a really brilliant 360 degree camera that gives you super confidence when manoeuvring. If you bump one of these you really are inept and probably do need that lane departure intervention after all. After my rant I consoled myself with Toblerone under the panoramic sunroof which brightened my day.

Power is by a 1.4, 4 cylinder petrol engine that is a gem. It works together with a lithium battery and a 48 volt electric system. This Suzuki Mild Hybrid System is one of the best, giving a smooth and torquey power delivery. All this is linked to a six speed manual gearbox - so good, in fact, that I reconsidered my commitment to automatics. Naturally these days there is a planet saving stop start system - but it's one step ahead of the noisy grinding systems used by other manufacturers. Suzuki's system uses a belt drive instead of gears and you stop and start again in near silence. You hardly know the engine



has stopped and you don't hear it start again - so much more relaxing than the harshness of noisy coughing rivals.

The interior is very comfortable. Hard wearing and functional materials are such that they will obviously stand the rigours of family use. A warm and pleasant place to be, it has been constructed without resorting to the use of glitzy and fluffy delicate materials. This is a car built to survive.



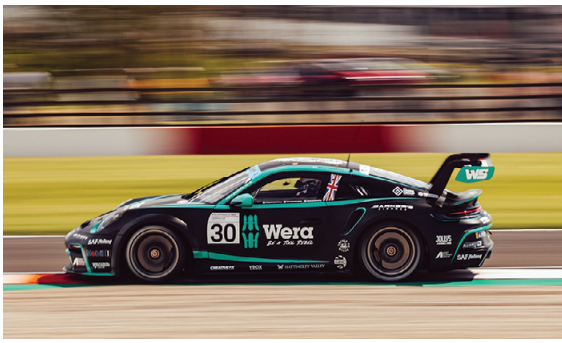
For safety, there are enough airbags to refloat the Titanic and there's enough space to carry more than you will really ever need to carry. Boot space is adequate and it has a floor that can be set at different heights. There is little need for options because there's an abundance of the best gear on the Ultra - not least of which are the leather seats. And the S-Cross Ultra price? Set at a level guaranteed to maintain that approving grin on the face of The Mona Lisa. Just over £28,299 is exceptional value.

Did I mention 4wd technology? It's so advanced that Isaac Newton would struggle to comprehend how it works but he would certainly award an apple to the engineer behind the delightful driving experience. It's quite capable off-road - so unless you go to extremes, you are unlikely to get stuck

Mediating the gap between engine and wheels are transmission systems offering yet more choice. You can go 'auto' but the manual version tested here with six carefully chosen ratios, provides performance without shooting you in the wallet at the pumps (*It will easily return more than 50 mpg overall.*) Gear ratios have been particularly well matched to the power characteristics, allowing adequately lively acceleration and easy cruising in sixth.

On the highways and byways it handles beautifully, rides very well and goes fast enough (near 125mph I'm told) rewarding driver and passengers with progress, not of the snobbish kind but of the democratic kind. It's an all-round proper motor for today.

'Does it do absolutely everything wonderfully?' I hear you ask. Possibly not. But what it does do is turn every drive into a safari of serenity - a regal progress which makes aspiration redundant. When driving the new Suzuki S-Cross you are certain of one thing. You have already arrived.



Will Launches 2026 Season With Stunning Donington Display

Will Jenkins is early championship leader in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB after scoring a brilliant pole position and class victory across the opening round of the 2026 season at Donington Park on the weekend 11-12 April.

Jenkins got his second season in the Carrera Cup GB off to a superb start at his 'home' circuit of Donington Park, with electrifying pace in qualifying netting him his first overall pole position, before he fought through to a breakthrough PRO class victory in race two.

Returning to the scene of his Carrera Cup GB debut last year, the Wera Alliance Race Academy driver got the season opener off to a great start in free practice on Thursday. Setting the pace in the opening session, he eventually ended the day second quickest to set himself up for qualifying.

The Stone-based talent went on to excel on Saturday, charging to the top of the timesheets in his Team Parker Racing Porsche 911 GT3 Cup car. His best effort of 1m 04.801s around the National layout secured him pole position for the first of the two races on Sunday, with his lap impressively being two tenths of a second faster than anyone else.



Jenkins produced a great start to convert pole into the race lead heading into an early safety car period. Perfectly executing the race restart to maintain his advantage, he led a large portion of the race in front of the live ITV4 television cameras before unfortunately slipping back to second late on.

Comfortably holding second place to the chequered flag to start his season on the podium, the 21-year-old would therefore start fourth on the partially-reverse grid for race two. A great start saw him immediately grab a place into Redgate for the first time, moving him up to third.

Jenkins' forward momentum continued at the same corner next time round, with a great switchback move securing him second overall and crucially the PRO class lead. With the overall leader not making any mistakes, he maintained a clear gap to those behind to earn his maiden PRO victory.

That result means that Jenkins holds a one-point advantage heading into the next round at Brands Hatch in three weeks' time (09-10 May). He does so thanks to the crucial support of his loyal personal partners Asset Alliance Group, The Reefer Trailer Centre, Hopkins Race Transporters, Barkers Finance, SAF Holland, The Green Group and WS Transportation.

Will said: "What a way to start the season! Saturday was perfect getting my first overall pole position, and while it was a shame to miss out on the win in race one, I honestly couldn't have asked for anything more from the opening round and I'm delighted with how it's gone.

Team Parker Racing gave me a fantastic car from the off and I was so happy I could make the most of it in qualifying. To lead from the front of the field in race one was a great feeling and I gave it everything I could to hold on to the win, but it just slipped away from me.

Starting fourth on the reverse grid for race two, I knew I needed to try and move forward quickly. I really enjoyed the couple of moves I made, and once I was into the class lead, my job was to hold that and the maximum points. Thank you to everyone involved in making this possible, to be Porsche Carrera Cup GB championship leader is incredible and I can't wait for Brands Hatch next."

The images included are from Porsche GB






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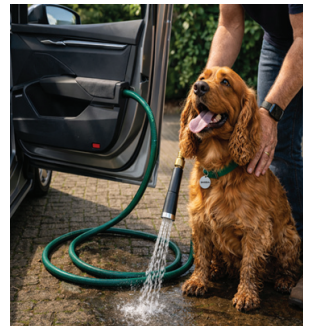
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Škoda Reveals New Hound Hose Accessory For Cleaning Mucky Dogs

Škoda is expanding its Simply Clever range with an innovative new power washing system – Hound Hose. The new accessory is designed to clean the paws of dirty dogs before getting back in the car after long walks, keeping customers' beloved canines and cars squeaky clean.

Available across the model range, the Hound Hose features a compact hose integrated into the driver's door to pamper the paws of dirty doggies and preserve the cleanliness of both car and canine. Using a bespoke reservoir situated in the door and a pull-out pressurised hose, the Hound Hose features multiple spray settings:

- Škoda Spritz – quick-wash function for lightly muddy escapades



- Matted in mud – for dogs that made the most of every puddle on the walk
- I love you, but you're not getting in my brand-new Škoda when you are this muddy – strongest setting to get the dirtiest of dogs perfectly pampered.

Each of the three settings ensures that the muddiest of mischief-making mutts are suitably cleaned after every walk – from woof-and-tumble times in puddles to long runs in the forest.

For customers with range-topping L&K models, a heating element and shampoo makes every hose-down an experience of pure pedigree elegance and luxury. For those with a vRS and the most dynamic doggies, a more powerful turbo charged water pump provides a deeper clean to freshen every fur follicle with the speed expected of a Škoda performance product.

The Škoda Hound Hose is set to revolutionise dog mobility, supplying an effective and thorough clean for every canine that regally rides in its owner's Škoda. With the system, muddy pups will no longer leave seats looking ruff, and no carpets a-paw-lingly unclean.

Pawla Fetchmore, Škoda UK, said: "Škoda is barking mad about dogs, and we know first-hand that the majority of dog owners - from those that own the tiniest chihuahuas to the greatest of Danes - have, at least once, rolled their eyes and sighed at the sight of dirty paw prints squelched into the carpet of a new car. With the Hound Hose, Škoda has put both dog and owner first, adding this ingenious feature to the already essential line-up of Simply Clever features."

Saving Christ Church (Stone) And Celebrating It's 150th Anniversary

By Philip Leason MBE

A Gazette reader had recently visited Christ Church in Stone and was interested in a stone at the front saying that the church had been unpinned in 1951 and wondered what it meant. I also received another enquiry about Christ Church and so I thought I would put them both together.

In the late 1940's it was discovered that the west end, including the main entrance, had been affected by subsidence and was gradually moving away from the main body of the church with the result that the apex of the west wall was five inches out of line, and the front of the church was actually leaning forward.

A restoration appeal was launched which was supported by the Bishop of Lichfield Edward Sydney Woods. Writing on 8th October, 1949 he states;

"I am very pleased to command and give my support to the appeal which is being made for Christ Church Restoration Fund. It is quite clear from the report if the architect, that the work of restoration cannot be delayed and I trust that there will be many within the parish and in a wider area who will courageously face this challenge and give generously to the restoration fund which has now been launched. There are many calls which are made upon the faithful within the church but this demand, which is related to the maintenance of the church in which parochial worship is centered, must it seems to me be given priority."

The Vicar, Rev. Harold Clew, L.Th. and the restoration committee worked diligently to raise the fund's and by August 1950 the £1,500, (the estimated amount to complete the work) had been raised and the work could commence. The money had been raised from generous donations from parishioners, grants and various fund raising events.

The first job was to clear out the foundations on the three sides of the affected area and then to underpin the walls with thirty small concrete 'stools.' These strongly reinforced 'stools' were each capable of supporting 130 tons

With the walls of the church resting on the stools, the gaps were then bricked up and concrete poured in via chute. Altogether 140 tons of concrete and 25 tons of cement were used to create entirely new foundations. It was believed that this method of supporting a building while a new foundation was laid had not been used in the Midlands before and raised a great deal of interest in the construction trade.

In addition to the foundation another important job was the laying of new concrete beams, across and lengthwise under the west end of the church, to take the weight of the main buttresses and pillars.



Rev Harold Glee L.Th, Chaplain to the Faroes Vicar of Christ Church 1940-57 who led the restoration appeal that "saved the church"

In addition to the cost of the beam itself. The ground under the main buttresses proved too soft and larger concrete piers were necessary of which one was at least 25 tons in weight.

The Rev. Glew ended his letter by stating *"When completed we shall have the satisfaction of knowing the church is secure for all time, as far as human skill can make it."*

The restoration work was eventually completed by the builders, Horace Poole Ltd, in 1951 with a special thanksgiving service and no doubt to much relief of the Rev Glew and the parishioners.



Christ Church, Stone the fountain stone was laid in 1838 and restored in 1950/51

A Time For Celebration

The second enquiry comes from a reader who remembers taking part in a parade from St. Michael's Church to Christ Church in the late 1980's but can't remember what for.

This was the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of Christ Church in 1838.

In the 19th century the only Protestant church in Stone was St. Michael's. When it was built in the 1750's (consecrated in 1758) one of the ways of paying for the church was the sale of the pews.



Mrs Melita Leigh, in the role of Viscountess St. Vincent rein acts the laying of the fountain stone in 1988



The stone by the main entrance to the church which aroused the readers interest

Owners had the exclusive use of the pew. This caused problems as the population in the town had started to grow and in many cases there were empty pews they could not be used.

Led by the Rev. Charles Simeon a conference was held at Meaford Hall with Viscount St. Vincent and the Rev. Francis Kitchin, a curate at St. Michael's and it was decided to take the necessary steps to form a new parish at the northern end of town.

The land for the new church was given by Earl Granville and the money for the building was raised by public subscription. All the seats in the church were free to use and it was to have the dedication Christ Church.

The foundation stone for the new church was laid on the 28th June, 1838. A bronze plaque on it reads:

"THE FIRST STONE of this CHURCH WAS LAID ON THE DAY HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, the 1st, WAS CROWNED, BEING THE 28th day of June 1838 by the RIGHT HON MARY ANNE, VISCOUNTESS ST. VINCENT"

I always think that it is interesting that the Queen is given her correct title "Queen Victoria the 1st" as on so many statues, plaques etc. Her Majesty is simply referred to as simply Queen Victoria..

A report in the Staffordshire Advertiser of 30th June, 1838 states:

"After divine service (at St. Michael's church) a procession was formed which extended a mile in length and marched forward to the Northern end of the town.

A band led all people of local importance, 400th Sunday school children and the Committee of the "New Church," as they accompanied Mary Anne, Dowager Viscountess of St. Vincent to the site where she was to lay the foundation stone of a new parish church"

This parade was re-enacted on the 28th June in 1988 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the church, and it is this that the reader was referring to.

A service led by the Rev. Bill Spray was conducted in St. Michael's church and then the congregation, including school children dressed in period costume walked to Christ Church where Mrs. Melita Leigh acting as Viscountess St. Vincent laid a commemorative stone. It was particularly appropriate for Mrs Leigh to play this role as she was the daughter of the Rev. Glew who did so much to save the church back in the 1950's

The anniversary was also commemorated with a flower festival in the church. Brownies, guides, cubs, scouts and venture scouts decorated the corner of the building and a musical touch was added by the choir.

The climbers and explorers children's groups adorned the windows, helped by the Flower Guild. The Mother's Union, Cornerstone group and Pathfinders club decorated the north east corner.

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

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

Philip Leason

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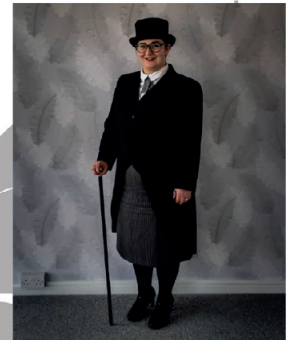
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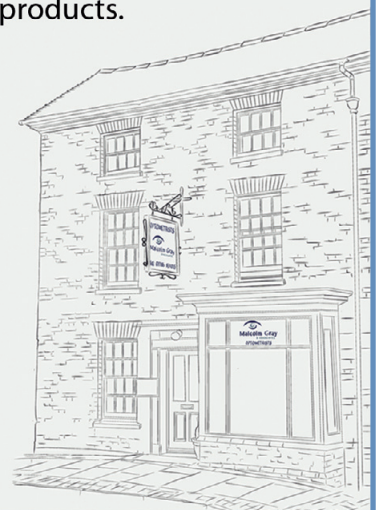


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Local Football Teams Throughout The Years

By Chris Copp of Staffordshire Archives & Heritage

This month's selection from the Staffordshire Past Track website features some of the football teams in the Stone and Eccleshall area. Bigger, longer, put possibly not better, the 23rd FIFA World Cup hoves into view this June and July with games being hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States. With 48 teams qualifying it is the largest tournament yet and a far cry from the first men's World Cup held in Uruguay in 1930. Then, only 13 teams participated with very few European sides and none of the Home Nations attending. This was partly due to the cost and difficulty of travelling to South America during the Great Depression.

Locally, football has been the most popular winter sport since the 1870s. As well as town and village sides, every factory had its own football team, as did many churches, schools and youth clubs, all participating in league and cup competitions in Staffordshire. Here are just a handful of them. We've listed the names where we have them but please do contact the Past Track team if you can fill in any gaps.

There are now over 52,000 photographs, documents, maps, paintings and other images relating to Staffordshire's history and heritage on the Staffordshire Past Track website www.staffspasttrack.org.uk and more are being added all the time by staff and volunteers at Staffordshire Archives & Heritage.

If you have any photographs you'd like to contribute or any information about the images already on the website please contact the team at: Staffordshire Archives & Heritage, Staffordshire History Centre, Eastgate Street, Stafford ST16 2LZ. Telephone: 01785 278379, email past.track@staffordshire.gov.uk. You can also keep up to date with what's new on the Staffordshire Past Track facebook page.



Stone Lotus Football Team at Stafford Rangers F.C. 1966
Stone Lotus football team at Marston Road, home of Stafford Rangers.

Back row (left to right): Andy Mayer, John Morris, Fred Heath, unknown, Charlie Elkin, Mickey Stubbs, unknown. Front row: unknown, Vic Hassell, Harold Tonkinson, Keith Buckley, Geoff Lloyd, unknown. (Mr J. Morris)



Football team, Eccleshall Secondary Modern School, 1951-52.
Football 1st XI at Eccleshall Secondary Modern School, Shaws' Lane, Eccleshall. The school building is now Eccleshall Community Centre. Standing back row, third from right is Michael Trevor. Photographer: Peter Rogers of Stafford. (Mr P. Trevor)



Croxton and Wetwood Football Teams, late 1950s

Back row (left to right): Denis Ward, J. Horton, S. Boulton, Michael Trevor, D. Keay, W. Parton, F. Parton, W. Pye, unknown, M. Wize, D. Lalley, J. Parton, N. Shelley, Geoff Williams.

Front row: D. Jones, J. Lawton, D. Younge, M. Horton, L. Simpson, G. Jones, L. Painter, unknown, N. Timmis. Croxton Football Club was founded in May 1953. Major J.A. Friend provided goalposts and some funds, and Mr W. Beardsmore of the Vernon Yonge Arms provided a room for club meetings. The first manager was Mr H. Baragwanath. (Mr P. Trevor)



Granville Youth Club Football Team, Stone, 1966.

Back row (left to right): Derek Hodgetts, John Booth, John Morris, Ken Finney, Dennis Banks, Bill Abbotts. Front row: Reuben Harvey, Mick Beswick, Barry Hood, John Land, Charlie Elkin. (Mr J. Morris)



Football team, Alleyn's High School, Stone, 1992

Back row (left to right): Rob Price, Neal Gardner, Peter Owen, Colin Leese (captain), Ben Williams, Keith Malkin, Dave Lipscomb, Richard Pratt. Front row: Matthew Rose, Chris Shenton, Ben Nield, Rob Steventon, Chris Plant, James Norman, Dan Bourne. Missing from the photograph are Richard Jones and Scott O'Brien who were playing for Port Vale and West Bromwich Albion at the time. This was a strong school team that during the four years at Walton Priory had won the regional cup three years out of four and had lost in the final in the other year. However, the team shown here was not the exact team and was hastily put together one dinner time in order for the photograph to be taken. (Staffordshire County Museum)





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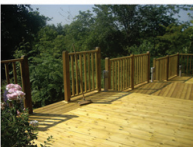
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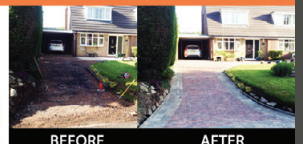
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