

THE STONE & ECCLESHALL Gazette

MARCH & APRIL 2024

Spencer The Jeweller

*Celebrating 20 Years Of
Craftmanship In Eccleshall*

See page 4 inside...

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By Philip Leason MBE

It's Festival that makes living in Stone & Eccleshall so special

Where does the time go? It seems to have flown by since the last issue.

Firstly, the bad news... Unfortunately **the 2024 Stone Festival & Carnival, and The Eccleshall Festival, have both been postponed**, due to suffering the same fate, there's not enough new volunteers getting involved to replace those who have retired, or moved out of the area.

Both Festivals, in my view, are at the very fabric of what makes living in Stone or Eccleshall so special. My most vivid and happy childhood memories are made up from days at these Carnivals, all the stalls and wins on the tombola, the fun fair rides and candy floss, the dog shows and motorbikes flying through flaming hoops, I can still smell the petrol now!

Not only do the Festivals provide a week of Summer fun and activities, with events tailored for all ages and interests, but every penny they raise goes straight back to our local charities, many of whom don't receive any official funding, and rely heavily on the generous donations that the Festival Committees hand out each year.

It's a big loss for both our towns. I do hope some readers out there may feel the same, and be inspired to get involved with either committee, and hopefully help to save our festivals for future generations, so they get to make those lifelong memories too.

Right no more bad news! Congratulations instead go to David and Angela Spencer, in April they celebrate 20 Years of Spencer The Jeweller in Eccleshall. Stone Lions are celebrating 45 years charitable work in Stone, and good luck to Helen and Andy at Eagle House, whose luxury Eccleshall accommodation has been shortlisted for 3 Staffordshire Tourism Awards.

Congratulations also to Eccleshall's Master Saddler Kate Hardt, who has scooped

awards at the National Saddlery Competition in London.

Well done to Stone OA veterans, recently crowned Staffordshire FA League Cup Champions, it's hard work maintaining your peak physical fitness in your late 40's!

Stone Ramblers have sent their Walk of the month, and whilst out on a stroll in February they bumped into a news film crew, they'd both gone to see the beautiful display of snowdrops, then the crew wanted to interview them for the news that night, imagine going out for a walk, and getting home to see yourself on the telly box!

There's way too many events in this edition to mention all, some highlights though include: Stone Train Station are holding a Community Open Day, if you've not visited for a while it's a great opportunity to see our beautiful station and meet some of those that keep it looking that way.

For the kids, there's Easter Family Fun Trails and Easter Activities taking place in Sandon, and Longton Carnival & Pig Walk Parade takes place in April (*Yes a Pig Walk?*)

There's new Art Classes started in Stone & Eccleshall to help people improve their mental health, Jenny is inviting people that feel a little isolated, or low, to pick up a paintbrush and feel the colour enter into your life again.

Staying crafty, there's a chance to learn the delicate art of Marquetry, with Free beginners' sessions.

Big names in music are coming with Jess Glynne, Manic Street Preachers and Busted announced as Headliners at Trentham Live 2024, and Paul Walker & Karen Pfeiffer are to perform in Broughton.

Have a great Easter, until next time...

Dan Mitchell 26/2/24



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GETTING IN TOUCH

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Once you've finished enjoying your Gazette, please recycle it.

Spencer The Jeweller

Celebrating 20 Years in Eccleshall

Twenty years ago David Spencer had a plan.... It was time to close up his jewellery workshop, in Birmingham's world famous Jewellery Quarter. He had been continually busy there designing and manufacturing gold jewellery for 17 years, including designing and making chain from Clogau Gold, the famous Welsh Gold of Royalty for the last 100 years. David had set his sights on a new jewel.... Eccleshall.



Spencer The Jeweller opened its doors to the public on April 1st 2004, a few weeks before the birth of David and Angela's third daughter. The family relocated soon after, to focus on running the business together. This year they are celebrating 20 years as a successful independent jewellers!

Essential to the team are Nicola, a goldsmith, and Deb, a silversmith. Both have worked with David and Angela for most of those 20 years and their skills and expertise in the workshop and with clients is first class. The emphasis from the day one, up to the present day, remains the same, bespoke jewellery, quality repairs and the remodelling of customers pieces on the premises. Clients are constantly amazed at the team's vision, skill and ability to take an old, unfashionable or even broken piece of Jewellery, and then transform it into a brand new piece, made to their requirements.

Over the years David has noticed a huge rise in orders for bespoke Engagement, anniversary and Wedding Rings, he told us "I think every bride wants to feel unique on her special day, and with bespoke jewellery she knows that she's the only person in the world wearing that piece, as it was made for her. I've had requests to make jewellery for special birthdays and anniversaries as well."

Did you know that Spencer the Jeweller are masters of silverware repairs and polishing, including rhodium plating? They also can offer stone replacements, ring sizing, sensitive refurbishment of heirlooms and even pearl stringing. Also battery changes including pressure checks, watch and clock servicing and repairs, and even quotations and valuations for insurance and probate purposes.

Spencer The Jeweller's clients over the last 20 years in Eccleshall, include local people, as well as regular loyal customers from the North and South of England, France, some from Wales and even a few from as far away as Sweden and America.

Angela Spencer told us "Clients trust our family run team, and is what makes them return time and time again. We've found that word of mouth recommendations are worth their weight in gold, as our clients introduce their family members to us. Clients put a lot of trust in us, and there can be no better way to be recommended."

Enter Spencers and you will find beautiful jewellery, made on the premises, mixed with jewellery from British jewellery companies. Hot diamonds have been sold here for almost 20 years as have the watch brands Rotary and Citizen. To help you keep your jewellery sparkling, between our professional polishes, they have a good selection of connoisseur products, including sonic cleaners, beauty wipes and dazzle sticks for home use. Angela continued "We are continually creating jewellery for commissions, and what is made here doesn't stay on view for long! Our website, Instagram and Facebook page allow us to show off some of these stunning pieces."

David and Angela are both passionate about Eccleshall, and over the years have joined in the Eccleshall Street Markets, and whilst making jewellery outside, and cleaning jewellery free of charge the team have raised thousands of pounds for The County Air Ambulance (there's also a collection box for the charity in the shop. This charity is very important to the Spencer Family).

Spencer The Jeweller's team, David, Angela, Nicola and Deb, have earned the reputation for being honest, trustworthy and friendly, call in today to congratulate them on their 20 year anniversary in Eccleshall.

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www.spencerthejeweller.com



Stone Festival & Carnival Postponed

Stone Festival has provided a weeklong festival of events leading up to a wonderful Carnival procession, every June (except in 2020 due to the National Covid Lockdown) since 1969!

The current Festival Team have met every month since November and we have been brain-storming new ideas and considering how to maximise our productivity and create an annual event that is exciting, attractive, up to date and entertaining.

However, many of the original (*and subsequent*), members of the Festival Team are either no longer with us, have left the area, or have retired. As a consequence, we are small in number and do not have the resources or manpower to organise all the activities that have previously made up a week-long programme of events.

So, we have taken the decision to do something extraordinary!

We aim to ensure that Stone Festival & Carnival will feature a range of exciting events and activities, including a colourful parade through the town with live music performances, dance shows, colourful floats, a funfair, food and drink vendors,

and much, much more!

NOT THIS YEAR but NEXT year - 2025!!

We realise this will be disappointing for many people, however, we are able to confirm that a number of our smaller events will still take place, in June this year, as originally planned.

As we finalise the details, we will publish regular updates in the Gazette, on our website and on our Face Book page.

Longer term, our aim is to create an exciting line-up for the 2025 "new look", rebranded, Stone Festival & Carnival and to ensure that there is something for everyone - events that will cater to different interests and needs - and we are confident that by allowing more time to plan and with additional help and support, the event in 2025 will be bigger and better than ever before! The Stone Festival Team are committed to providing an unforgettable celebration of the hospitable and creative community spirit that our lovely town is becoming known for!

If you wish to contact the Festival Team, to offer your support, please email the acting Chair (Tim Joyce) at concessions@stonefestival.co.uk



Eccleshall Festival in 2022

Eccleshall Festival 2024 is postponed too The future may also be in doubt

Following the stepping down of the Festival Committee members, who had arranged Eccleshall Festival for the past ten to twelve years, a new group was being formed to take on the task.

However, this group has now found it not possible to do so, and has also stepped down.

The festival will NOT therefore take place this year and any interested persons who wish to consider arranging future festivals in Eccleshall can contact Peter Jones peterwjones@btinternet.com or Libby Dale libbydale@tiscali.co.uk who would be able to provide information.

It has been suggested that a festival should be arranged for 2025.

Stone Lions Club celebrate 45 years service to our local community

Fun, Friendship and Fellowship, coupled with excellent food and wines, were the order of the day at The Stone House Hotel on 17th February, when members of Stone Lions Club welcomed friends and fellow Lions from far and wide to help them celebrate the 45th anniversary of their foundation in 1979.

A delicious meal was served by the friendly and approachable staff of the Stone House Hotel who are great supporters of Stone Lions, particularly with regards to the annual PSA Testing Event which takes place on 30th April this year.

The evening included just the right amount of formality, with speeches from District Governor Lion Barry Prior of Douglas Valley Lions Club and Stone Town Mayor

Councillor Jim Davies who both recognised the work done by members of the club and the difference they continue to make in the local community, but the main purpose of the evening was to have fun together!

There was plenty of reminiscing with long-standing friends from other clubs together with the opportunity to meet and chat with members who are new to the organisation.

Lion President Paul commented "We have enjoyed a very successful evening. I would like to thank everyone at the Stone House Hotel for their hard work tonight and Lion Rod Niven and Juliet for all their efforts in making sure everything ran like clockwork."



Gazette Eccleshall NEWS IN BRIEF

Councillor's Drop-In

Peter Jones, the Borough Councillor for the Eccleshall Ward, holds a regular monthly drop-in session at the High Street library, and the next ones will be held on **Saturday 9th March and 6th April**.

Residents are invited to drop in and raise concerns or just for a chat. He can be reached at 01785 851381 / 07815 419166 and email pjones@staffordbc.gov.uk

Civic Amenity Visits

A refuse vehicle for the collection of excess waste will be parked on Stone Road, Eccleshall, opposite the Methodist Church, from **9am until 11am on Saturday 23rd March** and every other month.

The visits are arranged and funded by the Eccleshall Parish Council and future dates can be found on the council's website, and on the High Street notice board.

Garden Guild

The Croxton & Broughton Garden Guild's meetings take place on the **4th Wednesday of each month starting at 7.30pm** in Broughton parish room, Wetwood (ST21 6NW).

New members are always welcome. On Wednesday 28th February David Moreton was the guest speaker on 'Oak Tree Farm', and on **27th March** Mick Poultney will be speaking about 'Compost ready to use in a month' and on **24th April** Robert Barlow speaks about 'Plants for shady places.'

For more information contact Marianne Grimes on 01782 791420 or Linda Mifflin on 01630 620215.

Fly Tipping

If you know of any fly tipping in your area of the Borough you can report it by calling 01785 619402 or you can email Stafford Borough Council at grimewatch@staffordbc.gov.uk

Trinity Magazine

Subscriptions for 2024, of Holy Trinity and St Chad's magazine, are now due at £6.50 per year for ten issues delivered to your Eccleshall door. If you would like to start having the magazine delivered please contact Ron or Charles on 01785 850512 or 01782 658832 to arrange it.

Broughton W.I.

The Broughton Women's Institute will hold its annual meeting in March followed by a fish and chips supper and social time. In April the group will have Janet from Corner Patch as the guest speaker talking about the wonders of fabric and making things, and all the things that her Eccleshall shop provides.

Voluntary Car Scheme

The scheme is able to provide transport for medical visits including doctors surgery, opticians, chiropodist etc and of course hospitals. For full details get a copy of the pink leaflet from the library and Crown Surgery or the website at www.eccleshallvoluntarycarscheme.org.uk. or ring organisers Peter and Joy Jones at 01785 851381 or email peterwjones@btinternet.com.

The service is provided by local voluntary drivers at much reduced rates.

Historical Society

Nigel Metcalfe is set to treat members of the Eccleshall Historical Society to a "Nostalgic trip down the High Street" on **Monday 11th March starting at 7.30pm** in Holy Trinity parish room, Church Street, Eccleshall.

• Correspondence - Readers' Writes



The Asian Hornet threat

Dear Dan,

I am a beekeeper. I went to a meeting recently with the South Staffs, North Staffs, Sutton Coldfield and Burton Beekeepers. This was an extraordinary meeting due to discuss the possible establishment of the Asian Hornet in the UK.

Unless you are a beekeeper or live near the South Coast, you really won't have heard much about this non native invasive species. The NNSS (*non Native species secretariat*) have published posters and information leaflets which are available for public display.

<https://www.nonnativespecies.org/non-native-species/information-portal/view/3826>

Each person in the audience this weekend has agreed to try and make the public more aware of the threat and recognize and report any sightings. This hornet decimates honey production as it predares on the bees and sadly any other flying pollinator. We learnt that 1 hornets' nest can consume 11kg of flying insects in a season. I ask you how heavy are most flies or bees? 1 – 5g maybe?

France became the first European country for them to become established and they have now spread through Spain, Italy and Portugal. Portugal's honey crop dropped by 30% this year.

The channel has so far saved us from early establishment, but the Channel Isles are fighting a losing battle already <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-jersey-66305174>

There is little doubt that the UK will soon have established colonies of this hornet. But our aim is to educate the general public to report sightings so that the nests can be destroyed.

Beekeepers alone will not hold back the tide! <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/04/asian-hornet-likely-become-established-uk-say-experts>

This is not to be alarmist – they are as dangerous to people as the European hornet. But currently where people are trying to encourage pollinators – these insects will seriously impact on UK honey production and any crops that require insect pollination.

Thanks
Gill Knight
Stone

Asian Hornet (2nd letter)

Hello Dan,

My name is Jan Horstink and I am the Asian Hornet Coordinator for the South Staffordshire & District Beekeepers Association.

The Asian hornet is a Non-Native predator that unfortunately is trying to get a foothold in England. Over 70 nests were located and destroyed in 2023, mainly in the south-east of England but also in Plymouth, Hull and Yarm in the North-East.

It is possible that queen hornets from these nests have overwintered and will emerge in spring to start new nests. This is when the help of the public is needed to report any sightings of these hornets, enabling nests to be found and destroyed.

The Asian Hornet poses a significant risk to members of the public and attrition of honey bees and other beneficial insects as well as consequences for agriculture, horticulture, and biodiversity.

Beekeepers are working together to raise awareness of the Asian Hornet. We aim to reach local groups, schools, and local papers etc.

Jan Horstink
Asian Hornet Coordinator for the South Staffordshire & District Beekeepers Association.

ED: Blimey! We've only only had 2 letters sent in this edition, and both are about the Asian Hornet!

As a bee lover, and we all really should be, I feel it's important to help raise awareness to this potential threat.

The Gazette reserves the right not to publish any correspondence that arrives without a name and address or email address. It is our policy not to publish any addresses unless specifically asked.

We also will not publish any letters that we consider to be offensive or divisive - this is a freely distributed publication with a responsibility to our readership, beyond that of a paid for publication. It is for this very same reason that we do not carry a personal column or any advertisements for personal services that could be deemed potentially offensive.

Send your letters to dan@stonegazette.com

Delivering positive benefits

The Stone Alzheimer's and Dementia Drop in Club **meets every Thursday** at the Christchurch Centre in Stone.

Over the last year the membership has grown as news of the good work that the Club does has spread beyond the town. Members include those at all stages of the disease and the carefully planned activities provided are aimed at all.

The safe, welcoming, friendly and caring environment provided by the club's knowledgeable volunteers is the key to its success but the degenerative nature of the disease means that even small steps can be difficult to make. The volunteers use a number of different methods of stimulation which includes music, dancing, games, conversation as well as a recent addition, 'Monkey', a large stuffed toy. Some sufferers respond well to the toy and it has proved to be very popular.

Alzheimer's disease starts in the brain many years before symptoms start to show so early symptoms are mild and don't stop someone doing their normal everyday activities. It's only later that symptoms become severe and then normal activities become increasingly difficult as the disease progresses. Keeping the brain stimulated is important for both sufferers and carers which is why this is one of the key functions of the club.

But it's not just about providing a safe environment for sufferers. Being a carer is also challenging and isolation, along with the lack of social interaction, can be a major issue for many of them. Whilst providing stimulation for sufferers when they come to club, it is equally important that carers can also enjoy the activities as well as being supported and have the opportunity to discuss and share their own



situation and problems, as for many, it can be their only social contact with others.

Many of the volunteers in the club were originally carers who wanted to keep coming



along to continue to help the club when their home situation changed so their knowledge and insight can be very valuable and beneficial. Carers have found the advice and support from both the volunteers and the other carers to have really helped them cope in what are often challenging circumstances.

Two of our members, Barry, a carer, and Irvin, an honorary member, who lost his wife last year to Alzheimer's, have not participated in dancing at the club before but recently, both decided to get up and join in. Dancing is not for everyone and many prefer to watch so it was great to see them get up and join the others.

This step really highlights how the friendly and welcoming nature of the Club, along with the high levels level of care and support provided by the volunteers each and every week, can help both sufferers and carers and deliver positive benefits for all.

Lead Volunteer Sandie McQueen told the Gazette: "I cannot say how pleased we all were to see for Barry and Irvin take part – often, we only see small steps but that is what makes all that we do worthwhile and so rewarding."



Barry (left) with Irvin (above)

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Gazette Eccleshall NEWS IN BRIEF

Open Pub Night

On the **first Thursday of every month** there is an "Open Night" from 7pm to 11pm in Broughton Parish Room. Everyone is welcome for an evening of conviviality amongst old and new friends. The cost is £5 per person, with all proceeds going to the Parish Room funds. Bring your own drinks.

Coffee & Fellowship

On **Wednesday 13th and 27th March** the coffee and fellowship group gather for conversation and coffee in the parish room of Holy Trinity Church in Eccleshall, between 10am and 12 noon. No entry charge, £1 for hot drink and biscuit. Meet old friends and make new ones.

Community Band Meet

The members of the Eccleshall Community Band rehearse at Holy Trinity Church on **6th, 13th and 20th March** from 8pm to 9pm.

Humorous Poetry

The Eccleshall Poetry Club members will be reading and enjoying 'Humorous Poetry' at their **Thursday 7th March** meeting in Eccleshall Methodist Church Hall starting at 2pm until 4pm. They meet again on **Thursday 21st March** when the subject of the poetry will be 'World Poetry Day Food'.

Wildlife Trust

"Rivers from source to sea" will be the talk by Jack Perks at the Maer village hall (ST5 5EF) on **Friday 1st March starting at 7.30pm**. This is part of the monthly programme arranged by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and is open to everyone.

On **Friday 22nd March** the Trust meets again for an illustrated talk on "Birding on the doorstep" starting at 7.30pm in Holy Trinity church room.

W.I. AGM

The Eccleshall Women's Institute meets for a craft evening followed by its Annual General Meeting on **Thursday 14th March** in Holy Trinity parish hall starting at 7.30pm. On **Thursday 11th April** local man Keith Winstanley will give a talk entitled "Clipper round the world travels" starting at 7.30pm. The competition for the evening is 'a navigational compass'.

Morning Walk

The Eccleshall Trinity Men's Fellowship group will be enjoying a walk from Norbury Junction on **Friday 29th March starting at 10am** and followed by lunch at the Junction.

On **Friday 26th April** the members will walk in the Stone area and have lunch at the George & Dragon at Meaford.

Rotary Award

The Rotary Club of Eccleshall Mercia, have awarded Rotarian Brian Eyre with a Paul Harris Fellowship for his services to the club, to Rotary and the community.

Among many other things, Brian may be remembered for his undercover role as Santa on the Rotary sleigh at Christmas.

Seighford Holly Bush Quiz

The regular **Sunday Evening Quiz** continues at the Seighford pub with quizmaster Peter Jones and scorer Joy Jones.

The quiz starts at 8.30pm every Sunday evening and new teams of up to six members are always welcome, with the fee of £1 per person. There are cash and chocolate prizes each week.

Join us at Stone Train Station Community Open Day!

North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership invite you to join us on **Wednesday 13th March at Stone Station** to celebrate the station improvements and the work of the station volunteers.

Thanks to the volunteers and partners London Northwestern Railway and Network Rail, the station has benefitted from new planters showcasing a variety of plants and flowers, rainwater harvesting, a defibrillator and poetry and story board panels with more improvements to come!

Join us for free refreshments between 10am and 12pm provided by Futures2Gether, hands-on activities with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and demonstrations on using the defibrillator with AEDdonate.

There will also be lots of information on the projects delivered and an opportunity for you to get involved by voting for your favourite planting design!

A guided Rails to Trails walk from Stone Station into Stone Town will also take place. **The Trail is free to attend but places are limited in number and should be booked in advance.**

Please visit the News & Events page at www.northstaffsrail.org.uk to book your place.

If you are interested in volunteering at the station and would like to find out



**Stone Train Station
Community Open Day**

Wednesday 13th March 2024

North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership invite you to join us at Stone Station to celebrate the station improvements and work of the station volunteers and find out about our latest projects!

Drop in to the station building between 10am and 1pm for:

- ▶ Free refreshments (between 10am and 12pm)
- ▶ Activities including seed bomb making with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- ▶ Photo display
- ▶ Poetry readings
- ▶ Defibrillator demonstration
- ▶ Meet the station volunteers
- ▶ Rails to Trails guided walk around Stone (book in advance)*

* To book your free place on the guided Rails to Trails walk from Stone Station into Stone Town visit the News & Events page at www.northstaffsrail.org.uk



more then come along and chat to our amazing volunteers or email Emma McIntosh at North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership on northstaffscrp@stoke.go.uk for more information.



Black Lake Inn steps in to raise funds for North Staffs RDA

North Staffs RDA has been providing the therapeutic benefits that riding can bring to participants with special needs for several decades. Many riders, both children and adults, have benefitted from the physical exercise, the independence of being on a horse and subsequent gains in self-confidence.

The group is run solely by a dedicated team of volunteers who turn out each week, in all weathers, to provide the sessions that the riders benefit so much from, riding at Poplars Farm Riding School by kind permission of Mrs Mandy Smith.

The group also have to raise all their own funds - some lessons are subsidised to allow access to all, pony hire, specialist tack and the provision of riding hats, insurance and first aid training are all a drain on the funds.

The Black Lake Inn, Hilderstone Road, kindly allowed the group to place a collecting tin on the pub counter. Several weeks later the lack of cash used these

days meant the princely sum of 4p had been collected. At this point the landlady Cheryl stepped up and offered to organise a raffle for the group. A couple of months later, due to an enormous effort by Cheryl and her staff, raffle tickets had been printed and many prizes kindly donated.

The raffle was drawn at the pub's regular Thursday quiz night early in January and was a great success, raising a £1000 for the group. This will make a huge difference to the running of our group.

North Staffs RDA is immensely grateful for the efforts by Cheryl and her team at the Black Lake Inn, the businesses and individuals who donated prizes and all those who bought tickets.

Special thank you for prizes donated goes to - Acorn Motors, James Platt, Andy's Butchers, Design work from Hello Marky design, Richards and Phillip from Van National, Merv Bennet and Sons Domestic Appliance Engineers, Poplars Farm Riding School.

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Westbridge Park to get mayoral seal of approval at official opening event

A host of activities will be on offer as the Mayor of Stafford Borough officially opens Westbridge Park in Stone following its £1.5m transformation.

The park has proved hugely popular with residents and visitors after work was completed in the latter part of 2023.

The improvements have seen new play equipment, zip wire, wheeled sports facility and multi-use games area (MUGA) - as well as a woodland play area, sunken garden, toilets and enhanced footpaths and landscaping.

And at **10am on Saturday 27 April** the Mayor of Stafford Borough, Councillor Andy Cooper, will officially open the park to signal the start of a day of community led activities, stalls and entertainment.

More on timings and what is happening on the day will be publicised on the borough council's website and social media closer to the date. Any local group or organisation wanting to be involved in the event should contact smcdonald@staffordbc.gov.uk

Councillor Gillian Pardesi, Cabinet Member for Leisure at Stafford Borough Council, said it had been wonderful to see and hear how popular the new facilities have been.

"The council has an excellent track record of delivering some great parks across the borough and this is no exception. And the proof of its success can be seen with the number of families spending time at the park, and the thousands of young people using the fantastic new play equipment and wheeled sports facilities."

It is also great to hear about the park helping to draw more visitors to the town which will help support the local economy - as well as encouraging others to use the area for walking and cycling which provide benefits for physical and mental health."

The play park is significantly larger than the previous site and includes a range of equipment for all ages - including tower and tube slide, integrated mini trampoline, boulder scramble, tyre swing, and climbing blocks. The double zip wire has a more than 30 metre run. The MUGA is available for five-a-side football, basketball and tennis. Key space for local events and existing football provision was incorporated in the park design.

Councillor Pardesi continued: "I am really looking forward to the official opening event in the spring and will be hoping for some good weather so we can show off this wonderful park at its very best."

Information about the park and updates around the opening event will be available from Westbridge Park - A Destination | Stafford Borough Council (staffordbc.gov.uk)



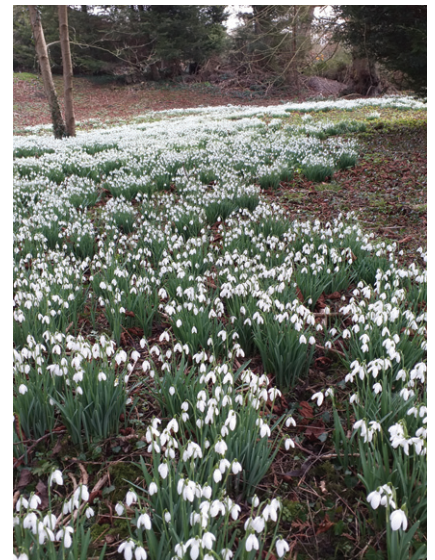
Stone Ramblers become TV Stars

Well, its all happening here at the Stone Ramblers, we've even been on the telly!

With Spring is on its way, one of our recent walks took us to Hopton Hall to see the magnificent snowdrops. A wonderful way to lift your spirits. (pictured right)

Coincidentally, ITV East Midlands News were filming there and we were interviewed and managed to promote the Stone Ramblers too! Amazing.

Aside from that we continue to be busy, in spite of the appalling rain. Nothing puts us off walking! All you need is appropriate clothing, good waterproof footwear and some determination.



something special in our coffee.

On one walk, an amazing farmer, let us eat our lunch in his barn. It was lovely and dry, and comfy too!

He will forever be our hero!

Have a look at our Facebook page, Stone Ramblers and our website at www.stoneramblers.org, where you will find lots of information, including our forthcoming walks.

We're off to Shropshire soon, for a three-day break and then have a week planned at Coniston in April and a week in St Ives in October. Busy, busy, busy!

We're at the Farmers' Market on Saturday 2 March and also the Official Opening of Westbridge Park on Saturday 27 April, so please come along for a chat and find out more about the Stone Ramblers

We look forward to seeing you!



It has been **VERY** muddy indeed and on one walk, the mud was just like liquid chocolate (have a look at the photo above!) and it was very difficult to release your feet.

We even walked on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, with a little drop of





Easter Family Fun Trails and Easter Activities

Visit All Saints Church, Sandon, for a series of special family fun days this Easter holiday.

Pop into the Church on **Fridays 29th March and 5th April between 11am-3pm, and Saturdays 30th March and 6th April 10am-1.30pm**, for self-guided Easter-themed family trails.

These treasure hunts will cover both inside and outside of the church, exploring birds, butterflies, bugs and beasties and the wide range of new spring life. There will also be plenty of family crafts and storytelling to enjoy supported by our National Lottery Heritage Fund Activities Co-ordinators and volunteers.

Visitors are invited to bring a picnic to eat outside in the sunshine or under cover in the church if preferred. The church has an accessible toilet and visitor parking. There is portable ramp access to the church building but not all parts of the building and churchyard are accessible to wheelchair users and pushchairs.

"We look forward to seeing lots of our local families coming to enjoy this really special building and the breath-taking views of our countryside." Said Elizabeth Jarrett, All Saints Church, Lifelong Learning Lead.

Please visit our website at www.sandonallsaints.com for more information.

Tittensor Village Hall is yours to use

We want to encourage people to consider using Tittensor Village Hall (TVH) to organise events and activities for Tittensor Community and surrounding villages.

We want more occasions like the Coronation Celebration in 2023.

Back in January two local ladies organised a very successful family disco – which well and truly blew away any post-Christmas blues. The event was a sell out and it was great to see so many people of all ages strutting their stuff to sounds from the 80's and 90's.

In the coming months we have a couple of traditional events planned **a quiz and cash bingo** - check out our website for details www.tittensorvillagehall.org.uk

As with most Village Halls, TVH was originally built for local people to come together and socialise. Our ambition for 2024 is to increase the opportunities for all ages in our community, and we are therefore looking for people to run activities, classes, events of any kind. We can give guidance and assistance as required.

Discounts on hire rates are given for regular bookings (8 or more in a year), booking is more than 4 hours, when the proceeds are wholly for a registered charity and/or the lead booker resides in the Tittensor Parish.

Our AGM on Friday 19th April, starts at 6.30pm and will be followed by Cheese, Wine and Beer. This is to thank everyone for their support in the last 12 months and to welcome new and interested parties, please send an email to info@tittensorvillagehall.org.uk to let us know you would like to come along; we don't want to run out of crackers!



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Council funding helps create a bit of history in Stone

A new Heritage Centre in Stone has been handed a funding boost from Stafford Borough Council.

Stone Town Council received £40,000 to help with the fit out of the Stone Heritage Centre which is being developed on the site of the town's former fire station.

The money will fund several items in the the visitor attraction including display cases and furniture as well as IT and CCTV equipment.

The money has come from the Rural England Prosperity Fund which is an extension of the Governments UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The borough council were one of four districts in the county to secure this additional funding.

In total the borough council was awarded one of the largest pots of money in the country from the government's 'UKSPF' after successfully putting forward schemes to help regeneration, climate change and culture.

Councillor Jill Hood, Cabinet Member for Communities at the borough council, told The Gazette: "Our allocation was one of the highest that any district council was awarded and is further demonstration of the confidence the government has in us to deliver for our community."

There are so many exciting things planned, starting up, or ongoing, in the borough and we are pleased to have been able to support the Town Council to help deliver a wonderful facility that will remind people of our rich local heritage and attract more visitors to the area who can then discover Stone past, as well as present."

Councillor Rob Kenney, Chairman of the Town Council's General Purposes Committee added: "We are grateful for this funding from the Borough Council to support the Stone Heritage Centre. These additional funds will allow the Town Council to improve the quality of its displays within the Centre and make it more attractive to visitors and educational users."



A Guide for The Mayor

Each year the current Mayor of Stafford Borough is presented with a copy of the Eccleshall Guide.

This year Councillor Andy Cooper was presented with his signed copy by the editor and publisher of the Eccleshall Guide, Peter Jones, prior to the Council meeting held on 30th January.

This guide is the 26th edition. **ED Well done Peter!**



Ryan Page and Curraghgraique Q Hill. Photo Credit: Majestic Photography

Stone's Ryan claims top spot in the SEIB Winter Novice Championship Qualifier

Stone show jumper Ryan Page jumped to success at Aintree International Equestrian Centre in January with Zoe Snedker's Curraghgraique Q Hill, in a hotly contested SEIB Winter Novice Championship Qualifier.

Sixty combinations took to the ring, where they faced Rafael Suarez's 12-fence course with a starting height of 1.10m, to contest for their spot in the Championship Final at the Royal International Horse Show.

In a 19 strong jump off, Ryan knew that a swift start was crucial to have a chance at victory: he told the Gazette "I hoped to qualify but you never know. I was early to go in the jump off and set out to be quick over the first three fences. I knew I could be quick enough, but you never know how people will go after you."

An impressive six combinations flew round the jump off to claim double clears, but it was the six-year-old Curraghgraique Q Hill (OBOS Quality x Curraghgrague Cobra Hill) who secured the win, edging out Calgary Boy I and James Whitaker by a thrilling 0.74 seconds.

"We found her [Curraghgraique Q Hill] as a three-year-old at the Go for Gold Sales. She is really fast, careful, and brave."

Ryan, who was selected for the 23/24 Gold Development Programme in December had a busy few days leading up to his triumph. Despite the competition, he managed to take the time to attend the second training camp at British Showjumping's National Training Centre. The camp offers training sessions to help participants establish themselves at the 1.40m-1.50m level. Reflecting on the programme, Ryan said: "I love it, it's given me a chance to meet and get to know other riders that I wouldn't normally have the chance to, Matt [Lanni] has been a great support since starting the camp last year."

Ryan, who is based in Stone, will now prepare to compete in the SEIB Winter Novice Championship Final with Curraghgraique Q Hill at the Royal International Horse Show, Hickstead. He will also ride Beech House Stud's BP Ko Jax, who qualified for the UNIBED – High Performance Equine Bedding Winter Grades B&C at Hartpury late last year.



Above: A good turn out at the last talk

Eccleshall Wildlife Centre Talk

Guest speaker Jenny Morgan will be speaking about the Gentleshaw Wildlife Centre in Eccleshall, at the Community Lounge, at the High Street Library, Eccleshall on **Thursday 21st March between 2pm and 4pm.**

Come and hear about the various animals and birds, and perhaps even get to hold one and stroke one.

The talk is part of a monthly programme

of speakers, arranged as part of a weekly open door session in the community room at the library every Thursday.

The speaker sessions require a ticket available from the reception desk at the library prior to the event at just £1, they are available on the first Thursday of each month. The ticket price includes coffee/tea and a biscuit.



Artist impression

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Coffee Break Story



By Stone Scribblers Creative Writing Group

A Walk on The Chase

Rosie is not a dog that barks often. Always placid and steady on a walk, there is not much that excites her so when I heard her frantic barking, I knew it would be something serious troubling her.

We were on our daily walk across Tittensor Chase and she had been, as usual, running through the bracken with her nose to the ground. I looked across towards the sound of her barking and then walked over to see what was up. As I neared, she looked up at me as if trying to communicate and I soon saw what had her attention. On the muddy ground lay a dog. It was not moving and I approached it with caution. I called Rosie to me and she ceased barking, presumably happy for me to take over.

The dog was the size and shape of a whippet but had the rough coat of a lurcher, it was awake but rigid with fear and had an injury to its leg. I knelt down beside it and it whimpered anxiously.

"Hello there, what've you been doing to yourself?"

I reached out to inspect the bleeding leg but the dog growled and I withdrew.

I was at a loss; I could not pick the dog up even if it would allow me to but neither could I leave it injured and lying in the mud. Rosie looked at me and - I swear that dog can read my mind - then set off down the path presumably to look for help.

I looked back at the dog lying at my feet and pulled a handkerchief from my pocket. With Rosie now at a distance the dog seemed to relax and when I knelt this time it allowed me to bandage its wounded leg to stop the bleeding. Rosie began to bark again and I stood up and looked behind me. A man was walking towards me, he was tall and bearded with shoulder length hair and in his hand, he held a wooden staff. Dressed in what appeared to be a monk's habit which was coated in mud as were his sandals. I walked towards him and held out my hand in greeting.

"Is this your dog? He's hurt, I've bandaged his leg."

He seemed frightened, ignored my outstretched hand and made the sign of the cross in the air between us. Walking past me he went to the dog and knelt down, the dog wagged its tail in recognition as the man spoke to it in a strange language which to my ear sounded like Welsh. Rosie looked on with a questioning expression; she was as puzzled as I was.

As we both stood watching the man gently lifted his dog and placed him around his neck, the dog did not complain, indeed seemed used to this position. The man turned to go.

"May the Lord be with you" he said, in English, and again made the sign of the cross before striding away from me across the Chase towards Bury Bank. How strange I thought, not a word of thanks.

Walking back to my car I looked again at the sign for the Two Saints Way heading north towards Chester. Once home I checked for updates on the walk's website and discovered recent evidence of an Irish friar named Symon Semeonis having made the pilgrimage back in the 14th century - accompanied by his dog.

by Sarah Akhtar

Stone Scribblers meet at Stone Library **on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month between 11 am and 12.30pm**, and you can find them at www.facebook.com/StoneScribblers/



Welcome To Stone! With The Bridge Over The River Poop

It's truly heartbreaking to see this happening

Action taken to stop raw sewage being dumped into major Stone sports facility

Stone Labour Party and Councillor Jill Hood have joined forces to demand that Severn Trent stop dumping raw sewage straight into a major River Trent sports facility.

At a recent meeting with Severn Trent Water officers, convened by Stone Labour Party and attended by Councillor Hood, the water company admitted that on approximately six occasions in 2023 raw sewage was poured into the middle of the town's canoe slalom course to relieve pressure on a main sewage treatment pipe.

Photographs of raw sewage being released (shown) were taken last summer by Phil Barber, a Stone resident and canoeist of 40 years standing who also attended the meeting. He said

"Dumping raw sewage into the middle of a sports facility is simply unacceptable. The canoe club have closed events in the past and are aware that any future event may have to be cancelled at short notice."

Another Stone resident got in touch with the local Labour Party to say *"This affects me and my son as we are regularly on the Trent. When the outlet goes it's disgusting."*

The Severn Trent Water officers told the meeting that to move the sewage outlet up to 300 metres away from the site would cost approximately £400,000, and that persuading the water company to fund this would be difficult.

Bill Lockwood, Chair of Stone Branch Labour Party said *"We made it clear at the meeting that the water company must carry out this work. £400,000 is a very small amount compared to the £508 million profit made by them in the last financial year, which was £2 million pounds up on the year before."*

This stretch of river runs alongside the extensive new play facilities provided at Westbridge Park and is bound to attract additional river users, including families



ED: *This story really saddens me. As a teen I swam, fished and canoed in our rivers. I do wonder how long these traps are left full of excrement, and worse, before anyone comes to clean and disinfect them fully?*

padding and swimming in the summer.

We cannot allow Severn Trent Water to continue creating a health hazard on financial grounds, and will be meeting again with the company in the Spring to continue to make our case.

If any other Stone residents have experience of this sewage pollution, and the way it has affected them, we would like to hear from them at contact@stonelabour.co.uk

Stone Labour Party intends to continue its campaign to clean up the River Trent throughout the area following the release of Environment Agency figures that in 2022, the latest period for which figures are available, there were 672 sewage dumps across 30 sites in Stone Constituency for a duration of 2,536 hours.



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Christo Frick

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- Awarded the prestigious "PROSSA" medal for the best achiever in fixed Prosthetics in my year.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Restorative Dentistry from the Eastman Dental Institute, London.
- Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Anterior Restorative and Aesthetic Dentistry from London Dental Teaching Centre by Prosthodontist, Dr Basil Mizrahi (who is also a lecturer at the Eastman Dental Institute).
- Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Occlusion and Tooth Wear from the Pankey Institute, Miami, Florida.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Implant Dentistry from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Regular theatre sessions for complex implant cases with Dr Gerrit Wyma (MFOS and Fellow/Chairman of the ITI).
- Regular theatre sessions for complex aesthetic implant cases with Prof Andre van Zyl (Periodontist and Head of Periodontal Department at University of Stellenbosch/Pretoria).
- Member of the ITI attending regular study clubs.
- Postgraduate Certificate in Cb-Ct Core Training Level 1 and Level 2 (justification, interpretation and reporting of oral Cb-Ct scans), Cambridge Academy of Dental Implantology
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Walk of the Month from The Stone Ramblers

Hello again, our 'Walk of the Month' is a shorter walk of 4 ½ Miles with the opportunity to stop for refreshments at the Plume of Feathers or Duke of York. We hope that you enjoy it...

Barlaston-Trent & Mersey Canal - Outlanes

Distance: 4½ miles Time: 2 hours

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

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

Route Information:

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

2. Passing through a National Trust gate and after about 15 minutes from the car park you will come to a major junction of tracks, 2 broad grassy tracks to the right, one going up a steep hill, the main track going straight on. Ignore all of these and turn diagonally left down through the trees and steps to a footbridge over the stream. The footbridge may be indistinct in the summer until you are about 10 yards from the main track. Cross this footbridge and turn left along the side of the stream for about 50 yards. Before the track bears left take a right hand turn, beginning the climb to the top of the hill. The track bears left following the NY signs up the hill. As you climb the hill the view opens up on the right looking towards Moddershall. At the top turn right.

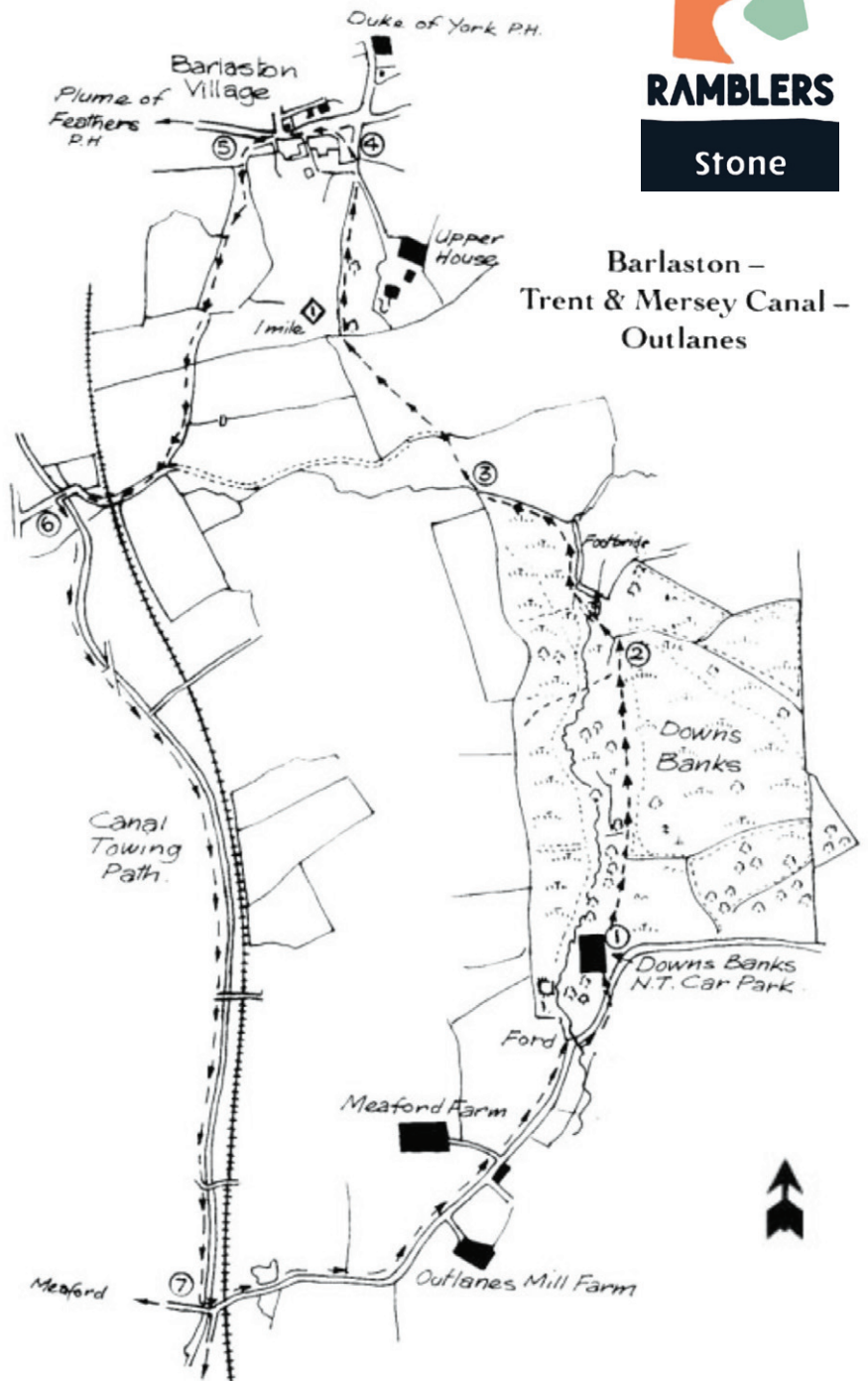
3. Cross the stile out of Downs Banks following the track downhill. To your left in front you will see Barlaston village. Follow the path downhill, passing the stile to the right of the gate. Carry straight on, ignoring the gravel track to the left, eventually passing through a kissing gate and into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

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

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

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

The canal was opened in 1771 although the whole navigation of 93 miles from the Trent to Preston Brook was not complete until 1777. This was from a start in 1758 when Earl Gower and Lord Anson asked James Brindley to survey a route from the Potteries to the Trent. The final route connected the Trent to the Mersey at Runcorn.



Barlaston – Trent & Mersey Canal – Outlanes

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

Have a look at our Facebook page, Stone Ramblers and website www.stoneramblers.org, where you will find lots of information, including our forthcoming walks. We welcome new members to join us as guests for 2 to 3 walks and only ask that you wear strong footwear, that you don't mind getting muddy, bring some wet weather gear and that you bring something to eat and drink.

If you wish to walk with us regularly and we really hope that you do, you will be expected to become a member of the Ramblers, which opens so many new opportunities.

We are planning to have a stall at the Farmers' Market on Saturday 2 March and also the Official Opening of Westbridge Park on Saturday 27 April, so please come along for a chat and find out more about the Stone Ramblers and perhaps purchase one of our two walking books. We look forward to seeing you!

Penny Meakin
Chair, Stone Ramblers



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Weekly Timetable of Events

Mon	MiSfiT Fitness - STRONG Gentle Exercise U3A Talking Books U3A Craft U3A (monthly 2nd Mon) Slimming World MiSfiT Fitness - STRONG Clubbercise Dance Fitness	9.30-10.15am 10-11am 10.30-12.30pm 2-4pm 6-7.30pm 5.30-6.15pm 6.30-7.20pm
Tues	Pilates: All Abilities Family History U3A (fortnightly) Gentle Seated Exercise & Social Sequence Dancing Papercraft U3A (fortnightly 2nd & 4th Tues) Weight Watchers Boogie Bounce Fitness Pregnancy Loss Support (1st Tues monthly) Pilates: All Abilities Rock Choir	9.30-10.30am 10.30-12.30pm 1.30-2.45pm 2-4pm 2-4pm 6-7pm 6.20-7.10pm 6.30-8.30pm 7.30-8.30pm 8-9.30pm
Weds	Guitar U3A Knit, Crochet & Chat Beginners & Improvers Line Dancing & Social Conexus Tuition Stafford & Stone Rockbox Fitness Yoga: All Abilities	10.30-12.30pm 10.30-12.30pm 1.30-3pm 4-6pm 6.30-7.20pm 6.30-7.30pm
Thurs	Happy Feet Beginners Italian U3A Indoor Bowls Free Soup/Light Lunch & Social Indoor Bowls (U3A) Meditation U3A Pregnancy Loss Support (1st Thurs monthly) GPC Meeting (3rd Thurs monthly) Flower Club (last Thurs monthly)	10-11am 10-11.30am 10.15-11.45am 12.15-2pm 1-3pm 2.30-3.30pm 6.30-8.30pm 7.30-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm
Fri	MiSfiT Fitness STRONG Taekwondo BINGO - Community & Social Group	9.30-10.15am 7-8.30pm 7.30-9.30pm
Sat	Slimming World Child of Mine Playgroup (last Sat monthly) Over Eaters Anonymous (fortnightly)	8.30-10am 2-4pm 4-5pm
Sun	Table Top Sale/Car Boot (fortnightly Sep/Apr) St Johns Church - Weekly Service St Johns Church - Monthly Service (last Sun)	8.30-11.30am 10.30-11.30am 6.30-7.30pm

Walton Community Centre looks forward to meeting you this SPRING!

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

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

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

Walton Community Centre prides itself on being a place where people get a **friendly welcome** & get to make new friends in the local area.

If you're looking for a **room to hire** for your group or event get in touch with them for availability!



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Walton Community Centre, Whitemill Lane,
Stone, ST15 0EQ



Stone Scribblers get Elevated

Stone Scribblers creative writing group have a new space within Stone library.

Having outgrown the downstairs space, Keeley Spilsbury, library manager agreed to the group using the first floor, where the space is larger.

The group has nineteen regular members. It was vital that we stay in the library, which has been our home since the group was formed in 2008.

It is a focal point in the town and increases the footfall. However I am pleased to say that the group is

flourishing and can continue using the library, due to the help of Stone library staff.

Following a successful visit to see the Staffordshire Hoard a visit has been arranged at The Brampton Art Gallery and Museum, to give further food for thought to the writers in the group.

Anyone interested in sharing their work or writing from scratch is welcome to join with us. The group meet twice a month at Stone Library.



The Stafford Military Wives Choir performing at Sandon in 2023

All Saints Military Wives Charity Concert

Come along and join us at the very old, and very beautiful Church of All Saints, for a Charity Concert with the Stafford Military Wives Choir.

The popular choir return to the Church, after a sell out show last year.

If you've never visited the church before, you should, it has a long and fascinating history, at the time of the Domesday Book, Sandon was one of a number of manors in Hertfordshire which belonged to St Paul's Cathedral.

The manor remained in the cathedral's ownership until the 19th Century. The cathedral entered into a contract in 1348 to rebuild the chancel of All Saints'. This appears to be the earliest surviving part of the present church today.

The concert takes place on Friday 8th March, beginning at 7.30 at Church Ln, Sandon ST18 0DB, with wine and soft drinks available.

Tickets are priced at just £8, and are available from Rose on 07876 540491 or Steve on 07972 838140. All proceeds from the concert will go to the Sandon Church Restoration Project.

Stafford Military Wives Choir are part of a network of 75 choirs in British military bases across the UK and overseas. The Military Wives Choirs is a charity that brings over 2300 women in the military community closer together through singing, not only wives, but also veterans, serving personnel and mothers, sisters and partners of currently serving personnel.

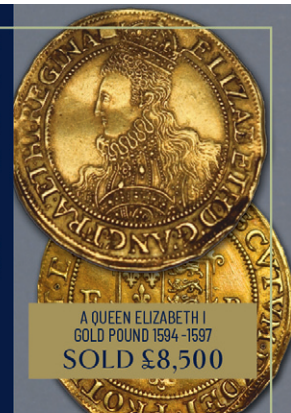
Service personnel move around frequently and it can often be tough for the families to put down roots or make new friends, which can leave women feeling isolated, particularly when loved ones are away for long periods of time.

Research shows that singing in a choir can help to alleviate stress and can contribute to an improvement in isolation, anxiety and depression. That's why the Military Wives Choirs are so important.

The choir's repertoire for the evening will include songs old and new including some which have been composed especially for the Military Wives Choirs network.

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Stone Puppet Tree Jamboree *That's the way to do it!*

A wonderful family day of "having fun with puppets" with interactive puppet shows, singing, dancing and puppet making is planned for the last Saturday in June again this year, on **Saturday 29th June, in Market Square Stone.**

Last year, the Stone Town Mayor, Councillor Jim Davies, was attacked by Mr Punch, and was almost eaten by a crocodile! (*Have you ever been eaten by a crocodile?*)

Thankfully, Jim survived and is pictured below opening a fun-filled Event that included performances by the St Dominic's Primary School Puppet Tree after-school club, and young dancers from the Sanctuary Dance Studio.



This year, the Puppet Tree team have arranged an extended fun-filled programme, where families can come along not only to see lots of puppet shows, including **Muffin the Mule and Punch & Judy**, but will also be invited to "have a go" and perform with some puppets themselves.

Children will also be able to make their very own puppet to take home, and best of all, it's all FREE!

- There are no charges, admission fees or collections - we want everyone to become involved and have a lovely day out!

As Punch would say, "That's the way to do it!"

For further information or if you would like to help or take part in the day's event, please email David Leech: tradpup@btinternet.com



Each year the members of the congregation of St. Michael & St. Wulfad's Church sign a large Christmas card in return for making a donation instead of sending cards to each other. The money is then donated to a local charity. The money from donations from last Christmas went to Stone Stroke Club. The photograph above shows Church Warden Philip Leason, and his wife Edith, presenting the money to the Club on behalf of the church

A great start to the new year for Stone Stroke Club

The members and volunteers at Stone and District Stroke Club have had a very enjoyable start to the 2024 and have welcomed several visitors to their regular meetings.

Philip and Edith Leason started the ball rolling by calling in with a donation of £100 from the members of St Michael and St Wulfad's Church who had chosen to support Stroke Club instead of sending Christmas Cards to each other. The following week Graham Finlay, presented the club with a cheque for £400 on behalf of Longton Probus Group, which was the proceeds of their Annual Christmas Draw. As volunteer Chris affirms, this support will make a huge difference to the club. "Stroke Club is self-financed and our day to day running costs are met by the weekly subscriptions paid by our members.

These generous donations will enable us to provide some additional extras, hopefully a 'Spring Fling' party and entertainment in April and a trip out for lunch in August. Our thanks go to all concerned."

There is always something different going on at Stroke Club and a special guest attended the meeting on 7th February when Eric Wain, husband of



Graham Finlay presenting Probus cheque to Joyce Farnham who is Stroke Club President

Stroke Club volunteer Kate, brought along a small part of his 300+ collection of model buses and coaches, most of which he has made by hand over many years. The vehicles all had a connection to the local area and the attention to detail was wonderful, reproducing the original livery of each individual company represented. Members and volunteers thoroughly enjoyed seeing them all and reminiscing about holidays and trips taken over the years, even journeys to and from school!



Eric Wain with some of his buses and coaches

Stone and District Stroke Club is a friendly and sociable group, organised and run by a team of enthusiastic volunteers who aim to provide an opportunity for those who have had a stroke to make new friends, spend quality time together and enjoy a variety of social activities. The club meets **each Wednesday** at Little Stoke Cricket Club and is always keen to speak to anyone interested in finding out more, either about becoming a member or helping out as a volunteer. Please call Chris on 01785 812027 if you would like more information.



Adbaston Community Concert Society (ACCS)

A new year, a new programme!

In 2023 we hosted 4 super concerts; Manchester Camerata principals, a quintet comprised of violin, 'cello, viola oboe and piano performed in May. A baroque organ, and solo double bass recital in July. The Keyboard Trust supported a virtuoso Bulgarian pianist in September, a duo performing with viola, violin and piano entertained us in November.

Our concerts are all held at the beautiful church of St. Michaels and all Angels, Adbaston, ST20 0QE, from 5.30 pm on the 1st Sunday of May, July, September and November.

The programme is in 2 halves, with interval refreshments, drinks and socialising! Free parking is available nearby. Ticket price is £10 and are always available 'on the door'.

Dates for your diary!

2024's concerts will be; 5th May, 7th July, September 1st and November 3rd.

We already have booked Manchester Camerata for May, and an exciting Wind Trio from the Birmingham Conservatoire in July. To be confirmed are performers for September, November.

We are proud of our contacts and the superb performers we are able to bring to this rural venue. We are supported by Stafford District Arts Council, our generous patrons, and loyal audience, helping us realise our mission statement of giving musicians a platform, and our audience great music at an affordable price.

Do please add the above dates to your diary and try one or more of our concerts!



Trio Volant coming to Newport Music Club

Newport Music Club is thrilled to present Trio Volant in concert at Cosy Hall, Water Lane, TF10 LD on **Saturday March 9th at 7.00 p.m.**

Trio Volant formed in 2010 whilst they were studying at the Royal Northern College of Music. Winners of the Dorothy Parkinson Award 2017 for young outstanding British chamber musicians and Recommended Artists for Making Music for 2019-2020, the Trio regularly give formal recitals and lunchtime concerts in and around Manchester and the North West.

The Trio comprises:- Alice Braithwaite, a busy freelance bassoonist in demand throughout the North West; Beatrice Hubble, a music teacher and freelance oboist; and Tom Evans who divides his time between instrumental teaching, examining and performing as a freelance clarinettist. Individually they have worked with The Halle, Opera North, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC

Philharmonic, Manchester Concert Orchestra, Northern Chamber Orchestra and National Festival Orchestra. They have a wealth of solo, chamber music and orchestral experience.

It promises to be a delightful evening of music from well known works such as Mozart -Marriage of Figaro Overture - to lesser known compositions by Milhaud, Pierne and Bozza. Do come along and join us.

To discover more visit our website www.newportmusicclub.org

Tickets are £15 adult/£5 child (cash or cheque) - available from 'Hey Jude' and 'Bobby's' cafe in Newport, or at the door on the day. Contact the Music Club at newportmusicclubtickets@gmail.com or phone 07726 959233 to confirm the number of adults and children tickets you wish to reserve.

Newport Music Club returns to Cosy Hall on **Saturday 11th May at 7.00 p.m. with 'Flutes and Frets Duo'**

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An archive image of the station in the good old days!

North Staffs Rail Promotion Group news

The story in Stone that affects many people who value a regular train service, comes from the December timetable change. While the northbound service is unaltered, those users who liked to board a direct train to Birmingham now find the final destination is only Stafford. For journeys beyond Stafford passengers need to change trains.

There are a few benefits in terms of connections, and a few minutes can be shaved off the time to Birmingham by moving very swiftly between platforms. However, several people have contacted North Staffs Rail Promotion Group to say how inconvenient it is, racing between platforms on what used to be a simple direct journey.

Jon Heal, the Chair of NSRPG, has been regularly talking to London Northwestern Railway (LNR), who run our service, since the curtailment of the service was announced last year.

Jon told the Gazette, "It is really difficult to get any review of the effects on rail users. All train companies are under great pressure from the government to cut costs, so cutting a service in two does just do that. But if the revenue from the paying passengers is halved as well, we aren't really any better off."

At rail planning meetings, all the smart people talk about Putting the Passengers first in their PowerPoint presentations. It would be more accurate in our case to report we are Putting the Accountants first."

NSRPG would welcome comments from users, either positive or negative, that they can pass on to LNR management.

Please contact jhnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk and in particular, the rail user group would like to hear about anybody who stopped using the train as a result of the change. NSRPG are also seeking support from Railfuture, the national rail campaigners, and from local politicians.

The positive news is the continuing hard work by station volunteers supported by Emma McIntosh of North Staffs Community Rail Partnership. They are holding a community day at the station on **Wednesday March 13th**, to show some of the projects at the station, and give the community a chance to speak to the volunteers. Various activities will be going on between 10am and 1pm, and there will be a chance to join a Rails2Trails walk, guided by Claire Sandys of NSCRP. Information about volunteering and campaigns for a better train service will be available. All welcome on the day.

The next meeting of the rail user group is in Stone Station on Monday 25th March, 7 to 9pm. All welcome there as well for raising any local issues. Again contact jhnorthstaffsrail@hotmail.co.uk for information.

An invite to bowl at Barlaston

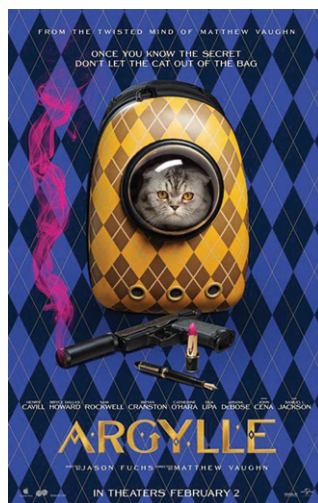
Barlaston Bowls & T.C. on Meaford Road are always looking for new members. Playing bowls is a great way to enjoy some gentle exercise which is not too taxing on the body, whilst at the same time enjoying good company and lovely surroundings.

Whether you're on your own, a couple, or a group of friends, come along and give us a try. **Social bowling available every Friday afternoon at 2pm beginning in April.** All welcome, you won't regret it!

REVIEWS MOVIE

by Joe Jenkinson





ARGYLLE

Rated: 12A Director: Matthew Vaughn
Starring: Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard, Sam Rockwell

Despite being directed by Matthew Vaughn, who gave us Kingsman: The Secret Service, Argylle had me checking my watch for the last forty minutes.

What at first seemed a comedically ambitious premise of a spy novelist accidentally predicting the ongoings of an evil syndicate in her books, its creative potential is abandoned for something far more derivative.

Much of the all-star cast is one note as well as underused; fans of Henry Cavill will be disappointed to learn of his mere fleeting cameo role, and the last third is an onslaught of twists that become more and more predictable and senseless.

JJ Rating 2/5

MEAN GIRLS

Rated: 12A Director: Samantha Jayne and Arturo Perez Jr.

Starring: Angourie Rice, Auli'i Cravalho, Tina Fey

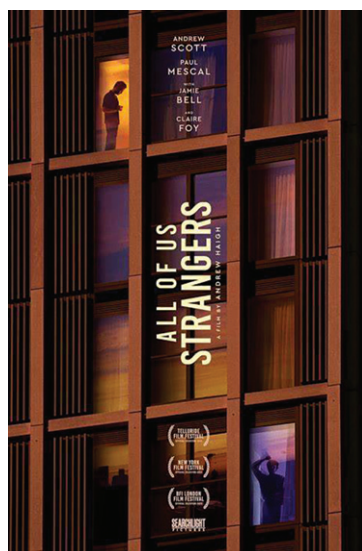
I have no previous experience with Mean Girls - neither the musical production nor the original film with Lindsey Lohan. I just ventured in hoping to have the usual escapist experience that I get with musicals and I certainly got it!

It IS an updated version where social media is referenced, but never to the point where it becomes frustrating and on the nose. The songs won't win awards but they are quite catchy.

The only contender I will pick is 'I'd Rather Be Me Than Be With You', sung with vigour by Auli'i Cravalho. I'm sure fans of the culturally significant original will detest the existence of this remake and those who love the musical on stage will be coy. Personally, I've grown to value musicals as my ultimate escape from reality capsule and I love movies involving schools these days



JJ Rating 3/5



ALL OF US STRANGERS

Rated: 15 Director: Andrew Haigh
Starring: Andrew Scott, Paul Mescal and Claire Foy

A deeply sincere and tragically beautiful tale of love, loneliness, misguided hope and family connection. It is a movie with the appropriate length that compliments its simple yet effective message underneath a gorgeous display of visuals and music that speak for it, whilst dialogue is sparse.

It enchants you but never gets carried away with its own unique identity. Andrew Scott, who has this incredible ability to step outside what is expected of an actor in an emotional scene, was soul-crushing throughout. Similar words could be said for Paul Mescal and The Crown's Claire Foy.

The unexpected ending was on my mind all week, the signs of a brilliant experience.

JJ Rating 5/5



Helen and Andy at Eagle House

Eccleshall couple's luxury accommodation shortlisted for 3 Staffordshire Tourism Awards

Andy and Helen, the owners of Eagle House in Eccleshall, are thrilled to be finalists in three different categories of the 2024 Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism and Good food awards. The prestigious award ceremony takes place on 14th March 2024 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Lichfield, and is the 10th anniversary of this distinguished event.

The husband and wife team have worked really hard over the last 2 years, setting up and running their accommodation business. With no previous experience in hospitality, the former Nurse and Nuclear Physicist have been on a steep learning curve and enjoyed every minute of their adventure together.

They have made it through to the final stage of the competition having been pitted against 140 applicants. Having won the Silver award for their Bed and Breakfast in last year's competition, they are delighted to now be shortlisted in three categories, acknowledging their progression and success. These are; B&B/Guest House of the Year, Self-Catering Accommodation of the Year as well as the award for Ethical, responsible & Sustainable Tourism.

Andy told the Gazette "It is a great honour to be in the running for these awards. For such a new business, with our little team of two, it is a real achievement for us to be competing against fantastic and well established businesses such as Alton Towers and the Trentham Estate."

Eagle House is stunning grade 2 listed residence, with over 200 years of history. It offers three spacious and elegant Bed and Breakfast rooms as well as the Eagle's Nest, a cosy one bedroom self-catering Apartment. It's luxurious, with lots of little extras and is also committed to sustainability. It is the only accommodation provider in the area with an Electric Car Charger for guests!

Located just a few minutes stroll from the thriving and elegant High Street, offering guests an array of independent shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes.

Helen said "We feel so lucky to live in Eccleshall! It is such a warm and welcoming community, there is always something going on and so many nice places to eat and drink. But we also have the tranquil Staffordshire countryside right on our door step and our guests also love to explore all the pretty woods and footpaths!"

The couple have had a great year running their hospitality business, seeing an increase in bookings and continually improving their accommodation. They are excited to attend the award ceremony and celebrate all they have achieved with the other finalists.

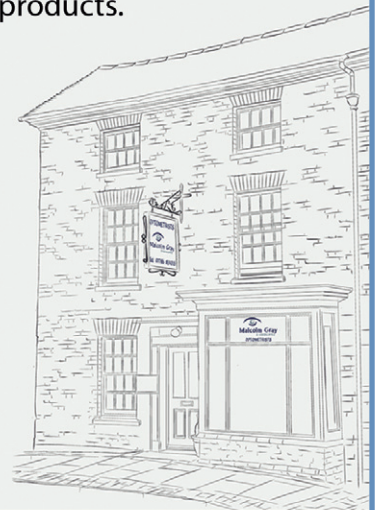


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Stone Lions Annual PSA Blood Testing Evening

Stone Lions Club (CIO) would like to invite local men over the age of 40 to attend their Annual PSA Blood Testing Event at the Stone House Hotel on Tuesday 30th April 2024. This event is being sponsored by Stone Lions Club (CIO) and is organised in conjunction with the Graham Fulford Trust, a registered charity who have supported Stone Lions Club (CIO) and a number of other Lions Clubs in recent PSA Testing Events.

Past experience has shown that this event is always very popular, with almost 500 men attending the last session in April 2023, and Stone Lions are anticipating that a similar number will attend this year.

To avoid congestion in the car park and reduce the length of waiting time for those attending, tests will be carried out **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY** and unfortunately it will not be possible to offer a test to anyone who does not have an appointment. You can register for an appointment online or, if you do not have internet access, by calling Graham Fulford Trust on 01926 419959.

Appointments are available from 6.30pm – 9.30pm and bookings may be made as from 1st March 2023.

If you have not attended a Stone Lions PSA Testing event within the last 3 years, you will need to register with the Graham Fulford Trust so that they have your contact details to enable them to notify you of your results. It is very straightforward to register, just visit www.mypsatestests.org.uk click on **Our Partners**, scroll down, click on the **STONE LIONS** logo and follow the instructions on screen. Register using your name, e-mail address and a password (remembering to make a note of the e-mail address you have used and your password). You will then receive an e-mail which you should open straight away and click on the green verification button. Once you have clicked on the verification button you will be able to make an appointment and access your results when they are ready.

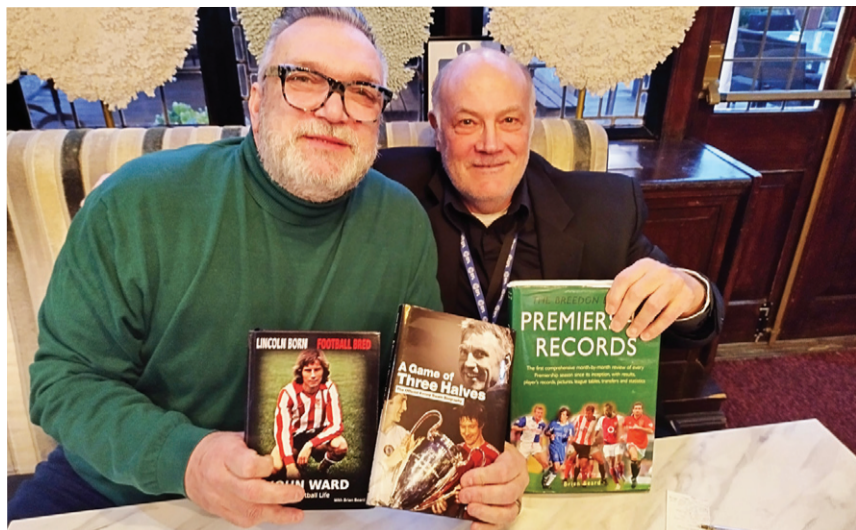
If you have taken advantage of one of Stone Lions PSA Home Testing events during the last 3 years you will already be registered with Graham Fulford Trust, in which case please go to <https://slc.mypsatestests.org.uk> to book your appointment and follow the instructions on screen.

When you have made your appointment and completed the medical questionnaire, please print off your Blood Form, which has a unique QR Code holding all your information, and bring it with you on the night of your test as the laboratory will need it when processing your blood. If you do not have a printer available it will be possible to log on to your account and print one off when arriving at the Stone House Hotel.

To make sure the evening runs as smoothly as possible, please arrive promptly for your appointment. Every effort will be taken to ensure the safety of those attending and all are asked to follow any guidance on the night with regard to wearing of masks, social distancing etc.

Once again, Stone Lions Club (CIO) is prepared to provide tests free of charge for those who wish to attend, but there is no doubt that this project is extremely expensive to deliver, as factoring in the cost of phlebotomists and overheads, the cost of processing each test works out to around £20 per person. It is sincerely hoped that those attending will be willing to make a contribution towards this cost by donating generously on the night, to ensure that this service can be offered in future years. Donations may be made either by cheque, in cash or by making use of the Card Reader which will be available at the time.

In addition, Gift Aid forms will be available and UK Taxpayers are requested to complete one wherever possible to maximise the value of their donation.



Brian Beard on the right, with footballer Neil "Razor" Ruddock

By the book...

After ploughing up and down the UK motorway network as Sky Sports' longest serving football reporter and amassing 1,296 games in the process, Brian Beard decided enough was enough. He decided instead to concentrate on developing his other passion, writing autobiographies. Sadly his most recent work was completing the life story of well-known renowned local football man George Andrews who passed away last year. Brian told the Gazette.

"It was a pleasure and honour to place on record the life of 'The Bear', a true sport who brought pleasure to many people during his career. I must admit I felt humbled by his career total of 5,000 games with my tally which was half that."

Even though he concentrated on covering football, for radio, Sky and a variety of written media outlets Brian still found time to write autobiographies as well as being Associate Historian for the Football Association. He also had the unique experience of being a ghost writer for George Best, remember him? It was a not so easy task but it did lead to a momentous compliment from the football legend as Brian explains.

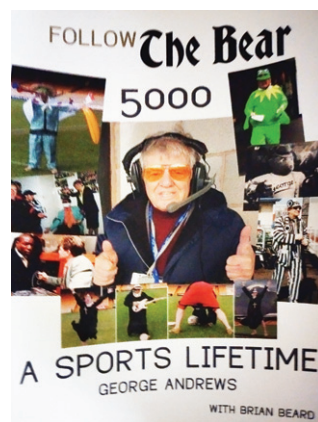
I was engaged to write a ghosted newspaper column for George but George being George was rarely where he was supposed to be, when he was supposed to be. So, invariably, I was literally writing his column, as George, for George. Fortunately it went down well and it led to the best compliment I ever had in my career as a journalist. George said to me one day, "Brian, no one has ever got inside my head as good as you, thanks."

But that wasn't all, one day a package arrived through the post. It was yet another of George's autobiographies, 'The Good, the Bad and the Bubbly' which just about summed up George Best. Not written by Brian but in appreciation of his other role as George's ghost writer. Brian takes up the story.

"Originally my thought was the copy George sent me was one of those given to authors 'gratis' by the publisher. But on closer inspection I spotted a sticker on the inside of the dust jacket, from a bookshop. George had put his hand in his own pocket and posted me a copy and written inside the title page, in George's hand was a dedication; 'To Brian (Alias Mr Swayze) Kind Regards George."

After working for the two biggest companies in the autobiography-producing marketplace Brian became disillusioned with the overall philosophy

behind the business model of those companies which seemed to place the fiscal bottom line ahead of a true record and legacy for their clients. And so he set up his own company to produce bespoke autobiographies which placed each client front and centre when it came to producing a satisfactory and accurate record of their lives for their family, friends and loved ones.



Brian adds.

"I am proud that each and every one of the dozen plus life stories I have written has elicited the same positive response from those clients at the heart of what is after all a legacy to their loved ones. To paraphrase, what each subject said to me when they received their book was,

'Brian I can honestly say you have captured my character perfectly in the way you have taken my words and put them into black and white. 'Thank you' and I must in all modesty add that sentiment was accompanied on more than one occasion by a few tears of sincere gratitude."

A driving force behind Brian's philosophy is a question that many of us ask after someone close to us has passed away. He told the Gazette.

"I know very little about my parents' lives and even less about my grandparents, because I never asked questions while they were alive. My paternal grandfather was at Gallipoli, in 1915, a year later my maternal grandfather, a master baker, was caught up in the Easter Rising in Dublin. I wish I had asked those questions before it was too late. That is why I think writing bespoke autobiographies is a beautiful way of placing on record a lifetime of memories that may otherwise drift away."

If you are interested in having an autobiography written contact Brian at bespokeautobiographies@gmail.com



Ladies showing off their works of art at one of the classes

New Art Classes in Stone & Eccleshall

Jenny Hardacre, from Jmh Art, has started new art classes in Stone and Eccleshall, for anyone who wants to lift their mood a bit. There are 4 classes which take place weekly at Eccleshall Community centre every Monday 1-2pm and 18:30-19:30 And Stone Station Community Centre every Wednesday and Thursday 18:30 – 19:30

The classes are painting with acrylics, whilst sipping hot tea/coffee and relaxing. They paint a variety of things from landscapes to still life, even the highland cow has made an appearance. There's really something in there for everyone and suggestions are always encouraged. The price is £8 per person, everything is provided so you only need to bring yourself along.

Jenny told the Gazette

"I want to reach as many people in the community as I can to help with the struggles of mental health.

I suffered badly with mental health back in 2019, I was in a coercive controlled relationship where I lost all my identity and will to live. I fled the relationship back to my mothers with nothing but a suitcase. I was in a deep hole of self hatred and my thought would take over my days. I came across some paints at my mothers and sat down one afternoon and started painting. I cannot begin to tell you how much painting helped me to get back onto my feet, and release my mind from stress and worry's.



Now I want to give back to the community, for all those that are struggling with mental health and for all those that feel they are alone. So I decided that I wanted to make a safe, affordable space where the community can come to unwind, make friends and express themselves.

I host weekly painting sessions at the Stone Station which is such a beautiful place to get together. I want to get the word out for anyone who is feeling isolated, anxious or down."

To book a place contact Jenny via email jenny_marieh@hotmail.co.uk or call 07444 434956.

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Stride Revive: Uniting Our Community, One Step at a Time

Welcome to Stride Revive, where each step we take is a testament to our commitment to wellness, connection, and togetherness.

My name is Evelyn the founder of Stride Revive, I live in Great Haywood and I am passionate about wellness for homeworkers. I am on a mission to get people out and walking into nature, to embrace the healing power of the great outdoors, and to foster a sense of belonging within our community.

Every day, at 1 pm, we invite you to step outside, breathe in the fresh air, and embark on a 30-minute walk through our village streets and pathways. It is a simple yet powerful gesture - one that holds the potential to uplift your spirits, clear your mind, and invigorate your body.

But Stride Revive is more than just a walk. It is a community- a gathering of neighbours, friends, and fellow villagers, united in our shared commitment to wellness and camaraderie. That is why we encourage you to join our community on social media, where you can share your walking journey, connect with others, and inspire one another to keep striding forward.



So, let us lace up our shoes, step outside, and embrace the beauty of our surroundings. Let us walk together, talk together, and uplift one another as we stride towards a healthier, happier future. Together, we can make a difference- one step at a time.

Join us today at 1 pm, and do not forget to share your walk on social media using #StrideRevive.

Together, let us make every step count. There will certainly be Walk and Talk meet ups held daily in Great Haywood, and coming soon to Stone and Eccleshall, just go to Facebook to find events in your area.

Let us stop being domesticated and reconnect with our birthright of nature's healing embrace!



Making Lives Better

Stone Community Hub exists to support people of all ages who are in need because of ill health, loneliness, disability or financial hardship, through the provision of advice, and activities to help improve their quality of life and, in particular to alleviate the impacts of social isolation and adverse economic circumstances.

The geographical area that Stone Community Hub (SCH) covers is Stone and the surrounding areas and villages, more specifically Stone, Barlaston, Yarnfield, Swynnerton, Eccleshall, Fulford, Oulton, Hilderstone, Milwich, Sandon, Burston, Mill Meece, Cold Meece, Cotes Heath, Moddershall, Norton Bridge and Beech.

SCH receives funding from a variety of sources and in many forms, including either one off or regular charitable donations from individuals and local businesses and companies, grants, schools, national retail outlets, local churches, local publications, Stafford Borough Council, Stone Town Council and many parishes. This list is far from comprehensive but just illustrates the broad diversity of the generous donors. National grants are also applied for but in these challenging times, there are many more organisations competing for reducing pots of money!

The services that SCH provide are continually being added to but these include the Food Bank; a daily drop-in centre; craft sessions; one-to-one support; free weekly meals (Hub Grub) and snacks; a warm meeting place for old and new friends; free internet help, access and advice; regular activity groups; a job club and help with CVs and applications and above all a warm welcome!

We also host special one-off events, the last one being our Christmas buffet, where the tables were full of Christmas cheer as were our visitors!

The current list of activities on offer at SCH include daily drop in and food parcels, Monday to Friday and the first Saturday of the month; Hub Grub (a two course meal) on Mondays and Thursdays; Thriving Together on Monday afternoons; Arts and Crafts on a Tuesday and Friday morning; Games Club on a Tuesday and Friday morning; IT Help, One-to-One Advice, Crochet Club and the Parent and Toddler Group on Wednesday afternoons.

But whilst this list is our current provision there are always new ideas and plans to add additional activities to it, subject of course to available funding!

The Hub is run as a charity by a board of Trustees and a small management team and a very dedicated team of selfless

volunteers who are the life blood of the organisation, they help on a regular basis with the day to day running of the establishment, particularly Hub Grub, an endless supply of hot and cold drinks,



snacks, conversation and a friendly ear.

Anyone can drop in and have a chat regarding their needs, we do not discriminate or judge the reasons why help is being sought and any conversation is treated in the strictest of confidence.

We are so lucky to have a number of local companies, supermarkets and individuals who very kindly support the Hub and its activities and running cost with donations of all kinds and the Food Bank would not be stocked without them.

We are continually looking to expand the services and activities that are provided all of which need ongoing support from the local community. Help is always welcome in all forms whether it is by becoming a volunteer for one of a variety of roles; making one off or regular donations; donating food, or arts and crafts; following us on social media and sharing our posts; raising awareness of our services; facilitating a group for special advice or helping to cook a meal on site.

If you are interested in visiting us or getting involved and helping provide these valuable services, please drop into The Hub in the Frank Jordan Community Centre on Lichfield Street in Stone between 10.00 and 14.00 Monday to Friday, 09.00 and 12.00 on Saturdays or contact The Manager (manager@stonecommunityhub.com).



Lions Quiz Night Fun

The Stone Lions (CIO) Quiz Night on January 27th was advertised as 'A Quiz with a Difference' and, with a round where the answers were given and participants were tasked with providing the questions and a round where the decision of the majority determined where points were scored, it certainly was different!

Over 60 attendees rose to the challenge – a total of 12 teams - and all really entered into the spirit of this unique evening which raised a total of £450 to be used in support of Stone Lions charities. It was a very closely run contest, with The Crafty Grafters being the overall winners.

The members of Stone Lions Club would like to thank all those who attended and hope to see them all at their next Quiz Night. Quizmaster Lion Dave Handley commented "It is always a risk to try something different, but the general opinion of those attending was very positive, so it's a case of 'watch this space' for the format of our next quiz!"

If you would like to find out more about Stone Lions Club and their activities in the local community, please call 0345 833 8478.

Eccleshall Poetry Group meetings

Laughter is the best medicine! Clinical research has found that the emotional experience of laughter can relieve stress, help ameliorate pain, boost the immune system and help form social bonds. – And it's contagious!

As children we used to laugh hundreds of times a day, but as adults, life is more serious and our laughter is less frequent.

We need to laugh more and connect with those who do laugh and enjoy life. Eccleshall Poetry Group could prove to be the tonic needed.

They meet in Eccleshall Methodist Hall from 2.00-4.00pm on the **1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.**

They start their March meetings on **Thursday 7th March** with "Humorous Poetry". Expect a wealth of poems to be read by such poets as Spike Milligan, Edward Lear, Pam Ayres, Shel Silverstein, Lewis Carroll and of course the famous Anon will probably feature too.

Thursday 21st March, same time, same place, if you're hungry for more poems, they will be reading poems for "World Poetry Day" – with the theme of "Food".

In **April, Thursday 4th** from 2.00-4.00pm, their poems will centre around two of Ireland's greatest poets: "Yeats and Heaney". Perhaps W.B. Yeats' famous sonnet which focuses on a particular story from Greek mythology which brings about the Trojan war: "Leda and the Swan" will make an appearance. Maybe "Casualty" by Seamus Heaney will feature too in this battle of the Irish giants.

Then on **Thursday 16th April** they will be joining the country's traditional birthday celebrations for "Shakespeare's birthday" and all things "Happy and Glorious". So you don't need to head for Stratford-on-Avon, as sonnets and other forms of poetry will fill the afternoon as the Group enjoys another meeting.

Come and see if their style of poetry celebrations are for you. For more details call Thelma Whitfield on: 01785 760017.

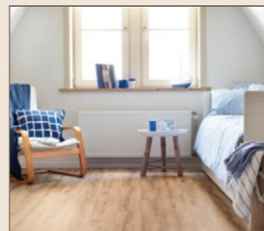
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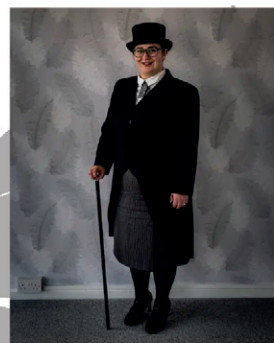
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Sir Gavin with Councillor Phillip Leason, who attended the site to ensure something be done about the issue.

Gavin takes action to fix blocked stream

Sir Gavin Williamson accompanied Councillor Phillip Leason on a visit to the Scotch Brook culvert near Stone, which had received complaints about the build-up of waste and subsequent effects on the environment.

The culvert in question connects to the River Trent and regularly fills up with silt, already prone to overflowing in the case of torrential rain.

It costs the Environment Agency around £100,000 every 18 to 24 months to remove the silt and debris. However, Sir Gavin and Councillor Leason were asked to visit the culvert to see that not only was the culvert blocked with silt and debris, but vast amounts of rubbish and plastic.

Sir Gavin met with one of the volunteers who helped to litter-pick the area but found that more help was needed to restore the culvert to peak performance.

The culvert, which resembles a dumping ground, has caused concerns for environmental degradation as the waste poses an environmental hazard. As well as this, the blocked culvert could actually lead to real problems for townspeople.

In 1987 the same culvert, blocked by

rubbish, collapsed and the river flooded Stone Town Centre, leaving cars and houses under water.

Sir Gavin urged pro-active measures be taken to prevent this from happening again, calling on the Environment Agency to clear the stream and encouraging locals to help out with litter picking. He was pleased that his appeal for action resulted in success, as the Environment Agency rapidly cleared the blocked culvert and the surrounding debris, which is now fit for purpose again.

Sir Gavin said: "I'm happy to announce that pushing for the authorities to be pro-active in dealing with the blocked culvert at Scotch Brook was successful.

It is crucial that we think ahead with such issues. If I and others had not acted, we could have been in danger of repeating the floods of 1987, which were caused by waste build-up and resulted in damage to the environment and to the local town. It can also be incredibly dangerous.

I'd like to thank the Environmental Agency for responding quickly to my call to keep the people of Stone safe."



Back Row - Isabella Buckley, Rory Welsh, Maria Kelly, Molly Philpotts, Heidi Naylor
Middle Row - Natalia Ankers, Mary Antcliff, Kayla Campbell
Front Row - Hannah Hamilton-Sims

Rooftop ballet stars to take the stage with English Youth Ballet

Staffordshire RAD ballet school Rooftop Studios, which has branches in both Stone and Leek, already has cause to celebrate this year – with the news that several ballet dancers from both will perform with the English Youth Ballet at The Regent Theatre in Stoke on 12 & 13 April.

The Company uses 100 young dancers chosen by audition from within an 80-100 mile radius of each venue; giving young dancers the opportunity to experience the creative process from rehearsal to performance.

Nine Rooftop Studios students were selected following the highly competitive audition process – including Isabella Buckley, Rory Welsh, Maria Kelly, Molly Philpotts, Heidi Naylor, Mary Antcliff, Kayla Campbell, Natalia Ankers and Hannah Hamilton-Sims who will go on to perform in the forthcoming production of The Sleeping Beauty.

Claire Simpson, Studio Director of the Leek school and manager of the Stone branch, told the Gazette:

"We couldn't be prouder of our brilliant young dancers – or of the fantastic teaching team who have nurtured their talents, especially our RAD qualified registered teacher Verity Caddy. This is a phenomenal opportunity and they have all worked so hard to get through the notoriously tough audition process. We can't wait to see them perform in April."

For more details of dance classes at Rooftop Studios, including RAD ballet for all ages (including over-55s Silver Swans classes) email info@rooftopstudios.co.uk

Walton pupils fundraiser 2024

For the 3rd year running, Samantha Owen has organised a charity fundraising event. She told the Gazette "Last year we raised £4795 for North Staffs children's departments and for a new forest school roof at Walton Priory Middle school in Stone where all the kids attend.

This year I have 46 children aged 9-11 years doing a 1/2 Ironman challenge throughout April. This involves swimming 1.2 miles, cycling 56 miles and running 13.1 miles.

The money raised this year will go to YoungMinds children's mental health charity and to Walton Priory middle school to refurbish their school hall.

It started in 2022 with 8 kids walking, raising £2000, then 2023 with 17 kids doing a triathlon raising £4795 and now we're up to 46 this year hopefully beating last year's total.

Some of these kids are on year 3 of these charity events and loving it. They are a huge inspiration and just want to make a difference."

If you'd like to donate or find out more you can visit https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/samantha-owen-4?utm_term=dgmd8KQYK



FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE 2024



Millie Tingles

Millie Tingles was a diminutive lovely lady who I had known for several years. Millie was deeply interested in my job and called upon my services when she required a sign for her new business venture.

She had made friends with a farmer, who ran a pick your own strawberries in the season, and he had a caravan from which he wanted to serve cups of tea and cakes which Millie quickly volunteered to run for him in return for a share in the profit that it made. He readily agreed and little Millie was soon in business with no immediate overheads. She asked me to paint a sign to read *'Millies Kitchen'* which I duly did with bright red letters on a piece of yellow painted plywood. I didn't charge her anything, but wished her good luck in her new venture.

A few days into the job, a problem manifested, inasmuch as, few people knew where she was. The farmer had sited the caravan behind a hedge which hid her from view, and was not really concerned about how many cups of tea or pieces of cake she sold, and told her bluntly that the unit couldn't be moved as there was nowhere else for it to go!

My heart went out to Millie. I knew for a fact that her husband had little time for her, and little Millie wouldn't say boo to a goose. That day something set in the pit of my guts and I went and had a cup of tea with her.

'How have you done today?' I asked her, *'One piece of battenberg and two cups of tea'* was the reply. *'I can't really go on like this! What can we do?'*

'Right,' I told her, *'We're going to change your name!'* Millie regarded me hollowly. A few years previously, I had worked for a firm selling books and the guy who ran a roadside diner where I frequently stopped for a bacon sandwich asked me if I could get him a particular title about the great train robbers.

'I've got it on the van now,' I told him... *'You're in luck!'* *'I used to be inside with one of 'em'* he said proudly in a broad Scottish accent. The young lad who was with me at the time gave a startled gasp, and involuntarily took a backward step, and the next day told all his mates about it and that he carried a gun under the counter, had tattoos all over his arms and was pretty nasty piece of work.

'Greasy Jake' as they named him did a brilliant trade from our village alone over the next week.

'So what's my new name going to be?' Millie tingles asked me *'Vile Mave'* I told her. *'Eh??'*

I acquired an 'A board from the corner of a nearby street, and painted it to a bright red, and spent nearly a week creating a cartoon character which took the form of a huge ugly person with a hairshorn lip and a complexion like a welder's bench, painted it onto the board and added some aggressive looking text that read

**'EAT AT VILE MAVE'S.....
100,000 FLIES CAN'T BE
WRONG'**

The text that I used was the same style as was used in the Harry Potter films, old english with spikes sticking out of it. I then painted up another piece of ply which read

**'People have eaten here and gone on
to lead normal lives'**

When I went to Millie's, we put the 'A board just as people came on to the strawberry field, and I said a little prayer.....

It was answered.

By eleven o'clock, Millie had sold out of cake, flapjack and was brewing up her fourth pot of tea. Her pretty face was alight with pleasure and *'Vile Mave'* took her place in Staffordshire folklore.

By Alan Povey



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U3A to the Marrow



Kate Hardt with her Prize Winning Side Saddle

Eccleshall-based Master Saddler in National Saddlery Competition

Master Saddler Kate Hardt entered the National Saddlery Competition in London on the 6th of February for the third time in a row since becoming a member of the Society of Master Saddlers in 2021, winning prizes each time. This annual event is held at Saddlers' Hall and allows members to compete in different disciplines, according to their membership level. Winning awards there is highly prestigious.

Kate began her career by becoming an apprentice saddler in her teens. After a few decades of following a different career path, she returned to her roots and joined the Society of Master Saddlers. Having qualified as a Saddle-Maker and Bridle-Maker in November 2021, Kate was granted the title of Master Saddler in March 2022.

This year, Kate entered a side-saddle as well as an astride saddle into the competition, and was awarded a 2nd and a 3rd place respectively.

Working on side saddles is a relatively new field of activity for Kate, who has ridden and competed side-saddle for more than ten years, with the pinnacle being a victory at the side-saddle dash held at the Sandon Point-to-Point race 2019.

Kate was also featured as bench saddler of the month in the November 2023 issue of Equestrian Trade News magazine, the official media partner of the British Equestrian Trade Association.

Based in Eccleshall, Kate Hardt Saddlery Ltd supplies a variety of British-made tack and saddlery. Her skills include not just saddles and side saddles, but also bridles and harness. Commissions for bespoke items such as a crystal browband are as much part of her portfolio as repairs to all kinds of tack. And if a customer would like a top-quality belt or treat their dog to a posh new collar and lead, Kate can craft those as well.

Stone and District u3a continues to attract new members of all ages. This time I have invited one of our 600+ members to tell us what he likes about the groups he's joined. But don't just take our word for it, come along. If you are unsure, look out for one of our handbooks, send us an email via the website or phone Liz on 07811 369769.

In other news, we have a shiny new website stone.u3asite.uk where you can find out about our groups and our next speaker meeting, to Tutbury Castle, where Curator Lesley Smith will give us another witty and theatrical talk about a prominent woman in history.

U3A to the Marrow

Back in the day, before the Internet when everything was in black and white, you spent fifty years working away, then got given a gold watch when you retired. After that you grew marrows for a couple of seasons until the Grim Reaper came calling, much to the government's satisfaction. Nowadays people have the audacity to retire and still be fit, healthy and raring to try something other than growing marrows. This is where the u3a or to give it its full title "University of the Third Age" came in.

It's not a university though you can certainly learn a lot. It's an organisation where people with similar interests can come together and form groups. The u3a may provide some facilities and meeting places. In return you have to grow marrows.... no you don't, you pay a subscription and can join any number of differing groups.

Stone and District has over 50 groups under its umbrella ranging from Allotments to Wine tasting. For a flat fee of £45 you can attend as many of these groups as you like. My betting the marrow growers are hiding in one or more of them.

I spent my work years grinding away in a scientific background. Come retirement I decided to explore the arts. U3a had just what I needed. To start with I joined the Guitar group. It didn't matter if you couldn't play very well so long as you were willing to give it a go. There was always someone to help. The feeling of accomplishment when you got through a tune and kept up with everyone else was addictive.

Flushed with musical success I branched out and joined the Photography group. For me it spans the technical and artistic. There are some people there who are very good and some who aren't. The very good ones are always keen to help those who are less experienced keeping their fingers away from the front of the lens and/or

remember to take the lens cap off.

To challenge us and keep things interesting we have "Projects". A recent one is "Close up and Macro" this is where you can take detailed pictures of marrows. Other projects have included bringing in a model for portraiture, Still Life, Dereliction, Nighttime Photography. With Still Life we set up tables with ornaments and decorations in the village hall. Nighttime photography was more of a free for all. I decided a ruined abbey silhouetted against a starry sky would get me street cred and the fabled "Great photo" comment from one of the experts. That's the highest accolade. Actually, there is one higher "Wish I'd taken that" but I've only heard it once. Mostly it's "Nice composition" or "Beautifully in focus". There's nearly always a constructive critique. I've never heard anything negative. Photography projects can fill you with enthusiasm. We had a project called "Power". The Photography Group gives good guidance on the use of photo editing software. One of the main ones is Photoshop Elements. I got all esoteric and tried to show "Photoshop Power" by recreating da Vinci's Last Supper in my back garden with a picnic table, checked



The photography group

cloth and two vases. Da Vinci, eat your heart out. I didn't get the fabled "Great photo" comment. I did get an "Oh!" I'm taking that as a positive.

The U3A and all its groups are there for people to meet people with similar interests.

It can also be a vessel to push you out of your comfort zone and get you to try something different, whether its Hawaiian canoeing (you need to learn the Hawaii 50 theme tune first) or Scrabble, there are U3A people out there who want to meet you (marrow growers no longer need use the dark web).

By the way you don't even have to be retired to join the u3a, just not in full-time work.

Tony Phillips



The guitar group



Stone Choral Society Concerts

Stone Choral Society have had a busy few months. On Saturday 11th November we performed Will Todd's Mass in Blue. This was a different work for us to perform!

The solo part carried the piece and the chorus with its bluesy lines. Andrea Tweedale, an opera singer, who has sung with us before soared above the choir with her top Cs and clear jazzy melodies.

The change of venue in St Dominic's Priory Hall was perfect for the performance. Remembrance Day concert also included excerpts from The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins to John Rutter's Go Forth into the World in Peace and Soldier Boy and to a haunting setting of the famous McCrae poem In Flanders Field and a setting of the In Paradisum by local composer and musician Stuart Johnson.

No sooner was the concert over then we were off to practise our Christmas pieces for our annual concert on Thursday 14th December back in Christ Church Stone.

This annual event comprises both sacred and secular Christmas musical pieces; some very well known and others written recently. This year the Choral Society was joined by part of the well-established Acceler8 Band (formerly the Co-op Band). They brought a traditional feel to our singing with their accompaniments as traditional as mince pies and mulled wine. Their solo band pieces were uplifting with their Christmas Medleys and a beautiful rendition of O Holy Night with Euphonium player Emily Braverman's solo ringing out.

On Tuesday 19th December we sang our Christmas repertoire around the piano at the Crown Wharf. It was a great evening in the heart of Stone as we sang to a packed audience.

Our Come and Sing day was on



Saturday January 27th, we spent the day singing Mozart from his operas to Masses. It was accompanied, as always, by superb cakes made by our members.

See the poster below for our **Spring Concert, this will be on Saturday 16th March 2024** in St Dominic's Priory Hall.



We are singing Fauré's Requiem and some other sacred favourites.

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

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

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TUES 9:30-10:30 **Pilates** Stone

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

TUES 18:20-19:10 **Boogie Bounce** Stone

TUES 19:30-20:30 **Pilates** Stone

WEDS 13:30-15:00 **Line Dancing & Social** Stone

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Sandon All Saints Church to open in the week

This Grade 1 listed Church, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, is now open to the public on set days during the week, they are:

- Monday evenings from 6.30 pm to 9 pm
 - Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12noon
 - Saturday mornings in March, from 10am to 12.30pm
- Guides will be on hand to welcome visitors and provide tours. Find us on Church Lane, off A51, Sandon, ST18 ODB. Further details can also be found on www.sandonallsaints.com

Bowling fun in Barlaston

Barlaston Bowls & T. C., on the Meaford Road in Barlaston, are inviting new players to come along and join them.

If your New Years resolution was to get some exercise, but golf was too expensive, you want to stretch your legs and keep active, but running or jogging is not good for your knees, and you find walking a little boring, then Bowling may just be perfect for you!

What better way to enjoy some gentle exercise and good company in lovely surroundings?

Whether you've never played before, or you have played plenty, you're on your own, a couple, or a group of friends, come along and give us a try. Social bowling available **every Friday afternoon at 2pm beginning in April**. All welcome, you won't regret it!

Murder Mystery at Sugnall Hall

The Stafford Players will be presenting a brand new and exciting murder mystery in the lovely setting of Sugnall Hall.

The drama is 1920's themed and is full of rivalry, jealousy and intrigue with the addition of a murder to solve!

It will be taking place on the evenings of **Friday 17th and Saturday 18 May** and will include a welcome drink and buffet supper.

For more information, contact Deborah Williams at debs.f.williams@gmail.com or call on 07899 836484.

Charity Beetle Drive

Great Bridgeford Village Hall Management Committee will be hosting an afternoon of fun with a Beetle Drive for all the family to enjoy, **on Saturday 13th April at 2pm**.

Tickets are £5, and available from Denise on 07786 393360. All proceeds will be donated to St. Chad's Church in Seighford, to go towards urgent repairs to its roof and tower.

There will be Tea, Coffee and a Cake Sale, however you're welcome to 'bring a bottle' along if you prefer.

Spare Saplings

I have about 20 Birch saplings and three oak saplings, in Stone, which I would like to plant, but finding a piece of land seems to be difficult, as most land is either for agriculture or for building.

If any readers have any suggestions I would be pleased to hear from them. I had hoped to plant them for future generations to enjoy. Please email brownmab.mabel1990@googlemail.com

Accommodation Wanted

Dear Readers, I am moving to Stone and looking for accommodation in the area. I am a driver so countryside area is fine.

I am helping out a local church for this period and work in a local school. I have two dogs. Very well behaved. I can help out in the house if needed or any care work.

Please contact Gail 07789 114052 if you can help.



Dougie Mac launches two new fundraising events!

Dougie Mac has introduced two fresh fundraising events for 2024, to go alongside its popular Bike Ride and Midnight to Sunrise Walk events.

The brand new 10K Run and Colour Dash, both on **Saturday 13th April**, will offer a new challenge to local runners while also providing people of all ages with the chance to fundraise for the hospice.

The 10K Run, sponsored by St. Modwen Homes, is a chip-timed event that will start and finish at World of Wedgwood, offering participants a wonderful route through the local countryside. This event presents runners with the chance to support the hospice through fundraising, with early bird registration prices beginning at £20 and later increasing to £25. Alternatively, runners can opt for the £40 registration fee with no expectation of fundraising.

Meanwhile, the brand new Colour Dash event offers individuals of every age an opportunity to support the hospice while having lots of fun. Supported by BeeActive, this event is a 1K run at Wedgwood Cricket Club, where participants kick off by playfully tossing powdered paint at each other, before

continuing to get covered at various paint stations around the course.

Registration starts at only £8 for under 16s and £10 for adults. Additionally, participants can choose, for an extra £5 fee, to access an inflatable '2-part Energy Assault Course'.

Deborah Vickers, Head of Business and Community Fundraising, said,

"We're thrilled about our two new events. We're hoping that our 10K run will appeal to keen runners looking to improve their race times and also those who want to set themselves a running challenge to support Dougie Mac.

We've never had an event quite like the Colour Dash before. It gives our youngest supporters the chance to take part in one of our fundraising events and we're inviting everyone to join in, embrace the mess, and enjoy a fabulous, fun event. It promises to be a fantastic experience, all while supporting the hospice"

Both events will take place on Saturday 13th April. Anyone wishing to find out more or sign up to either of these events to support their Dougie Mac, can go to their website at

www.dougiemac.org.uk/events/



Thanks to Gazette reader Michael Potter, from Stone, who sent in this photograph he'd taken of this stunning February Sunset, taken from his back doorstep.



Chinese New Year parade at Trentham

On 10th February, Trentham held a parade to mark the Chinese New Year. This year is The Year Of The Dragon.

Martin Robinson managed to get some pictures, but was out without his camera, so caught these on his trusty Google Pixel phone.



Alison Wakeman will present *Awareness of Bees and their importance in the environment.* Photo by Rebecca Franses

Guest speakers coming to Stone Chrysanth & Dahlia Society

Stone Chrysanth & Dahlia Society have series of talks in the coming months, on **March 14** Philip Aubury Presents *"Keeping them in Shape – pruning tips."*

This talk will also include practical demonstrations. Philip began his career as a student at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and then studied at Pershore College of Horticulture for the National Certificate in Horticulture.

A former director of Birmingham's Botanical Gardens, Phillip was the one who helped reshape them into one of the city's most precious oases. Philip now focuses on lecturing and his other favourite hobby – his own garden!

Then on **April 11** Duncan Coombs Presents *"Ponds, Marginals and Bog Gardens"*

Duncan is an enthusiastic speaker, a qualified botanist and horticulturist, passionate plantsman and plant hunter. Following time spent in biological research and development, he has spent many years lecturing in decorative horticulture.

Much of his professional development involved visiting and liaising with gardeners and their gardens, as well as nursery owners and their nurseries, during which he amassed extensive plant knowledge.

Now in retirement he gardens, gives talks to garden clubs and other organisations, leads garden tours, writes books and travels widely plant hunting.



A stunning waterlily bursts with colour against the water

And on **May 9** Alison Wakeman Presents *"Awareness of Bees and their importance in the environment"* Having been a beekeeper for a couple of years, Alison realised there was a lack of education in primary schools why bees are so important. So she created Alison's Bee Class in 2014.

Visitors and guests are welcome to attend meetings which are usually held **on the second Thursday of the month** at 7.30 prompt at Christ Church Centre, Christchurch Way, Stone ST15 8ZB

Admission £2.00 including refreshments (tea and coffee) provided at the beginning of meetings, from 6.45pm

Full details are on the groups website at <https://stonecanddgardenclub.org/>

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**WE BUY ANY
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FAST**

Jess Glynne, Manic Street Preachers and Busted announced as Headliners at Trentham Live 2024

Trentham Live are thrilled to announce the headline acts for their 2024 music spectacular.

The 4-day music event promises to be bigger and better than ever before. Trentham Live 2024 will take place from **Thursday 15th August through to Sunday 18th August.**

Four amazing shows across 4-days in one unique setting!

JESS GLYNNE

to headline on Friday 16th August

Jess Glynne is an English singer and songwriter and the first British female solo artist to have seven number one singles on the UK Singles Chart. She rose to prominence as a featured artist on singles such as 'Rather Be' by Clean Bandit, 'My Love' by Route 94 and more recently on Rudimental's 'These Days' with Macklemore. She was also considered one of the 'Most Influential People Under 30' by Forbes magazine in 2019.



MANIC STREET PREACHERS

will headline on Saturday 17th August

Manic Street Preachers are one of the most influential and iconic rock bands to have come out of Wales. Formed in Blackwood they have gone on to release 14 studio albums and have headlined countless festivals including Glastonbury, T in the Park, V Festival and Reading & Leeds. They have won eleven NME Awards, eight Q Awards and four BRIT Awards and were also nominated for the Mercury Prize and the MTV Europe Music Awards.

Their first album 'Generation Terrorists' released in February 1992 was a hugely ambitious debut, establishing them as unique artists, combining classic rock riffs with the attitude of pop and punk and lyrically setting themselves head and shoulders above their contemporaries. Throughout the years they have collected fans from all over the world, maturing and changing musically whilst always keeping the classic Manics sound.

At their live shows early tracks such as 'You Love Us' and 'Motorcycle Emptiness' comfortably sit alongside huge chart hits such as the No. 1 single 'If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next' and other tracks such as 'You Stole The Sun From My Heart' and 'Design For Life' alongside newer songs such as 'Orwellian' and 'The Secret He Had Missed', both taken from their most recent album 'The Ultra Vivid Lament' which reached No. 1 in the UK Album Charts in September 2021.



BUSTED

headline on Sunday 18th August

Busted's many successes spread far beyond the singles charts. Three of their four studio albums also peaked at #2, with 4.5 million sales leading to eight Platinum certifications as well as a total of 25 weeks in the Top 10 and two 5x Platinum selling albums. They have won two BRIT Awards - Best Pop Act and Best British Breakthrough - while multiple sold-out arena tours have seen them sell more than 2 million tickets.



Trentham Live has established itself as a Summer event on the UK festival calendar, drawing music enthusiasts from far and wide, promising a memorable weekend for music lovers of all ages.

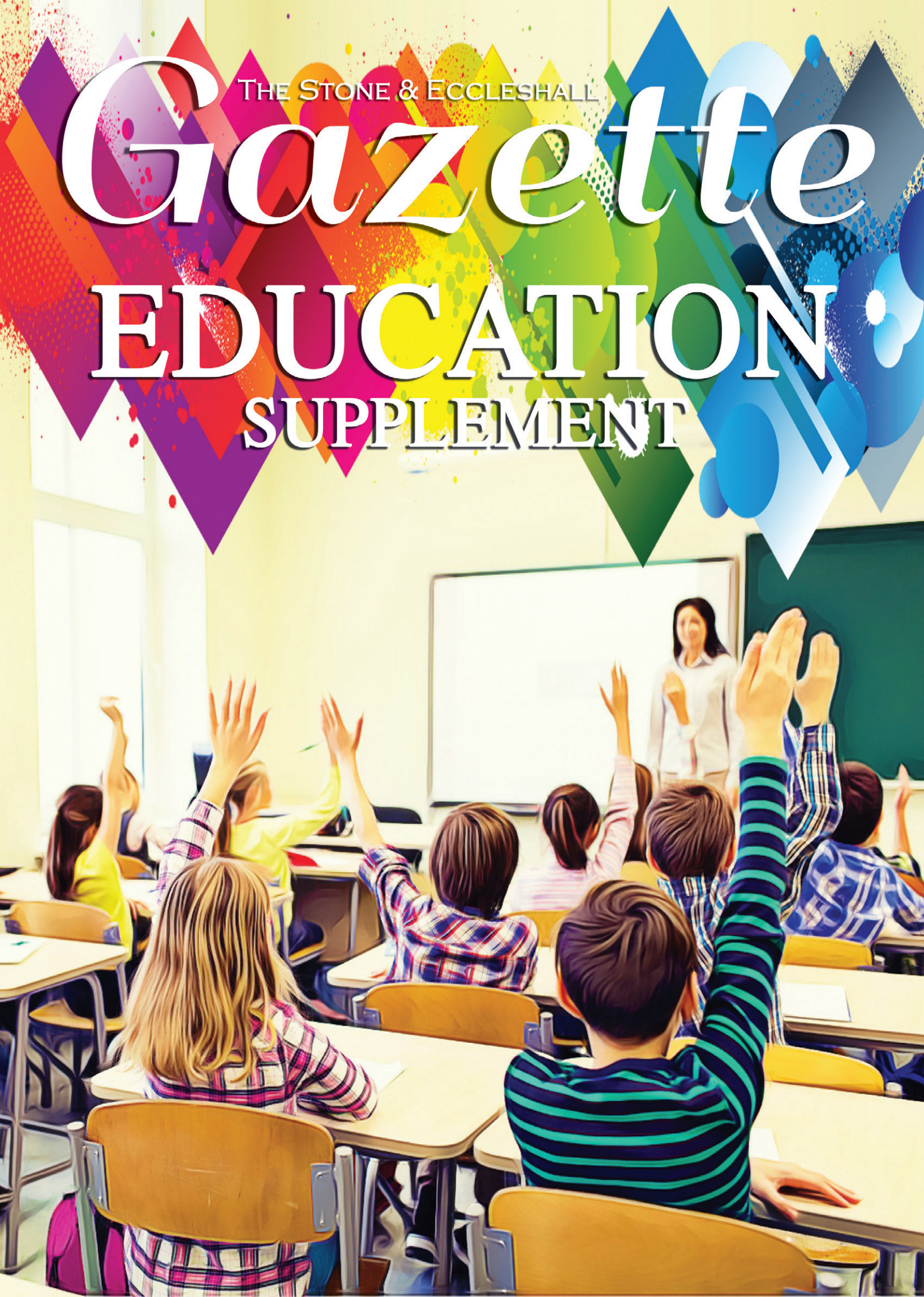
"We are delighted to bring Manic Street Preachers, Jess Glynne and Busted to The Trentham Estate for Trentham Live 2024," said Head of Events Kerrie Pope. "It's going to be a weekend of music and memories that will last a lifetime. Tickets start at £60 ensuring pocket friendly pricing for a great night out."

The event is now hailed as a firm family favourite in the event calendar, with a growing number of families choosing it as their first live music experience with young children along with a great selection of food vendors. Tickets and further details for Trentham Live 2024 are available now at www.trentham.co.uk/trentham-live and www.ticketmaster.co.uk

THE STONE & ECCLESHALL

Gazette

EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT





St Michael's C.E. (V.C.) First School

At St Michael's it is our aim that every child develops a love of learning and a desire to reach their full potential.

This is achieved through providing all children with an exciting and engaging curriculum that both inspires and challenges them, whilst being supported by a team of experienced teachers and teaching assistants. Our strong Christian ethos and values mean that every child in our school feels valued and part of our school community.

Our bright spacious classrooms, extensive school grounds including forest school areas and use of the local area ensure that learning is relevant, purposeful and fun. Our engaging curriculum is further enhanced through WOW weeks, learning outside of the classroom, educational visits and visitors into school. Ofsted 2023 highlighted how in our 'Good' school Wow days 'bring the curriculum to life' with our last WOW day culminating in an evening family walk on Barlaston Downs!

Our extensive school grounds which include a large playing field, woodland nature area, pond and outdoor classroom provide an excellent area for our forest school lessons which are accessed by every child in the school. Every child takes part in forest school and wellington boots are a must! Our School Nursery is located in a purpose designed building. The large room allows children to explore all aspects of learning through a wide range of practical, hands on activities. The building has its own large, enclosed outdoor area with soft flooring throughout.

Whether its riding the bikes, exploring in the sand, splashing in the water or climbing through tunnels and exploring tents our large outdoor environment has plenty of room for it all. Children can join from the day after their third birthday with flexibility of days and hours offered to parents to meet their requirements.

Every day is an Open Day so to arrange a convenient time to visit us to see all that we have to offer you and your child please contact the school office on 01785 334930. We look forward to welcoming you and your child to St Michael's.



St. Dominics Priory School

Come and see St Dominic's Priory School on **Saturday 2nd March from 9:30 – 12:30pm for our open morning** and have a personalised guided tour of our state-of-the-art classrooms, witness first-hand the children's experiences in class, with specialist subject teachers in action and the opportunity for an informal chat with the headteacher.

With student intake at an all-time high, our non-selective pre-school, prep and senior schools are thriving. We guarantee small class sizes, a diverse and interesting curriculum with enthusiastic and nurturing teachers, Year 7 scholarships, strong SEN support and stretch for academically high-achieving students. Our school transport reaches across Staffordshire and our wraparound care accommodates our busy families looking for support before and after school.

Achieving the highest possible inspection results year-on-year confirms that the quality of our teaching and learning produces incredible GCSE results, with students who are well-behaved, well-motivated and focused. Our outstanding provision, delivered by specialist teachers in sports, music, dance, drama and art, supports our students' overall development and creativity and our reputation for achieving excellence across all areas of competition is widely reported.

Central to our students' experience is the opportunity to take part in our extensive and varied extra-curricular programme; added extras that will give them confidence and valuable skills for life. We also provide exceptional pastoral care and are always committed to instilling a sense of openness, inclusion and acceptance within our school family. Our proud history and heritage gives our students a strong foundation, one that instils important values and the tools to go out into the world and make a difference.

So, if you are thinking about your child's very first school, a change of school or are looking for a Year 7 start, then St. Dominic's Priory is the school for you.

To discover more, join us for our **Open Morning on Saturday 2nd March** or book a tour from Monday 4th – Friday 8th March during Open Week. You can also visit our website www.stdominicspriory.co.uk or call 01785 814181 and follow on Facebook and Instagram to keep up-to-date on the latest news.



St. Michael's CE (VC) First School

Tel: 01785 334930

Weavers Lane, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8QB
office@st-michaels-stone.staffs.sch.uk www.stmichaelsstone.org.uk

Through God, we love, laugh and learn

St. Michael's CE (VC) First School welcomes children from 3 – 9 years of age.

As a school it is our desire to foster a love of learning to inspire children to become life-long learners and ensure that all children reach their full potential in a happy, safe environment.

WE OFFER ALL OF OUR CHILDREN ACCESS TO:

- An engaging and exciting curriculum
- A highly qualified, caring and nurturing staff
- Strong links with St Michael's Church and the local community
- An extensive outdoor environment
 - Forest School
 - Specialist music teaching
- A purpose designed nursery building and outdoor area for children from the age of 3
- Access to a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities
- Large spacious Early Years classrooms with dedicated outside learning environment
- Wraparound facilities open from 7.15am until 6pm

To arrange a visit to St. Michael's please contact the school office on 01785 334930.





ST DOMINIC'S
PRIORY SCHOOL
STONE



A Catholic Independent
Day School Educating
Children Ages 3 -16

Come and join us for our **March** **OPEN EVENTS**



PRE SCHOOL



PREP



SENIORS

St Dominic's Priory School will be the best decision you ever make for your child. We are a caring community that allows your child to thrive - whatever their passion.

- Highest rating of 'Excellent' by the ISI
- Outstanding academic opportunities
- Scholarships available for entry Year 7
- Exceptional pastoral care
- Wraparound care from 7:30-6pm
- First-class technology in modern classrooms
- Full range of extra-curricular activities
- School transport across the region

SATURDAY 2ND MARCH 2024

9:30am -12:30pm - NO BOOKING REQUIRED

MON 4TH to FRI 8TH MARCH

CONTACT THE SCHOOL TO **BOOK A TOUR**



www.stdominicspriory.co.uk Tel: 01785 814181

@ f stdominicspriorystone



Green Lea First School

Thinking about your child's Nursery Place?

Green Lea First School is located in a beautiful rural setting.



Every child enjoys Forest School weekly.



Part-Time/Full-Time Sessions Available



Small class sizes.



A safe and supportive environment.



Wraparound Care Available From 3 Years Old.



Well-being is paramount.

"Learn Explore Achieve"

To arrange a visit or to find out more, call 01889 505309 or email office@greenlea.staffs.sch.uk

Green Lea First School, Mill Lane, Coton, Milwich ST18 0EU

Visit our website at www.greenlea.staffs.sch.uk



Green Lea First School

'Learn, Explore, Achieve'

At Green Lea First School, we are dedicated to providing pupils with the very best learning experiences. Our motto 'Learn, Explore, Achieve' is the driving force behind this:

· Learn - Alongside wellbeing, learning is at the heart of all we do at Green Lea. We provide an engaging, purposeful and inclusive approach to teaching and learning to inspire in our pupils a lifelong love of learning. Alongside wellbeing, learning is at the heart of all we do at Green Lea. We provide an engaging, purposeful and inclusive approach to teaching and learning to inspire in our pupils a lifelong love of learning.

· Explore - We maximise our learning opportunities to ensure our pupils are inquisitive and equipped to question and explore the diverse world they live in.

· Achieve - Through our approach to learning and exploring, we are committed to securing the best possible achievements for our pupils at Green Lea First School and celebrate their successes.

"Green Lea is a very happy, busy school where children are supported and encouraged to grow and learn. We are a small, rural school at the heart of the community, situated in the beautiful countryside village of Milwich, just outside Stone. Our highly experienced team believe that learning should be fun, purposeful, engaging and challenging.

We pride ourselves on our family feel, our open-door ethos and ensuring our children's well-being is paramount. We welcome children from two years old in our Nursery, or if you would like to apply for a place at our school, please contact the school office for further details on the admissions process and to make an appointment to come and see us. You can email us at office@greenlea.staffs.sch.uk.

I would be delighted to show you around and answer any questions you may have."

Mrs L Harris Headteacher

To find out more visit our website <https://www.greenlea.staffs.sch.uk/> or check out our Facebook page!



Yarlet School

With a 'success for all' ethos, Yarlet aims to maximise the potential of every pupil.

At Yarlet we believe that there is a strong correlation between happiness and achievement and that children learn best when they are in a safe but highly stimulating environment.

We facilitate active learning for boys and girls aged 3 to 13 and believe that our classrooms and outdoor spaces play a vital role in our pupils' wellbeing and education. We make full use of our 33 acre site; pupils benefit from daily games lessons, enjoy freedom during their breaktimes and undertake ecology projects at our very own woodland walk and wild life pool.

Our lessons are exciting and our curriculum broad and varied. Specialist subject teaching is introduced at an early age and covers every subject by the time children reach 10 years old. This allows for in depth learning and excellence in all traditional academic subjects as well as exceptional achievement in subjects such as art, sport, music and languages.

The outcomes speak for themselves. In 2023, not only was there a 100% pass rate for Entrance Examinations but an impressive number of pupils left Yarlet with a scholarship or exhibition to their senior school.

A recent addition to our provision is Yarlet Forest School. A typical session includes a planned activity such as a creative team building task, safe tool use or den building and a reflective mindfulness exercise.

Yarlet also offers a comprehensive programme of complementary activities which includes weekly sporting fixtures, a host of musical opportunities, curriculum focused excursions and annual overseas trips such as skiing in Italy and cultural/linguistic enrichment visits to France and Spain.

We also have a fleet of vehicles which we use for our trips, sports fixtures and to provide a reliable daily transport service to and from school.

There is no substitute to seeing our school in action. So, for a much fuller picture, do visit us, have a look round our beautiful site, talk to our staff and meet the people who matter the most, our children.

Point your browser here for more details: www.yarletschool.uk/openmorning

We look forward to welcoming you soon!



Open Morning

Friday 26th April - 9.30am to 12.00pm

www.yarletschool.uk/openmorning



Oulton C.E. First School & Ladybirds Nursery

Oulton CE First School is rated GOOD by OFSTED and SIAMS.

We are a popular village school set within a strong local community, although we welcome a significant number of our children from surrounding areas. Our school caters for children from three years of age (*in our Nursery*) through to learners of nine years (*Year 4*).

At Oulton First School, we have a wonderfully committed team of staff who create a happy, welcoming and secure environment in which our children can thrive. We aim to involve all members of the school community in learning, in school life and in celebrating our successes! We believe that the partnership between parents or carers and the school is vital and we actively encourage the community to become involved in the life of the school.

The school is set in extensive grounds, which accommodates a trim trail, sensory garden, wild life area, outdoor classroom, nature area and a recently upgraded playground. We are a Forest School provider that utilises our school grounds as well as nearby Kibblestone International Scout Camp.

As a Church of England school we have close links with St. John's Church, Oulton. We promote Christian and moral values, whilst also recognising and valuing other beliefs. Our School Vision incorporates our school Christian Values: Hand in hand at Oulton, we strive to follow Jesus' example offering friendship and forgiveness through a trusting and welcoming community where all our loved and valued as children of God. We are thankful for the exciting and vibrant curriculum, which enables everyone to flourish and achieve their God given potential. I will cover you with my hands and protect you. (*Inspired by the Good Samaritan*)

Our Ladybirds Nursery provision offers free 15 hours funded childcare. Nursery intakes are September, January and April so your child can attend the term after their 3rd birthday.

The school offers a range of extra-curricular clubs including choir, yoga, gardening, football and kung-fu. Wrap around care is provided by Little Stars, 7.30am – 6pm daily. Please contact the office or visit our website for further information and to arrange a visit to our school.

Applications now being accepted for Ladybirds September 2024.

NSCG's alumni named as finalist in the British Education Awards 2024

NSCG's Newcastle College alumni Olivia (Liv) Windsor has been named as a finalist in the British Education Awards 2024 in recognition of her brilliant academic results and extra curricular success within the Vocational category.



The British Education Awards (BEA) promotes excellence in British education and recognises the value and importance of education and learning as the foundation to a good quality of life and for future success. The BEA identifies and celebrates individuals who have excelled within our British education system, acknowledging that success comes down to personal endeavour and application.

Liv, an incredibly talented student, joined NSCG in 2021 to study a BTEC National Extended Diploma in Applied Science, after extended periods of home learning during COVID-19. Along with all high school leavers in 2021, Liv's opportunity to sit her GCSE's was taken away due to the restrictions of the pandemic at the time. Despite this Liv thrived academically as she adapted to the demands of her course at NSCG.

Liv, from Fenton, was nominated for the award by Lisa Browne, Assistant Head of Faculty for Academic and Creative Studies at NSCG, because of her exceptional drive and commitment to her studies.

Commenting on Liv's achievement, Lisa told the Gazette: "I'm delighted that Liv has been picked as a finalist, this is a real testament to how hard she's worked to craft herself an incredible future in Science."

Liv had an appetite for hard work, tackling tasks without delay and was very resilient. She had a quiet confidence in her ability and often led the way with her peer students when working in small groups. This is all the more commendable as she ensured her grades were consistently high, despite undergoing two knee surgeries following a sporting accident, and caring for her disabled mother.

Without exception, all of Liv's teachers admired her work ethic, resilience and attitude which is why she was awarded the Vocational Science Award in the NSCG end of year Celebration Awards in 2023. It was no surprise that she left NSCG with three Distinction star grades and has progressed to Keele University to study biomedical science and we have no doubt she will continue to flourish at university and have a successful career. We wish her luck."



Oulton C.E. First School & Ladybirds Nursery

'Hand in hand learning together'



Rock Crescent, Oulton, Stone, ST15 8UH • Tel: 01785 336515

www.oultton.staffs.sch.uk

- Caring & popular village school for children aged 3-9 years
- Committed staff creating a happy, welcoming & secure environment for children
- Strong links with St John's Church, Oulton & the community
- Forest School provider
- A bright well maintained environment promoting learning including, library, wildlife area, sensory garden, large outdoor playing areas and various extra-curricular after school clubs
- Wrap-around care from 7.30am to 6.00pm
- For more information or to arrange a visit contact us at office@oultton.staffs.sch.uk

• FREE 15 HOUR PROVISION AVAILABLE AT OUR NURSERY

FEW PLACES REMAINING

• NURSERY INTAKES IN JANUARY, APRIL & SEPTEMBER

Member of the Key Educational Trust





Christ Church C.E. First School

Executive Headteacher: Mrs A Graham BA (Hons) NPQH

Christ Church C.E. First School is situated in Stone, at the heart of the community it serves. We welcome children from Reception to Year 4 in single year groups.

Children are at the heart of all we do at Christ Church. We understand that when a child starts school, these are the most precious years and form the foundation of their futures. We treat each child as an individual and respond swiftly to their needs to ensure that all children have the opportunity to settle, find friends and enjoy success. Our dedicated, supportive school staff provide the children with a safe and happy learning environment, helping them reach their full potential. We are proud of our school and our children's love of learning.

Our curriculum is inclusive, immersive and creative to ensure that all children can thrive. We enjoy learning outside the classroom and make use of the many green spaces around the town to enhance our curriculum offer. Whilst academic subjects are extremely important, we seek to develop the whole child through a comprehensive range of creative subjects. All children in school have weekly music and art lessons. In addition, all PE and modern foreign languages lessons are taught by specialists. We aim high and try to be uniquely the best that we can be.

We take pupil wellbeing seriously and have a dedicated school ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) and have recently introduced a therapy/support dog to our offer. We understand that children require meaningful relationships to feel settled in school and adopt a relational approach to all aspects of school life.

As a Church of England school, we uphold our Christian and moral values in all aspects of our work and also recognise and value the other beliefs of our diverse school community. This enables all children to build secure and lasting relationships with their peers and staff. We have strong links with the church (Christ Church) and the team visits every week. We hold a number of special events in church throughout the year.

Wrap around care is available on site from 7.30am – 6.00pm and is provided by Little Stars Childcare. See www.littlestarschildcare.org.uk if you would like to learn more, please call to arrange a visit to our school on 01785 336545 or visit our school website for more information and to view our promotional video: www.christchurch-stone.staffs.sch.uk

"Be the best you can be in God's beautiful world"



Christ Church Academy

*'At Christ Church Academy,
aspirations become reality.'*

Pupils at Christ Church thrive. At Christ Church Academy, aspirations become reality. The curriculum and extra-curricular offer are exceptionally rich. Each pupil is known and cherished. The Christian vision and values have a life-lasting and life-enhancing impact on personal and intellectual development."



These are just some of the things said about the school during our most recent SIAMS inspection, in which we were judged as 'Excellent'.

In 2022, Ofsted visited the school and confirmed that it continues to be 'Good' and that 'pupils at Christ Church thrive'. We are proud of our broad and balanced curriculum which we enrich through residential and daytrips, themed days and weeks, visiting guests, an aspirational reward scheme and by constantly listening to our children about what they like and don't like.

Our Excellence Programme ensures that very able children are challenged and supported throughout their time at the Academy, with special events and extra-curricular activities designed to supplement in-class learning.

In September 2023, we welcomed Minnie, our school dog, who provides wellbeing support to the whole school community. Strong pastoral support is central to life at Christ Church, and form tutors provide a close link between home and school.

Our schemes of learning and programmes of study are regularly refreshed in light of new material and changing cohorts of children. Children enjoy and benefit from a curriculum that is taught by specialists in subject rooms from the very beginning of their time at the Academy. Innovative and dedicated heads of department constantly evaluate the provision given to pupils to ensure it meets their needs.

Christ Church C.E. First School



Member of the Key Educational Trust

www.thekeyeducationaltrust.org.uk

We offer:

- A warm, loving, supportive school where everyone is treated with respect as part of God's family
- A family atmosphere with a caring, nurturing, relational approach
- A creative and inclusive curriculum where all children have a chance to shine, regardless of ability
- Strong support for all children to ensure they can all thrive
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities
- Excellent wellbeing support – we have a dedicated ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) and a therapy/support dog (Rusty)
- Opportunities to learn outside the classroom in many subject areas
- Dedicated music lessons in all year groups
- Specialist teaching of PE and French
- Strong links with the Church (Christ Church)
- Wraparound care provided by Little Stars



Northesk Street, Stone
Staffordshire, ST15 8EP
Tel: 01785 336545

We have spaces available
for September 2024

If you would like more
information or to visit the
school, contact the office on
the number above or email

[office@christchurch-
stone.staffs.sch.uk](mailto:office@christchurch-stone.staffs.sch.uk)



www.christchurch-stone.staffs.sch.uk



Christ Church Academy

A Middle School for children aged 9-13
Old Road, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 8JD



Minnie
Our school dog



“Pupils at Christ Church thrive” *OFSTED ‘Good’ 2022*

“The curriculum and extra-curricular offer is exceptionally rich” *SIAMS 2020*

Specialist subject teachers who deliver a broad and balanced curriculum whilst maintaining a strong focus on the core subjects of English, Maths and Science.

Excellent pastoral care which supports children to achieve, excel and enjoy learning. Before and after school provision available.

A strong Christian ethos with values such as trust and friendship underpinning an atmosphere of challenge, support and acceptance.

SIAMS ‘Excellent’ 2020

Visits to the Academy are warmly welcomed

Please call the school office to arrange your visit: 01785 334900



Fully equipped science laboratories, specialist technology workshops, computer rooms offering programming and coding from the outset, well-resourced library, strong links with the parish church, specialist dance and drama studio, extensive sports, music and extra-curricular opportunities.



Artsmark
Silver Award
Awarded by Arts
Council England



Walton Priory Middle School

Discover unique education in Stone



We would love to show you our wonderful school in action, please get in touch to book a tour!

☎ 01785 550040

✉ office@waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk

➤ For more information please visit
www.waltonpriory.staffs.sch.uk

🐦 WaltonPriory

📷 [waltonpriorymiddleschool](https://www.instagram.com/waltonpriorymiddleschool)



Walton Priory Middle School

Onward and Upward for Walton Priory Middle School
Walton Priory is a unique middle school that combines the best aspects of primary education with the facilities and expectations of good secondary provision.

We strive to encourage all our children to be their best by providing a wide range of academic, sporting and leadership opportunities. The school has the NACE award, recognising our outstanding provision for more able pupils, as well as Quality Marks in Science PE and Careers. Walton Priory won the National Careers Challenge award in 2023!



We welcomed several hundred interested parents to our Open Mornings in September and were proud to show our upgraded teaching areas as well as our Forest School and Food Technology suite. Our new Year Five children have settled in well to Walton Priory and enjoy the moral support of our role models and school ambassadors in Year Eight.

This year we have extended Forest School provision to ensure all year groups enjoy at least 6 weeks of outdoor education. We have also enhanced our residential visits programme, with new trips to Dorset in Year Seven (studying geography, history and sports) and France in Year Eight.

If you would like to visit us to see us in action, we would love to host a tour of the school during the day so that you can experience for yourself our welcoming and unique setting. We are currently accepting pupils for Years 5 and 7 for September 2024 start.



Pirehill First School

Pirehill First School is very much a Community School situated in the residential area of Walton, Stone.

We are very fortunate in having beautiful, well maintained grounds which are used throughout the year to enhance our children's learning, this includes our extremely popular Forest School which is accessed by all of our pupils.

Our school is a joyful place of learning which offers a rich and varied curriculum both within and outside of the school day. Our Ofsted inspection in May 2022 confirmed that we are a 'good' school and parents reported that the school is 'exceptional', 'supportive' with 'kind and caring staff'.

At Pirehill, we pride ourselves in our excellent standards of teaching, pupil progress, attainment and behaviour.

We strongly believe that every child has a right to reach their full potential and succeed in their own unique way, whether that is via sport or music, the arts, or by their own academic excellence. In understanding the unique child, by celebrating their strengths and through working together, our children learn very important lessons in life. We show that we care and respect everyone and everything, by living up to our Pirehill Principle.

Proud, Independent, Respectful, Enthusiastic, Happy and Healthy, Intelligent Individuals who Love Learning and who Love Life

Our Governing body is a strong, enthusiastic and committed group of people who represent the Community and the parents which the school serves. Together they manage and develop Pirehill by continuously striving for the highest standards, improving and extending opportunities and resources for all.

If you would like to know more about please visit our website and follow us on 'Twitter'. If you would like to see us in action please contact the school office on 01785 334970, we can assure you that you will be made to feel welcome by our friendly staff and our fantastic children.

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Enthusiastic,
Happy & Healthy
Individuals who
Love learning and
Love life**



IMPORTANT ADMISSION INFORMATION FOR SEPTEMBER 2024

We have a dedicated area on our school website for September 2024 admissions, which will provide you with a wealth of information about Pirehill First School.

Access through: [Homepage/Children/Year Pages/September 2024 Intake](#)

Please remember we are only a phone call away and would be delighted to answer any of your questions.

If you would like to arrange a visit to see our fantastic school in action please contact the school office to book.



Headteacher: Karen Williamson-Smith

Tilling Drive, Walton, Stone, ST15 0AA Tel: 01785 334970

Email: office@pirehill.staffs.sch.uk Website: www.pirehill.staffs.sch.uk Twitter: @PirehillFirst



In the heart of our community, Conexus Tuition Stone provides bespoke tuition in the core subjects (English, Maths and Science) for local young people. Led by a team of qualified teachers, our sessions focus on building confidence, empowering progress, and instilling a genuine love for learning.

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Stone Town Mayor, Jim Davies, kept the children enthralled with tales of a local hero

Stone Mayor drops in at Christ Church to give Year 4 a history lesson

Year 4 at Christ Church First School were treated to a history lesson courtesy of the Stone Town Mayor, Jim Davies and Lady Mayoress Lyn Davies.

The children are currently studying World War 2 and the Mayor visited to talk about Flight Lieutenant Richard Stubbs from Stone.

The children learned all about the pilot's short but illustrious career and all the many daring, but successful, raids he carried out during active service in WW2.

The Mayor had created a great PowerPoint presentation full of photos

and papers documenting "Dickie's" life as a fighter pilot.

We also learned about his untimely death, at just 22 years of age, whilst training other pilots.

This was a fascinating lesson and all the more special as the family lived just down the road in Padwicke House, on Northesk Street.

We are very grateful to the Mayor and the Mayoress who talked to the children about their connections with the Stubbs family, and the town of Stone.



Presidential Handover at Stone and District Probus

At the Club's AGM in February, President John Hemmings (above right) handed over the chain of office to incoming President Barry Tunnicliffe (on the left).

This last year has been most successful for the club, with a good increase in membership, a range of interesting speakers at the monthly luncheons at The Upper House Barlaston, and the recommending of outings to various places of interest.

Incoming President for 2024 - 2025 is Barry Tunnicliffe a very well-known retired local businessman, he is brimming with ideas for his coming year in office, to maintain and enhance the viability and success of the Club.

For more information about Stone and District Probus Club visit our Website www.stoneprobus.org.uk or phone our Secretary Jon Goodson on 01785 613966.



Tony Panther in the middle, with Aslan the litter picking dog, photo from 2011 courtesy of Jamie Summerfield

Saving the Bee's Tony would have liked that...

I was invited, as a member of Stone in Bloom, to a meeting on February 22nd, which saw a group of people come together, invited by Stafford Borough Council's Green Party to discuss anything and everything to do with Bees.

The rough agenda provoked a discussion on how we would work within the Borough to help towards preventing the decline of the Bee, and it was pointed out that many species of Bee had already become extinct, and others were heading that way too!

Bee populations are crucial to our food chain and agricultural systems, without Bees the supply of many foods and drinks would see supermarket shelves almost empty, as they all need the help of pollinating Bees, and as we have experienced when produce is rare, prices double. Bee habitats are being wiped out at an alarming rate, large scale developments, pesticides and the Asian Hornet which kills hives very quickly are just a few of the threats Bees face.

After much discussion a plan was set and with the help of the experts and Bill Waller, Stafford Borough Councils Ecology Officer, it was agreed that we would all go away and discuss areas we could look at to plant pollinating plants, (with permission) to encourage Bees to thrive in our towns. Schools will play an important part in the programme and will be invited to take part, but we can all be a part of this exciting plan.

I appreciate many people are afraid of Bees and I couldn't help but laugh recently watching Stone Town Marching Band practicing, the child playing the glockenspiel began furiously waving her mallets about trying to swat a Bee, and it made me think of the time when my daughter, who has an absolute phobia of Bees, let go of her pushchair and ran away screaming. Such was her fear of Bees she didn't think for a moment about her baby, it was at that point I seriously questioned her maternal instinct!

Bees are harmless, and if not bothered will not sting. Not all Bees sting, and male Bees do not sting at all, which puts into question Muhammed Ali's best quote that he "Floats like a butterfly, stings like a Bee!"

World Bee Day this year is May 20th, and in Stone hopefully we will quietly mark the day, so much discussion to follow as to how that will go. I'm so pleased Stone in Bloom was invited by The Green Party members to be a part of their Bee team, and thank them.

Now for some very sad news, Stone In Bloom Member Tony Panther has passed away. Tony was a valuable member of our group, and responsible for some quirky activities, one of them being him and his white German Shepherd dog Aslan, who would pick up beer and pop cans which had been thrown away, and carry them home!

Tony would put the cans into a big bin and when it was full, he would sell raffle tickets. He would ask you to guess the number of cans in the bin, and if correct you would win a prize. The money Tony made on the raffle would go towards Stone in Bloom funds to buy materials, plants and seeds.

Thank you for everything over the years Tony, we will all miss you.

Chairman Jill Hood 077364 13097
Secretary Tracey Stone 07545 780935



Back row (L to R): Dave Price, Rob King, Adam Tomkinson, Steve Millington, Jamie Riley, Richard Hewitt, Andy Lindop, Andy Maloney, Guy Martin, Mark Fox, Karl Cowbrain

Front row (L to R): Richard Jones, Adam Johnson, Dave Moore, Matt Bradbury, Dean Buckley, Dan Rainford

Stone OA veterans crowned champions

On Friday 26th January, the over 35s team at Stone Old Alleynians FC collected their first silverware this year by becoming Staffordshire FA League Cup champions.

Having won their group stage convincingly by beating Eccleshall, Woodseaves and Trent Valley, scoring fifteen goals in the process, they faced league champions Riverway in the semi-final. Having gone two goals down early on, the team roared back to emerge victorious by a 5-3 scoreline.

Facing Stafford Town in the final, again going a goal down early on, the Alleynians eventually finished up winning the cup 3-1, with goals from Steve Millington (2) and Adam Tomkinson.

The team competes in two leagues, the Potteries & District League and the Stafford League. Currently sitting mid-table in the Potteries, the new season is just underway in the Stafford League.

Player/Manager Richard Jones said:

"Having first started three years ago, the squad has been getting stronger season by season. In the cup campaign we scored 23 goals in just five games. In the last two seasons we have reached two cup finals and also won the Jersey International Veterans Tournament last April. We are due to defend that title in Jersey again this year and winning this league cup has set us up very nicely."

Stone Old Alleynians are the only club in the county to field competitive veterans teams at all of the possible age bandings, including, over 35s, 50s, 60s & 70s.

All of the cup winning squad have either played for the Club in men's football or attended Alleynes High School, as it was known back then. Most players have done both, with several having 30+ years playing experience for the Club, and ten of the squad coach junior teams within the Club as well.



Stone OA Girls FC turn out in numbers!

Saturday 27th January saw all ten girls teams at Stone Old Alleynians Girls & Women FC play together at the same time. It is believed to be the most girls teams playing football for Stone on the same day in the history of local football.

Although the Club have had this amount of teams for a long period of time, never before have all age groups managed to play on the same day.

With 8% of all female footballers in the county registered to Stone Old Alleynians, the girls section is thriving. With three more teams ready to start playing for the club in the near future, girls football is moving forwards at a rapid rate in the town.

Club Chairman, Richard Jones said:

"We have been waiting for this day to happen for quite some time. We have nearly 150 girls registered to play and another 40 waiting in the wings ready to start in the new teams we are creating. Additionally, lots of girls just attend

training, without playing in the fixtures. By the summer we may reach 200 girls. Our players aren't just Stone based, we do tend to get a lot of interest from this side of Stoke-on-Trent, with a sizeable number from the Trentham, Lightwood, Longton and Blurton areas, plus all of the surrounding villages.

We have a great facility at Alleynes Academy and the site is bustling with activity every Saturday morning. It's also nice when our teams are playing teams associated with professional clubs. Recently we had Port Vale, Burton and Crewe all visiting the site on the same day, playing league fixtures against our junior girls teams. Additionally, we have good, long-standing relationships with many teams across the county who enjoy coming to Stone.

We are always looking to expand and with a 3 Star Accreditation being recently awarded by The FA it shows we are putting the right provision in place for the local community."



Buddy's Elf bringing smiles for Buddy Bags

Sylvia Keris from Eccleshall returned again in her full time role as Buddy's Elf throughout December to bring smiles to people's faces, while being a mischievous Elf in local villages and towns throughout Staffordshire. For the 4th year running, Sylvia had been challenged to dress 24hrs a day, everyday from the start of December up to (and including) Christmas Day. She even has Elf pyjamas, so really is a full time Elf!

Sylvia was part of the Buddy Bag Foundation charity's Christmas Campaign appeal - helping to promote the charity that aims to pack 180 Buddy Bag backpacks every week - containing essential clothing, toiletry and comfort items including a knitted teddy bear - which are given to children in the UK fleeing domestic abuse, who have been taken into the safety of a refuge.

Each Buddy Bag and its contents, which are age and gender related for children from 0-2 yrs right up to teenagers, costs approx. £25. And sadly, the number of cases of abuse increase during the Festive Season and in Winter months - so to help meet the demand for the Buddy Bags, the charity set up a special webpage to help raise funds through Sylvia's Elf challenge - at the same time as she is bringing a little festive cheer, wherever she goes.

Her December 2023 antics included promoting various charities with visits by the Elf, mischief making in local businesses, running off with all forms of transport (*both mechanical and living!*), being interviewed on BBC Radio Stoke, and being part of a fun competition for James Du Pavay Estate Agents, who had secretly filmed the Elf in a house - where people doing virtual house tours could enter a competition with a cash prize, to spot which house and in which room Buddy's Elf was hiding!

To date, Sylvia (*or I should say, Buddy's Elf*) has raised nearly £1800 from her Elf mischief making, but is hoping to reach £2000 if possible.

All photos have also been posted by the charity on Sylvia's Facebook page named "*Buddy's Elf*". So if you need a bit of cheer, visit Buddy's Elf webpage to see the funny pics - and if these make you smile, you may like to give a little donation please to a very worthy Charity - as the Buddy Bags Festive website is still open for donations at: www.justgiving.com/campaign/elf2023



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'What's on' at Great Bridgeford Village Hall



Special Events

Wednesday 6th March - The Digital Skills Team will be coming to Great Bridgeford Village Hall Coffee Morning at 10.00 am to help with all your digital niggles - phones, laptops, tablets etc

Saturday 9th March - Fused Glass Workshop at Great Bridgeford Village Hall, 10.00-12.00 - contact Paula Andrews at Forsbrook Studio on 07879 368 811

Wednesday March 13th - The Staying Well Team will be at Great Bridgeford Coffee Morning 10.00-12.00, if you wish to talk to someone about any health issues.

Saturday April 13th - There will be a Beetle Drive for all those who love a good game! It starts at 2.00 pm, tickets are £5.00 each, available from Denise on 07786 393360 And all the profits are going to St Chad's Church, Seighford, to help repair the pinnacles.

Sunday June 2nd - National Garden Scheme opening - Leslie and Peter Longstaff will be opening their garden for the NGS - The Pintles, 18 Newport Road, Great Bridgeford, ST18 9PR; Admission is £3.50 per person, children free. Please use the car park at the Village Hall, opposite The Pintles. Homemade refreshments!

Regular Activities

· Tennis Club - Contact Hazel Waters, Membership Secretary on 01785 255 260.

Monday · The Monday Club - alternate weeks, over 60s; 1.30 - 3.30 pm. Contact Maureen on 01785 282 785

· Garden Guild 2nd Monday in the month at 8.00pm.; contact Denise on 01785 281 691

Tuesday · Parent and Toddlers 10.00 - 12.00am. Every Tuesday in term time; Contact Joan 01785 282 722

· Moorland Voices 8.00-9.30pm First Tuesday of the month; Contact 01785 281 117 · Village Hall Committee meeting - 2nd Tuesday of the month - contact Chairman Phil Causar

Wednesday · Coffee Morning 10.30-12.00, every fortnight - Jan 24th; Feb 7th, 21st; Mar 6th, 20th; April 3rd, 17th; May 1st, 15th, 29th; June 12th, 26th; July 10th, 24th; Aug 7th, 21st; Sep 4th, 18th; Oct 2nd homemade cakes including Gluten Free and sugar reduced; Leslie 01785 282 582

· Martial Arts/Kick Boxing 6.30-7.30pm. Contact Mark on 07932 408 382 · Argentine Tango - contact Hannah on 07749 368 581

Thursday · Canine Partners - training dogs to assist owners with disabilities; 1st Thursday in the month; contact Ronnie on 07584 995 247 Gentle Yoga - over 55s; contact Kerrie 07887 687 288 · Yoga - weekly during term time contact Kerrie 07887 687 288

Friday · Life painting & drawing 9.30-12.45, Contact Laura on 07588 074 229 · Argentine Tango dancing - contact Hannah on 07749 368 581

For more information please visit our website at www.greatbridgefordvillagehall.org.uk or you can email gbvh.bookings@gmail.com

For bookings contact Leslie Longstaff; The Pintles, 18 Newport Road, Great Bridgeford 01785 282 582

The Clothing Bank on Great Bridgeford Village Hall car park is for quality unwanted clothes and shoes. Proceeds will be shared between the Salvation Army and St Chad's Church.



Fulford Community Choir at Sandon Hall

Sir Elton John certainly supports choirs

I guess there is no better entrance from stage left when opening a show with no less than Sir Elton John waiting in the wings. Well, not exactly in the wings, but a quote from the great man himself leads nicely as an introduction as to what many feel singing in a choir is all about:

"To be part of the Royal Academy choir was incredibly fulfilling. Just the noise you make, and the camaraderie... it is the most life-affirming experience, singing in a choir."

To many reading this first article from the Fulford Community Choir and without doubt those thousands of community choirs throughout the UK, it's of no surprise, for these thirty words get to the very heart of what singing in a choir is about. Whether it be a church, workplace, community or any other place where a group of like-minded people regardless of gender, education, social status and ability simply come together on a regular basis to enjoy singing, and enjoy each other's company and hopefully get all the right notes in the right place for the majority of the time!!

Fulford Community Choir is one such choir, and it must be doing something right as it's been rehearsing and performing for the last twelve years. It's a mixed choir but like many choirs nationally it is in need of a few more tenors, and basses to assist in the choir to become more balanced between its voices and as such enrich their singing which ultimately all choirs aim to do.

'Commitment' to us is the word that binds us and every other type of group, it's the single word that produces a far better sound, but not only that, the dynamics and togetherness which leads to that other word which frequently follows the end of a concert - Enjoyment. And for a choir, a tangible, flexible kind of word that should and does bring enjoyment to both the listener and the performer in equal proportions. In other words, Job Done!

Currently, around sixty singers come together **on alternate Sunday afternoons from 4-6p.m.** in Fulford Village Hall to sing and in between catch up with friends.

At long last, following Covid, both singing groups and their patrons have finally adjusted to life once more following the dramatic changes to their lives lasting well over two or even three years. Evidence of this is shown in the number of members both returning or joining a choir for the first time in a final attempt to break the bonds that kept us in doors for what



Singing in a choir is the most life-affirming experience.

Sir Elton John, 2019

seemed a lifetime. This fact is clearly shown in the number of concerts we now have in our concert diary.

Our next concert carries with it a warning sign - watch the calories - as it's our annual sell-out spring concert in the village hall where the admission price includes the challenge to eat as much cake as you can!!

Appropriately, it goes under the name of Afternoon Tea Concert to be held in the village hall on the **28th April** followed soon afterwards in joining a Mass Choir Concert of no less than six choirs raising the roof on the **22nd June** at Longton Methodist Hall.

As a community choir, instinctively we encompass all parts of our community and a number of our choir have recently undertaken to sing along with dementia residents in residential care homes as well as the Stone Alzheimer's Drop In Club.

Then we also have our annual Christmas Concert in Village Fulford on the **8th December** and conclude our year with our Candlelight Christmas Concert at Sandon Hall on the 15th. There are other events in between these to keep our voices in tune so to speak.

So, if this appeals to you, and you would like to be a part of a choir that pride themselves in being part of a group which serves a diverse community, these are the contact details for the choir 07816 789939 or 07890 996798 or email fulfordcommunitychoir@gmail.com

Your first session is free and very reasonably priced after that. No auditions are necessary and there's no expectation that people can sing well. All levels of experience/ability welcome, and there's no expectation that people can read music as it's all taught in a really inclusive and fun way.

From Dr. Richard Talbot, MBE.

URBAN WILDERNESS PRESENTS
LONGTON CARNIVAL AND PIG WALK PARADE
 SUNDAY 21ST APRIL 2024 11AM-4PM



Join the Carnival!

Longton Carnival & Pig Walk Parade: Sunday 21st April

Longton Community Carnival is back for a second year, and groups, performers, and local residents can get involved!

A full day of free family activities will take over Longton Town Centre with Warwick's Funfair, food stalls, two stages, and the afternoon will feature the Pig Walk Carnival Parade.

Isla Telford, Co-Director of Urban Wilderness CIC told the Gazette:

"We are delighted to be able to bring back the Carnival and Pig Walk Parade again in 2024. The first year brought nearly 9000 people into Longton on a Sunday, which was a total joy to see.

New partners are getting involved this year, with Duchess China offering factory tours, and Gladstone Museum opening for free and hosting family theatre."

The organisers are looking for local performers for the stages, community groups to join the parade, and volunteers to get involved with making items for the carnival parade and supporting with information on the day.

Laurel Gallagher, Co-Director of Urban Wilderness, says:

"The Pig Walk parade celebrates the story of Aynsley driving a pig through the centre of Longton to win the land for Queen's Park and the money to build Longton Hospital. We work with world-class artists and local communities to fill the Strand with colour and music, and there's still time to get involved."

outdoor arts to towns and cities across England.

Leader of the city council, Councillor Jane Ashworth said:

"We are delighted that UKSPF money has enabled Urban Wilderness to organise another brilliant, free event for the local community. Last year, thousands of families visited the town to enjoy the festivities and

I understand that the Pig Walk was especially popular. It's great to hear that so many local businesses and organisations have chosen to support the event this year, too."

Jenny Harper, Co-Director of Urban Wilderness CIC says:

"Longton has so much going for it with good transport links and parking opportunities, and a brilliant community of independent businesses, charities and active groups that meet monthly at Longton Town Forum. The Carnival was one of many efforts last year that proves Longton has fresh ideas for the future of high streets.

We're looking forward to welcoming people in their thousands again for a day of free, familyfriendly fun."

Sheila Cowell, Chair of Longton Community Partnership (LCP), says:

"LCP are delighted to support Urban Wilderness to deliver the Carnival. Our volunteers had so much fun last year and we would encourage individuals to get in touch and join the team."

Jack Brereton, MP for Stoke South, says:

"Great to hear that Longton Carnival & Pig Walk Parade will return this year as part of local celebrations of Longton's unique and outstanding history. Last year's parade was a huge success with a fantastic attendance from across the city and beyond, including significant local support from community groups, businesses



The Carnival is part of a wider project to support the cultural and social regeneration of Longton Town Centre, funding in part through the UKSPF fund. It aims to provide opportunities for people to connect, celebrate their town, and support local businesses and communities. It also is a partner in Without Walls, a national network of organisations bringing innovative

and performers. I am pleased to see also that this year, Duchess China and Gladstone Museum will be partnering with Urban Wilderness to deliver another fun packed day of events. It is particularly great to see the UK Shared Prosperity Fund being used to support events such as this as part of continued government investment in boosting local creative skills, supporting our town centres and restoring local pride."

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As seen on **BBC Bargain Hunt**

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Warning - Co-op Car Park Changes and Charges

For a long time the Eccleshall Co op store has made no charge for parking, making it easily the best and biggest car park in the town.

However, from any day now, up to the first hour is free, and from then on time is chargeable.

Two pay machines have been installed, one on the far side of the car park and the other on the mother and baby bay. The machines vary in what can be used to pay but between them there are three methods of making a payment, cash, card or ECP parkbuddy app.

Do check the posters for full detail of charges and conditions. Make sure you are covered when you park, there is a £100 fine if you overstay your welcome.

You have been warned!



She bangs the drums

This month Barlaston Herons WI had a speaker from Joliba African Drum and Dance. David Woolley spoke of his time spent in Guinea Canakry learning to play African drums and he introduced us to a selection of percussion instruments all from Africa.

Members were each given instruments to play and we learned a simple song to sing along and play.

Members agreed it was very entertaining and good to be able to have a go!

Our meetings are held at Barlaston Methodist Church on Park Drive, Barlaston, on the **third Tuesday evening of each month at 7:30 pm**. Anyone wishing to join the WI is welcome to come along as a visitor before making the decision to join for the year.

We also have a theatre group; reading group; a craft and chat group; and a walking group. For further details please visit our Facebook page www.facebook.com/barlastonheronswomensinstitute



Sir Gavin and the Stone Traders at the Limestone Brewery in Stone.

Gavin champions return to the High Street

Sir Gavin Williamson has met with local traders in Stone to voice his support for the High Street, and to campaign for the revival of our town centres.

Sir Gavin visited Limestone Brewery where he met with representatives of several small businesses in the area, making up The Stone Traders Group, to discuss how to entice local shoppers back on to the high street.

Sir Gavin was keen to address the challenges facing the high street, including the difficulties of depleted transport links, and the increase of vacant high street shops.

In recent years, Staffordshire and indeed the country as a whole has seen a marked decrease in the numbers of high street shoppers, and many small businesses have suffered as a result.

The Government has therefore pledged part of its £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund to invest in local high streets, and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act will introduce new powers for local authorities to take control of empty buildings and enable local businesses

and community projects to bid for the chance to rent empty shops.

The government has also introduced a Future High Streets Fund, invested with £830 million, to target regeneration projects across 72 High Streets in the UK, one being Stafford. Sir Gavin has been a staunch supporter of these changes, and has pledged to press the local government on the funds available, so that Stone might also benefit from the Future High Streets Fund.

Sir Gavin said: "I was glad to meet with the Stone Traders and hear their very real concerns for the longevity of the local high street."

The retention of good train services and bus routes is vital to keeping our streets lively and bustling. I'm determined to work with local businesses to find ways to encourage shoppers to return to town centres and help-out Staffordshire's entrepreneurs.

Therefore, I'm determined to discuss with Staffordshire Council the issue of allocating government funding, so that high streets outside of Staffordshire are not lost."



Guides get the baking bug!

3rd Stone Guides enjoyed a fun packed baking day during the half term holidays.

The girls spent the whole day baking up some delicious cakes and a variety of confectionery (including chocolate truffles and lemon drop balls) all in preparation for a Mother's Day event next month.

New skills were learnt including 'taste tests' all in the name of quality control of course. Lunchtime saw a Pancake Bake

Off Competition which became very competitive and had to be declared a draw due to certain acts of sabotage!

Edith one of the guide leaders commented, "I was impressed with the girls teamwork and sense of fun"

Caitlin, a 3rd Stone guide said, "I really enjoyed baking with my friends and flipping the pancakes"



Paul Walker & Karen Pfeiffer In Concert

At Broughton Parish Room, Wetwood (ST21 6NW)
SATURDAY, 27th APRIL, 7.30 pm

Paul and Karen are a charming Anglo-German duo based in Staffordshire – in this very locality, even – and if you haven't heard them performing before, you are in for a treat!

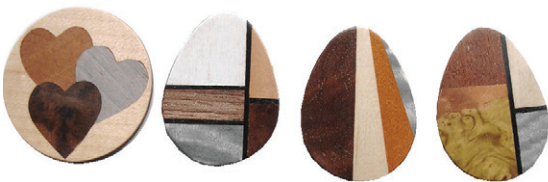
They have toured their shows extensively, taking in New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Ireland and most corners of the UK, wooing audiences with Karen's southern German accent tinged with an 'oatcake induced' North Staffordshire dialect from Paul's heritage. Their show 'Auf Wiedersehen, Me Duck' was a huge success at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

With their unique onstage chemistry and widely praised harmonies, they combine their own beautifully written songs with imaginatively arranged traditional and contemporary folk favourites. Paul's vocal and guitar style and calm geniality blend with Karen's clear powerful voice, woodwind accompaniments and natural theatricality to produce a great and memorable musical performance.

To learn more about Paul and Karen and their music, visit www.paulwalkermusic.co.uk

As well as being happy to stage a gig in their own village hall for a change from globe-trotting, Paul and Karen have very kindly offered to put this one on to help raise some funds for Broughton Tennis Club. It's a real help as the previously held annual fund-raising concerts, staged through the Live & Local rural touring arts organisation, appear to have come to an end.

There will be a bar on the night from 7 pm plus tea, coffee and biscuits in the interval. The performance starts at 7.30 pm and tickets priced at £10/adults and £6/under-16s will be available from Judy Thompstone on 01630 673104 and Louise Butter on 01630 620479.



Learn Marquetry at Free Beginners' Sessions

Staffordshire Marquetry Group are offering two free beginners sessions at their April meetings on **Wednesdays 3 & 17 April** at the Methodist Church Hall, Stone Road, Eccleshall from 2-4pm.

All tools and materials are provided and there may even be some biscuits!

Learn the basics of pictorial and geometric marquetry and make an attractive pendant or key fob. Whilst ideally participants attend both sessions that is not essential if you can only make one.

Contact the Group's Secretary, Quentin Smith, on 01785 850614 or email qjmarquetry@gmail.com for more details and to book your space.

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Aston-By-Stone W.I. Sing/Sign for your supper

As a W.I., we're proud to follow at least some of the old-established traditions of our predecessors. For example, the singing of "Jerusalem", which opens all our meetings.

In February, we did some more singing: our Speaker, Glynis Myles, came to tell us about signing for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. She taught us some basic signs, then led us in singing and signing two songs.

It was Valentine's day, so her choice of "Kiss me, honey, honey, kiss me" was an appropriate choice. We all sang and signed enthusiastically, and had great fun.

Glynis didn't ask how many of us wore hearing aids, and we didn't say, but it made us more aware of the isolation linked to being deaf or hard of hearing. As the saying goes, not every disability is visible.

After the signing/signing, we were more than ready for another grand W.I. tradition: a cup of tea and home-made cake, and a chance to chat with friends old and new among the members.

We love to meet new people. Why not visit us and see how a W.I. works? We have many activities, ranging from poetry to painting, theatre visits to celebratory meals, and next year will be our 100th birthday!

Come and see for yourselves, ladies!
We meet at Aston-by-Stone Village Hall **on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 p.m.** You can contact us at astonbystonewi.secretary@gmail.com, or phone 01785 615662.

Next month is our Annual Meeting, when officers are elected, and in April our Speaker will be Joy Stephens-Blank on "My Time Inside": teaching at HMP Stafford. *We look forward to seeing you.*



Gavin assists restoration project for historic mausoleum in Stone

Sir Gavin Williamson has lent a hand towards restoring a site of local heritage, a mausoleum in the grounds of St Michael and St Wulfad's Church in Stone.

The mausoleum houses a local family with a national legacy, the Jervis family, most notably Sir John Jervis, better known in history books as Admiral St. Vincent.

The mausoleum has national significance because of Admiral St. Vincent's illustrious career at sea, which began at the age of 10 when he ran away from home.

His military accolades come from his success in preventing a Spanish invasion in 1797, when he led the defeat of a Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent. His legacy is enshrined in the mausoleum, which stands in honour of his service to his country. There is also a monument paying tribute to his life in St Paul's Cathedral.

The mausoleum, which was built in the late 18th Century, memorialises one of Stone's greatest stories. However, the team of volunteers who have dedicated themselves to the careful maintenance and restoration work needed for the historic building are in need of further support.

Sir Gavin is determined to help efforts for the restoration of the mausoleum and has pledged to find suitable government and charitable grants that will support the project.

Sir Gavin told the Gazette:

"The Jervis mausoleum is a valuable piece of Stone history and pays tribute to the extraordinary life of a local man who bravely defended British liberty.

We must continue to preserve buildings that pay respect to our local heroes and heroines, so that their lives and legacies be protected for generations to come.

I've called on various government and charitable grants to fund the restorative efforts, and I'm certain that we can save this little piece of local history."



Sir Gavin Williamson with Councillor Philip Leason (left) and Mike Ward, a volunteer who helps maintain the site

A Handful Of Songs 2024

What does a spoonful of talent, a cupful of songs and a good sprinkling of sparkle make? Yes, your right it's the return of a Handful of Songs 2024!

The recipe for a great show is on the cards again when Girlguiding Stone Outward Division take to the stage to "wow" audiences with their singing, dancing and comedy talents. We have a great cast of enthusiastic girls aged from 7 to 16 years of age, raring to go and to let our audiences see the range of talents that our local Brownies, Guides and Rangers have in abundance.

Back at the Repertory Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, the show promises not to disappoint with an array of songs, dancing and the odd comedy sketch, it has something for everyone.

So, what's makes A Handful of Songs so special? Born back in 1975 by Maureen Recine, then Guide Leader at Barlaston put on a show for the senior residents of Barlaston at Christmas. It was received with huge joy and a seed was sown for the start of something very special. **49 years later, with Maureen still producing the show**, A Handful of Songs has gone from strength to strength, finding its feet on a professional theatre stage and being the only biennial girl guiding show (as far as we know), The show has been performed on a west end stage in

London and Symphony Hall in Birmingham!

With no auditions, the shows pride itself on being open to all girlguiding members and promises to give them a unique experience, to be part of a professional show with the opportunity to learn many new skills, singing, dancing, acting and confidence building alongside meeting new friends and having a handful of fun mixed in!

This year's show brings the delights of West End Musicals mixed with a touch of seventies sparkle and sounds straight from the Mother Continent. Over 45 songs, hundreds of costumes and some razzle dazzle add that to the talents of a group of young and passionate girls promises to create a show that you wouldn't want to miss.

The show takes to the stage at the Stoke Rep Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent from **Tuesday 26th to Saturday 30th March**, with a matinee and evening performance on the final day. Tickets are now sale so grab your tickets online via our website www.handfulofsongs.org.uk/tickets or via email tickets@handfulofsongs.org.uk. Tickets are priced at only £12.50 for adults and £10.50 for concessions.

A very warm welcome is assured from the minute you arrive to enjoy our show stopping performances!!!!



Councillor tackles Severn Trent over pollution at Canoeing spot

Dear Editor,

in my capacity as County Councillor for Stone Urban I was invited to a meeting by Bill Lockwood and other members of the Stone Labour group, along with two Severn Trent representatives.

I wasn't new to the problems raised during the meeting, as I have been working for a while on the problem of our dirty stretch of river. I have spoken with both residents, and Severn Trent, regarding my concerns so found the meeting productive, and although I felt that one representative was quoting chapter and verse, the Severn Trent party line and going through the motions, the other guy was truthful, forthcoming, and extremely understanding with some offered solutions.

The main topic was the area around the Canoe Club which has one of the most prestigious slalom courses nationally and boasts obvious successes with Olympic medallist Joe Clarke who brought home a gold to Stone, plus the great Lizzie Neave and Adam Burgess.

Canoeists practice on the river many times a week, they too aspire to being successful (and not capsizing!)

Post meeting, I wrote to Severn Trent's CEO Liv Garfield, she replied immediately. Opposite to the Canoe Club on the River Trent in Stone is a huge CSO pipe (Combined Storm Overflows) this is a pipe which spews sewage into the river as soon as the rain water flow becomes too much for the treatment plants, it does not take much rainwater before the raw sewage begins to pump into the river.

We spoke of getting the pipe removed, but in my opinion, as there is another CSO just half a mile upriver that does not solve the problem we have, as the sewage flows down river.

In her reply to me the CEO says .

"The storm overflow or Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) you're referring to activated six times in 2021, and eight times in 2022, so is already well below the long-term Government targets (CSOs to spill fewer than 10 times a year on average, by 2050).

As you will be aware, many sectors and activities impact the quality and ecological

status of our rivers and the EA (Environment Agency) have identified nearly 2,000 individual reasons across the length of the River Trent.

Less than 10% of these are related to storm overflows. However, that is still too many, and we know the strength of public feeling about them. In England 2023, storm overflows were responsible for around 12% of rivers not achieving good ecological status. In the Severn Trent region, that figure is closer to 4%."

She added *"I'm really pleased that our proposed plan has highlighted investment and improvement work on two local CSOs in Stone as well as substantial investment at our Strongford Sewage Treatment Works - investment that will help to dramatically improve local river quality for the Stone waterbody."*

Excuse me for sounding cynical at this point, but perhaps this is connected to the fact that Severn Trent Water has just been fined over £2million for "Reckless" pollution, allowing huge amounts of raw sewage to go into our River Trent from Strongford Treatment Works just up the road from Stone.

I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that six times in 2021 and eight times in 2022 (I have no information re 2023 / 2024) should be reduced to Nil spills in the future.

Liv Garfield says *"sadly, we can't replace the system overnight as it would cause untold road disruption and cost many tens of billions."*

It is time for us all to demand from the Government that the huge profit-making water companies build and operates a modern system, which will not allow any discharge of raw sewage or pollution of our waterways, so that we can have confidence in letting our children go into our seas and rivers without fear of becoming ill.

In fairness Liv Garfield wrote a lot more, I have only shared the part of her email relevant to Stone.

**From
County Councillor Mrs Jill Hood
Stone Urban Division**

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Model Bus Extravaganza

The Model Bus Federation (North Midlands Area) proudly present their **45th Model Bus Extravaganza at on Saturday 20 April.**

The popular event, which has Scenic Layouts, Model Displays, Refreshments and Sales Stands takes place in the Sports Hall at Blessed William Howard School, Rowley Avenue, Stafford, ST17 9AB 10.00am to 3.30pm.

Admission is £3 for adults, Senior Citizens £2 and accompanied children under 16 Free. Admission and refreshments are CASH ONLY please

If you're coming by bus - Travel by POTTERIES Route 101 Hanley - Newcastle - Trentham - Stone - Stafford alight at Stafford Station, head over the railway bridge then it's your 2nd left.

Wintry Walks & Views Of Stone

Stone based rambler and photographer, Paul L.G. Morris, shares some of his recent photos with us

In some ways winter is a strange season: we think of the wind, rain and snow but we do get sunny days; we consider that the days are getting shorter and the nights are drawing in but the days have been getting longer since 22nd December and the nights getting later from around 13th December – perhaps this extra light is why plants like snowdrops appear while we still think it is winter.

Winter has many moods and not every year is the same; here I show a collection of photos taken in and around Stone over the past few years.



Pirehill Lane last year: Although the cold weather may not be to our liking, nor to the liking of wildlife, it is important for the balance of nature (Tennyson's 'Nature Red in Tooth and Claw' is only part of the story) so I will start off with a couple of snowy, frosty photos with the first being a panoramic view from



For the second photo, this was taken after a light dusting of snow at Shugborough and shows the River Sow near Essex Bridge – strange how it has settled on the river but not the grass:



Winter is the most common time for flooding although, with our changing climate, this is not always the case. To cope with the overflow, nature provides flood plains or meadows which has blessed us with some lovely nature reserves beside the River Trent. Below are a couple of views of our flood meadows in action.

The first taken from the A51 road bridge in 2019:



and the second is of Crown Meadows from Trent Close taken this year:



There is an almost magical feel to the atmosphere when fog begins to lift revealing a fine day; but fog, or mist, has a tendency to both quieten the sounds and soften the view. These two images were taken along the canal in Stone in early 2020 before we knew what was coming with Covid. The first shows someone having a quite stroll along the path:



And this second one was taken as the fog lifted leaving a light mist and showing a clear blue sky:



A fine day in the country gives me the opportunity to see trees devoid of their leaves but showing the magnificence of their architecture (or should that be sculpture?). What doesn't show well in photographs at this time is the reddish tint that many trees may have as the leaf buds swell; this gets more pronounced as the days pass. This particular tree was taken at Shugborough, just one of many fine specimens to be seen there:



I mentioned earlier that some plants begin to grow even though it is winter when everything is 'supposed' to be dormant. This is a clump (or is that a nod, carpet, cheer...) of snowdrops seen at the Dorothy Clive Garden:



But snowdrops are not the only plant emerging from the soil, daffodils are not far behind:



with a few early ones in flower:



Finally, it is always worth keeping an eye out for the unexpected. In an early January walk along the canal by the Whitebridge estate my wife spotted a Kingfisher. We couldn't get anywhere near to being close and I didn't have a powerful lens with me, just a compact camera. But I did manage to get this (heavily cropped and enlarged!) view of it resting on the tiller of a canal boat on the opposite bank:

Isn't this an amazing country?



Stone Crown Bowling Club

An invite to Stone Crown Bowling Club Open Day

As the temperatures begin to rise and the sun comes out more and more it is time to think about what to do during the summer months. Stone Crown Bowling Club is now preparing for the upcoming season. As such we are always happy to see new members join us in what is a very sociable and friendly club. Not only do we run a full bowling programme we also organise many other social events all year round.

Our Open Day this year will be on Sunday 7th April, you are welcome to call in any time between 11am and 4pm where our members will be waiting to show you around and give you a short bowling taster session.

As mentioned we are a sociable bowling club. Throughout the season we organise social bowling on a regular basis including afternoons, evenings and away days to different venues. In addition, for the more competitive amongst us, we organise friendly matches against local clubs and internal club knockout competitions. Even after the outdoor bowling season comes to a close in October we have facilities for indoor bowling, and many other various social gatherings. You will find that throughout the whole year you will not be left wondering what to do with your time.

The club can be found on the B5027 Uttoxeter Road, Little Stoke, ST15 8RA 200yards above Little Stoke Cricket Club. For more information please feel free to visit our website at www.stonecrownbc.org. If you find that you are interested in joining please contact our Club Secretary Sylvia Mahoney on 07967 157073.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Moddershall & Oulton Cricket Club Junior Academy – Producing Cricketers and a whole lot more...

2023 was special for the Moddershall & Oulton CC Junior Academy, not only did the club celebrate their Centenary Year but their youngsters had yet another year to remember.

Team successes saw their u12's, u14's and u16's win their respective leagues along with the u12's also winning the cup too! What was more impressive though were some incredible individual achievements.

With 6 teams to fill on a Saturday afternoon a real emphasis is put on their Academy to keep the conveyor belt of young talent moving forward and producing cricketers to play senior cricket. These youngsters are exposed to adult cricket at a young age and this exposure does wonders for their confidence.

But for the club it's not just about producing cricketers, it really is a whole lot more. The team pictured below is taken from the U15 County Final in 2019 and perfectly illustrates what they mean by "a whole lot more".

Out of the 12 players pictured above, 8 played soft ball cricket and started their journey at the club, and this is where the support begins. Very quickly the youngsters learn to take instructions, become team players and to respect the

game. This continues throughout their time within the academy, where help is given trialling for representative cricket, applying for scholarships and when doing their D of E Awards.

Of the team pictured several are already at university, 7 received sports scholarships and all but 2 have represented Staffordshire Cricket at the various age groups. Several have gone on to represent the Midlands at the Bunbury Festival and Super 4s and at this year's U19's World Cup in South Africa 2 of this group represented their respective countries. An incredible achievement for a 'small country club'.

3 picturesque grounds set in beautiful countryside with panoramic views across Shropshire provides a great place for boys and girls to start their journey and to learn how to play cricket, have fun and make lifetime friends.

Moddershall & Oulton Cricket club is a wonderful family club so if you're interested in your son or daughter being a part of this or require any more information then please contact us on moddershallandoulton.cricketaacademy@outlook.com

Inner Wheel Celebrate their National Club's 100th Birthday

The Inner Wheel Club of Stone & District helped the National Inner Wheel Club of Great Britain and Ireland celebrate its One Hundredth Birthday on January 10th 2024. The members of the club chose to visit a unique private cinema to see "Mama Mia! Here we go again" as their own celebration. **ED: I love that little cinema!**

They also decided to combine this event with donating 100 items collected from members to give to Stone Community Hub.



On Friday January 12th. Club President Helen Whetnall along with members Kate and Elaine Delivered the 100 plus items from Stone Inner Wheel members to Stone Community Hub and presented them to Hub Manager Jane Harding.



Members at the Cinema with the 100+ items collected



Robert Walls presents a cheque to Sandie McQueen

Amazing support for Stone Alzheimer's Club

Supporting carers beyond club meetings has been something that the volunteers have sought to do for some time and now it will be possible.

Lucy Ludlow and Zak Patel, who are dementia advisers, are now regularly visitors to the club and will provide support and advice for carers so if you need assistance, please get in touch.

The Stone Alzheimer's Club relies totally on donations and collections to support the work that it does with its twenty-six members and their carers.

In January, the Club was delighted to be presented with a cheque for £134.50, money that was raised by 'Carols at Salt Church' and 'Carols on the Green at Hopton' in the period before Christmas. The carollers were looking for a worthy cause to support and a recent article in the Gazette led them to the Stone Alzheimer's Club.

Also, in January, the club received further funding for £200 in memory of Joseph Davies to allow the club to hire his favourite entertainer to entertain members, £162.00 in memory of Ellen Roberts and a donation in memory of Pat Maitland.

In addition to this, Pauline Trinder and her sister agreed not to give each other presents this Christmas but decided instead to give to a local worthy cause, so thank you for donating to the Stone Alzheimer's Club.

Lead Volunteer, Sandie McQueen said: "With the growth of the Club over the last year, these donations, totalling £566.50, could not have come at a better time and will be put to good use in providing a safe environment for members and entertainment."

She went on to say: "Since May 2022, the number of members in the club has more than doubled and as we have no formal funding, supporting our work has become increasingly challenging. Fortunately, the generosity of the local community and organisations have come to our aid and it is really appreciated."

If you would like to know more about the Club you can email: stone_alzheimersclub@btinternet.com
Visit www.stonealzheimersclub.mywebcommunity.org
Give us a call on 07375 748733 or simply come and see us...you will be really welcome.



Sandie McQueen receives a cheque from Dilys Davies

Page 2 Stage Creatives
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Gone 50 Years Ago This Year But Still Fondly Remembered - Joules' Brewery

By Philip Leason MBE

In the last two editions of The Gazette we have looked at one of the major changes to Stone the occurred in 1974 with the reorganisation of local government and the loss of both the Urban and Rural District Councils. This month we look at another major change and loss to the town, the closure of Joules Brewery on 31st October, 1974.

The Joules family were long residents of Youlgrove in Derbyshire. One member of the family William went to Salford where he established a brewery which he eventually sold in 1854. The most famous member of this branch of the family is William's grandson James Prescott Joule who was born at the brewery in 1818. He became a famous physicist and it is after him that the 'Joule' unit of electricity was named.



Portrait of Francis Joule Born Youlgreave, Derbyshire, 21 Feb 1755. Died 21 Feb 1837

It was William's brother Francis, who was described as a "maltster," who came to Stone in 1758 and took over a small brewery and the White Horse Inn, which had been in existence since 1719. (There is a portrait of Francis in the "Lamb and Flag" section of Crown Wharf).

In 1767 Francis demolished the inn and built a house on the site which was later to become the residence of the head brewer. Out of interest, Francis was a leading non-conformist in the town and he preached in the small chapel built on his land (approximately where the entrance to the B&M carpark is today). The chapel later closed and moved to large premises in Chapel Street, now Station Road. The old chapel was used as a store for the companies wine and spirits.

In Alfred Barnard's book "The Noted Breweries of Great Britain and Ireland" Volume III he records details of his visit to Joules' brewery in 1889 and writes:

"At the bottom of the yard, in what was once the Independent Chapel, are located the wine and spirit stores, for supplying the firm's public-houses and local customers. Tradition says that the father of the first brewer, Joule, once held forth from the pulpit of this building, and, by his stirring discourses, quite awakened a sleepy district. We were shown a subterranean passage, in the basement of the edifice, leading to his house, through which he made his way to attend to his Sabbath duties. One of our party conversed with an old gentleman, whose father had heard Parson Joule discourse so eloquently that his

congregation were quiet moved by his appeals."

It was while the chapel was being demolished in the 1960's in order to build a new boiler house that the skeleton and remains of the Rev. W. Thomas who died in 1833 and had been buried there, were found and later reinterred in Stone cemetery.

In 1780 Francis built a "public brewery" not only to supply his own premises but also other public houses in the area. It is this year which was later used as the establishment date of Joules and was shown on the letterheads and used in their publicity.

The brewery thrived and in 1797 more land was acquired in the High Street on which to expand. After leaving school John, the second son of Francis and after whom the brewery was later named, began to take an active part in the business. (There is a portrait of John in the Lamb & Flag section at Crown Wharf).

In 1870 the business was acquired by three Liverpool brewers, one of whom was Thomas Harding and from then onwards the Harding family were actively associated with the brewery. In 1898 it was decided to convert the business into a joint stock company, with Thomas becoming the first Chairman. His grandson Ronald Ambrose Harding joined the company in 1949 and was appointed Managing Director in 1950 and Chairman in 1952. His eldest son Michael joined the company in 1956 and was appointed Managing Director in 1964 following the death of the well-known gentleman Stanley Blood. Michael remained the MD until the brewery was taken over by Bass Charrington.

As well as supplying local customers, in the early days the company exported to various countries in the world. However from 1914 Joules confined their marketing activities to the midlands where most of their licensed houses were located. By 1965 they owned 222 public houses and 43 off licenses.

It wasn't only the beer drinkers of the Midlands that prized Joule's beers highly, for in 1919 the brewery received the Silver Medal at the National Exhibition of Brewing and Allied Trades. This was followed by a bronze medal in 1925, the bronze, silver and gold medals in 1926. The Gold Medal was awarded for the championship in the draught beer class with a beer with an original gravity of over 10390. Further awards were received in the Exhibitions of 1932, 1935 and 1937. Perhaps the most notable honour which many readers may remember was in 1957 with the award of the Brewery Trade Review Challenge Cup for the best bottled beer in Great Britain namely Joules Stone Ale.

In the late 1960's Bass Charrington began to buy an interest in the brewery and on 17th April 1970 they made an offer to acquire the balance of the ordinary stock in Joule's which they did not already own. The offer was accepted and from 1st August 1970 John Joule and Sons became part of the Bass Charrington Group and became the last brewery to be taken over by them.

Right from the start there was a doubt as to whether or not brewing would continue in Stone.

Various petitions were organized and on 6th March 1971 the brewery employees held a demonstration march through the town organised by the local branch of the Transport and General Workers Union. In November 1973

beer lovers from throughout the country flocked to Stone to take part in a march organised by the Campaign for Real Ale.

Throughout this time tests were being carried out at the Bass brewery in Burton-on-Trent to try and reproduce Joule's Bitter. A statement issued by the brewery on 30th May 1974 read: *"Brewing operations will cease at Stone on 31st October, 1974 and the brewing of Joule's Bitter, already successful matched, will be carried on at the Bass Production Brewery at Burton-on-Trent, the traditional home of British Brewing."*



Portrait of John Joule, born at Youlgreave, Derbyshire on 4 Jan 1783. Died Meaford Old Hall, Meaford, near Stone on 2 May 1858.

John Joule took over his father's brewing business in Stone in 1813, when it was renamed John Joule & Sons.
Artist: T. Arrowsmith (1772-c.1829).

To commemorate the closure of the brewery a special brew of Royal Ale with a gravity of 1080 was produced, much of which was drunk at a farewell party for the brewery workers held in the old bottling stores in Newcastle Street on the closing day. However some of this last brew was bottled as a permanent reminder of the last ale to be produced by Joules in the town.

In the last few days of the brewery some of the fermenting vessel which were not used for the last brew were filled with water and some employees swam in them.

Another event held on the last day was a "wake" organized by the local branch of CAMRA. Members dressed in period costume paraded along the High Street to the brewery gates where they laid wreaths and then on to the Market Square where they erected a display of Joule's memorabilia. Later they gathered at the Red Lion where they drank the pub dry of draught beer.

The closure of the brewery was not only the loss of a business and the redundancy for some of the employees but it was also a great loss to the town as a whole Joules were always great benefactors to Stone. On 7th August, 1928 Joules presented the first ambulance to the town. This was replaced in 1937 the original ambulance having covered 10,656 miles, attended 617 calls and 162 accidents.



Delivery Trucks and Drivers 1920 - 1930 (c.)

They were the first to make a contribution to the fund during the Second World War to buy a spitfire.

They were also great supporters of sporting events and often provided sponsorship or presented trophies.

The company also provided a trophy for the annual Fat Stock Sale held just before Christmas at the cattle market in Mill Street, Stone. The winning farmer was also presented with a bottle of "Blue Cross" whisky.

During the early years of Stone Festival the company sponsored a beer drinking contest where teams from the various pubs had to drink pints of beer in the fastest time, with penalty points being added for spillages.

Perhaps the most lasting legacy is in the form of the Downs Banks, a plaque at the entrance states: "These Downs were purchased by John Joule & Sons Ltd., endowed by public subscription and presented to the National Trust on 22nd Day of July, 1950 as a thanks offering for the victory in the war of 1939-1945 and as a memorial to those who fell in the war."

In a recent email from a reader and a new resident I was asked if I would describe where some of the buildings I refer to were located.

The buildings along the High Street from the double fronted building where the former Conservative office was to Willowsbrook cards shop, were the offices and a shop (*latterly an Office Licence*). It is worth noting that Joules took a great interest in technology over the years. They were the first to have electricity in Stone and they encouraged the introduction of the telephone and had the prestigious number of Stone 1 (*later on the introduction of STD - 2141*).

Behind the offices was the brewery its self with the fermenting tower dominating the skyline with a neon sign on top. On one side of the brewery yard was the brew house with its coppers where the wort was boiled.

On brewing days the aroma of brewing beer filled the air of the High Street - a smell which you either loved or hated. Many of the old brewery workers reckoned that they could tell the type of ale being brewed by the smell.

In February 1955 the whole of Stone was saddened when two employees working in the brew house were badly scalded when the wort in the coppers boiled over and they subsequently died of their injuries.

The mash tuns had to be emptied by hand and men stripped to the waist would climb in and shovel out the spent grains into a shoot, under which would be a lorry waiting to take the waste to local farms for cattle feed.

In the next buildings were the stores where the malt and hops in sacks known as pockets were stored. At the end of this row of buildings was the boiler house which produced the steam for the brewery

On the opposite side of the brewery yard was the cask shed where the wooden casks (*later aluminium*) were washed, steamed and

inspected before being re filled. Also on this side of the brewery was the modern fermenting rooms.

One of the secrets of Joules beers was the quality of the water used and the wells were also located in this area.

In 1977 there was a serious draught the water authority tested the water in the wells with a view of supplementing the mains supply. However they found that the water contained too much iron and was therefore unsuitable.

Also in the brewery yard was the wine and spirit department where the wines were stored in the cellars below, some of which probably dated back to when the old monastic brew house, which is believed to have once stood on the site. You could certainly see blacked marks on the wall where flaming torches had been put. To provide ventilation to the cellars there were grids by the wall of the brewery offices in the High Street which are still there today.



Offices of Joules Brewery in High Street 1974 - 1975 (c.)

Sadly the cellars have probably been destroyed when the site was redeveloped.

Approximately where the unloading area of the B&M warehouse is today was the tank beer department which opened in February 1970. Beer was transported in bulk by tankers and pumped into tanks in the cellars of pubs with a high volume of beer sales.

Opposite in what is now the garden area of the Crown & Anchor was the brewery cooorage.

Once the beer had been brewed, fermented and racked (*put into barrels*) it was transported by road (*in an operation called "the brew"*) from the main brewery to the conditioning cellars in Newcastle Street. Here it remained until it was transported by road to the pubs and clubs throughout the area. Also located in this building were the bottling plant and the bottled beer and mineral water warehouse.

In the yard alongside the bottling stores were the loading bays and the transport department.

Joules had a reputation for the appearance of their delivery vehicles, the drivers of which were still called draymen after the ostler of the old horse drawn drays. The vehicles were actually painted in the company's own paint shop and maintained in their workshops. The special fire proof building used to store the cellulose paint still stands by the canal alongside the tunnel which carried the steam pipes under the road from the boiler house in Crown Street to the buildings in Newcastle Street.

The tunnel was discovered and broken into when the foundations were being dug for Crown Wharf.

The Joule's vehicles even appeared in a series of adverts for Morris's Lubricants of



Casks at the cooorage yard, Newcastle Street, Stone, 1965 - 1974 (c.) now the Crown and Anchor car park.

Shrewsbury under the heading of "Fine Fleets on Morris's Oils." A slight link with this company is the fact that when the home of the Morris family was being demolished a large wooden fireplace with the coat of arms of Shropshire above was purchased by the new Joules brewery and is now in Crown Wharf.

So those unfamiliar with where the brewery and its ancillary were located can see that it occupied a considerable part of the town.

To finish this article I am going to quote a poem written at the time of the closure 50 years ago by Mrs Constance Hall:

*I walked along the road to Stone
And saw the steam rise high
As I had seen so many times
In years that have gone by
It pours itself above the town
In such a friendly way
So white and so important
As it billows every day
I caught the smell of hops and malt
As millions have before
It's all part of our dear town
Right through the days of yore
But now the old familiar scene
Will soon be gone for ever
One never thought it possible
That they could history sever
I went there as a little girl
To get a jug of balm
For my mother's home made ginger beer
In the days when life was calm
But then they say "That's Progress"
And yet I fail to see
Why they must pick on sear old Stone
And change its history
The place will never be the same
Without its gorgeous smell
And what will now become of it
Well... can anyone tell
So goodbye to our old brewery
And when you don your hood
The memory will still linger on
By Joule's it was good*

I hope that the above will be back memories to some readers, and will be of interest to others.

Please help us to keep the heritage of Stone alive for generations to come. If you have any photographs relating to the anything mentioned here please contact Staffordshire Past Track.

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

Philip Leason

**Photographs courtesy of
www.staffspasttrack.org.uk**

Gazette Motoring

The Suzuki Swift Sport

Behind the wheel there's a sensation of freedom - By Syd Taylor

Undoubtedly motorists are feeling the pinch where the fun factor is concerned. Drivers say that no longer is driving a delight. Indeed - it's a bit of a nightmare. Folk would sooner be putting their feet up in front of the telly than pressing the pedal to the metal.

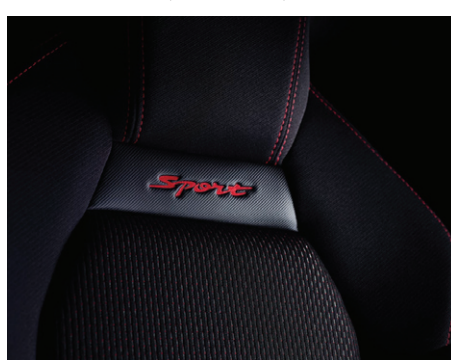
Yes, indeed we know that it can be grim out there on the highways of hell - but take heart; motoring excitement is not dead. There is a niche market of fun-loving drivers that manufacturers are eager to reward: hence the generation of small cars with perky performance.

The Suzuki Swift Sport soars high in this select category. It's an attractive, compact, smartly styled little wonder that is mightily impressive with a spritely image but with no gimmicky excrescences. To look at, you realise it's a compact athlete of the road: so smoothly and cheekily is it styled. One look and you're smiling. Get behind the wheel and there's a sensation of freedom. This is a car that doesn't just take you there, but feels like it's just taking to the air.



With five doors and room for five, the practicality makes it a much more usable everyday proposition than highly focussed rivals like the impractical Abarth. Nevertheless it's a fine performance hatch that feels better the faster you go. The car seems to thrive on hard driving, always responding with reassuring precision. Stable and sure-footed, this Swift invites fun, not fuss.

It's a rare car these days that performs with pleasing alacrity and possesses all the tactile qualities that any good driver's car should have. In one of these cheeky cars you could blow raspberries at the verger for chatting up the vicar's wife as you press on with a big smile and bowl along with bountiful verve. In short, it offers an amalgam of qualities that, when rolled together in one deft package of momentum, amounts to that elusive and yet desirably disgraceful experience called fun.



For the first time in a long time I took to the road with a twinkle in my eye, inserted the most comely passenger I could find, boasted that the sky's the limit, and headed off with a care-free chuckle to confront the stationary tailback at the traffic lights.

I said to my passenger, Susie Swift from Swadlincote (for it was she) who had swept in like a breath of Spring!

"You might wish to stretch out, for there is plenty of room and once we get clear of this it'll be vroom, vroom, vroom!" ... and so it proved.

Once all impediments were cast aside, and I was able to extend the splendidly engineered machine, there was scarce time between vocal exclamations of pleasure to extol its virtues. For the class, it certainly can turn up the heat. It's called the Swift and it lives up to the name. Good as it is, early 2024 sees a new model on sale. With revised styling and a new smaller capacity three cylinder engine with slightly less power, I can't wait to try it.

But as for the current model - It's a peerless purveyor of perpetual enthrallment, and even on dark days it twinkles like a fairy light in the gloom. And yet, despite its sportiness it's as economical as an austerity grocer, returning up to 50 mpg. For fun per pound per mile it's hard to beat, being such a good package that other manufacturers are finding it hard to swallow.



If you're in the market for a smart and sporty experience, the Swift Sport will answer your prayers and more. On a sun-dappled twisty road it twists and turns and flashes in the light. *(Bear with me on this!)* *'It grips the road so tightly it seems to lift the highway up into the clouds where everyday cares are diminished and hitherto inaccessible peaks shrink to the size of molehills. If you want to feel free, unfettered, feisty and fun-loving, the Suzuki Swift Sport certainly delivers - and all for £24,270.'*

The 4 cylinder 1.4 engine loves revs, has mild hybrid assistance from a small battery under the passenger seat and with 129bhp, drives through a slick six speed manual gearbox to the front wheels. A top speed of near 130 mph is there for law breakers - but more importantly one can appreciate zip and zest that mere figures can never show. It hums along obediently at motorway speeds and you can settle down and cruise - but motorways are not where you want to be in a Swift Sport.



Suzuki are thorough and pains have been taken to ensure that all subservient systems are perfectly complementary to the performance available, enabling the Swift's road behaviour to be specifically matched to the engine. And careful provision is made for the driver to be entirely in control while remaining wholly at ease.





Government committed to MOT modernisation as consultation concludes

On the 25th January the Government published its response to the consultation on updating MOT testing for cars, motorbikes and vans, which confirms that the first MOT will remain at three years from registration. Every subsequent MOT will also continue to be taken once every year, ensuring motorists can continue to drive with peace of mind.

Launched in January 2023, the consultation sought views to ensure roadworthiness checks continue to balance the cost to motorists, road safety, advances in vehicle technology, and tackling vehicle emissions.

To ensure MOTs are fit for the future, the Government will further investigate how to better monitor diesel vehicle emissions through the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). This will include whether testing should do more to ensure that diesel vehicles comply with emissions regulations.

Analysis from the AA suggests that an annual MOT can potentially save drivers between £200 and £400 as picking up developing faults each year means drivers aren't hit with higher repair bills further down the road.

Roads Minister Guy Opperman said: "We have listened to drivers and industry, and keeping MOTs in their current form shows once again that we are on the side of motorists."

"By offering clarity on MOT tests, alongside our recent street works consultation and unprecedented £8.3 billion to resurface roads, we are helping motorists drive with peace of mind and ensuring Britain's roads continue to be some of the safest in the world."

With the constantly improving technology of modern-day cars and Electric Vehicles (EVs), the Department will continue to work closely with industry stakeholders and drivers to establish a programme of longer term, reform for MOTs.

To ensure they remain fit for the future, the Government is exploring a more effective test for diesel particulate emissions, whether further improvements could be made to the MOT for electric vehicles and the transfer of some larger zero-emissions vans to more standard, car-style MOT testing.

Neil Barlow, Head of Vehicle Policy at DVSA, said: "Ensuring the MOT remains fit for the future is a key part of DVSA's work, and getting ready for new technology will help keep Britain's roads safe."

We hope this positive news will provide some certainty for garages to enable the investment in new technologies that could be needed to keep the MOT at the forefront of road safety and the environment."

DfT will also monitor technological developments that could require an altered MOT, such as Advanced Driver Assistance Systems.

Jakob Pfaudler, AA CEO, said: "AA polling showed drivers overwhelmingly (83%) supported the annual MOT for keeping their cars and other cars safe. With one in 10 cars failing their first MOT, we fully support the Government's pragmatic decision to maintain the first MOT at three years and annually thereafter."

The measures follow last week's proposals to tackle overrunning street works from utility companies and the biggest ever funding boost of £8.3 billion, enough to resurface over 5,000 miles of local roads in England, as the Government continues to be on the side of drivers and improve journeys for more people, in more places, more quickly."



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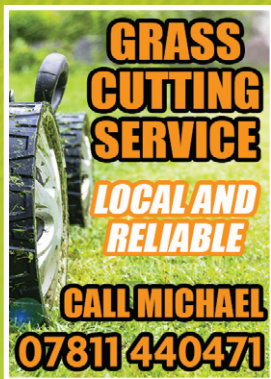
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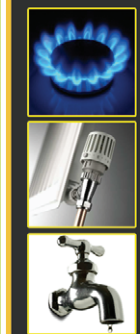
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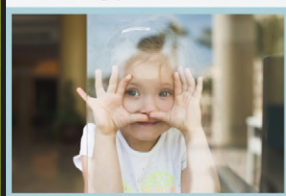


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