

STOURTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 3 May 2023

Life continues to be strange. With communities coming out of lockdown we had a wonderful weekend celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in June last year. Little did we know then that only a few months later we would be in mourning for a queen who had been on the throne for most or all our lives. On behalf of the Parish Council and every resident within the parish I sent a letter of condolence to the new King and received a note of thanks to all back.

As part of the Jubilee celebrations a Maple tree was planted by Dennis Chapple. It can be seen together with the Commemoration plaque beside the drive to Stourhead House, close to the Clock Arch. We are grateful to Cllr Higgs and the National Trust for their help and support organising this event.

National Trust Lights Event

We continue to work with the National Trust supporting them with their Lights event but tempering the needs of the community during the long month of the event. Some members of the Parish Council are involved in the discussions that take place both before the event and afterwards. We are grateful that we now have Cllr Niemand on the Parish Council keeping us updated and taking on the concerns we pass on about the event.

Litter Pick

We had another successful litter pick this year again organised by Cllr Hoare. The day itself was a wonderful example of the community coming together, but others like myself unable to take part that day have been regularly litter picking on other days. It is appalling that within a few hours of clearing rubbish there is always more litter deposited on our roads, fields and verges.

WC Winter Salt Scheme

It has become apparent that the winter bad weather scheme was not working and we are continuing to work on solving the issues affecting our village. We are very grateful to Cllr Fearon who has dedicated a huge amount of time to sorting this out and to Cllr Higgs who is co-ordinating a gritting group on 'WhatsApp' to help when the need arises.

Parish Steward

We are grateful to Cllr Hoare who liaises with our Parish Steward and is regularly monitoring and checking that we make full use of his time. We have access to the Parish Steward for only a day each month that he works in the parish so it is important that Cllr Hoare has any requests in good time to pass them on.

Public Access Defibrillator

Our defibrillator has now been installed under the arch from the car park into the Spread Eagle Courtyard. It can be found just along from the Parish Council Noticeboard. The What3Word position is **fish.traffic.unloaded**. We are very grateful to Pat Booth who has been managing the PC defibrillator for many years, and to Erik Ruane who has very kindly volunteered to take on the monthly checks and is now liaising with Community Heartbeat.

Parish Survey

We extend grateful thanks to Cllrs Joyce and Gray for all their time and hard work compiling the parish mobile phone signal survey which we carried out during the year. Also thank you to all those who took time to complete it and return it.

Website

Many thanks to Cllr Hoare who continues to maintain our website www.stourton.org.uk

Notice, agendas and minutes are put onto the site so they can be viewed by all.

Donations

The Council made donations to Mere Link Scheme, St Peters PCC for churchyard upkeep, and the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal and also to the Gillingham branch of Citizens Advice which helps our residents. We have also contributed to the Kilminster Coronation Fund as Kilminster has kindly invited residents of Stourton to join their celebrations at the Home Guard Club this coming weekend.

Councillors

All our Parish Councillors deserve thanks for all they do for the community. They give up their time and put in a lot of effort for the village. We are also grateful to George Jeans for his work for Stourton in Wiltshire Council and not least our clerk Fran Hill for all her work and commitment to the PC during the year.



**Whitesheet
CE Primary Academy**

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office@whitesheet.dsat.org.uk
Executive Headteacher: Mrs Emily Mullord
Assistant Headteacher: Tamsin Edmed

25th April 2023

Whitesheet Report

School is graded 'Good' by Ofsted in December 2021 and currently has a 'Good' Church School evaluation – due to be re-inspected in the 2023/2024 academic year.

The school currently has 39 pupils on roll, across two classes. The children are taught in 3 phase groups in the morning for core learning time.

End of academic year predictions look excellent with 100% of all Year 2 and Year 6 pupils achieving the expected standard or better in reading, writing and maths. Our phonics teaching is excellent, and results are always in line or better than National comparisons.

We have a higher than average percentage of children with Special Educational Needs (although partly due to small numbers) who are well supported through a nurturing approach and specific targets. The school works well with external professionals and agencies. The backlog of assessments at Local Authority level is causing a delay in some children getting the assessments or diagnosis they need.

We are well supported by our Trust, DSAT, who provide excellent training for all staff across curriculum areas and monitor our quality of teaching and learning.

We have positive relationships with our families and are working closely with our PTA who are raising funds to support curriculum enrichment opportunities. Last term they contributed to 6 music workshops across different music genres, and we have booked a company to teach the children how to use green screens as part of their computing education. Each week the children also have 2 hours of specialist PE provision delivered by trained coaches. We pay into the Gillingham school sports scheme to enable pupils in all years to compete or play with other schools, for example, next week Woodpeckers are going to be attending a gymnastics event.

We have a local Governing Body who support and challenge leadership across the school and meet 6 times a year and would welcome other people from the wider community who may be interested in school Governance.

We are currently developing our 'Secret Garden' to include zones for the children to use as part of their outdoor forest school experience. This includes renovating the pond, installing a mud kitchen, and creating four flower beds for all children to grow their own produce and flowers.

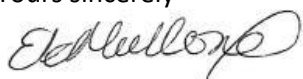


We also have our swimming pool to use during the Summer. In the Summer holidays, we enabled local families to open the pool and swim at a discounted rate which we intend to repeat this coming Summer.

The school has managed to maintain a balanced budget even though there have been pay rises and increase in fuel costs. We are also increasingly offering the school for use by different organisations for local events.

Advertising is a challenge and we would like to add a road sign to the main road to indicate our school is here and would appreciate any help with this.

Yours sincerely



Emily Mullord

Executive Headteacher

[#climbingtonewheightstogether](#)

STOURTON MEMORIAL HALL REPORT 03/05/2023

By Helen Baker

Hall Manager

Good evening to all,

My apologies for not being here in person and thank you to Richard for reading this report on my behalf...

2023 is an exciting year! - the year events are now fully emerging following covid and lockdown restrictions.

Weddings, craft and antique fairs and catering events are back in abundance and enjoying all our beautiful hall has to offer. This year the hall will also host its first celebrant led wedding which will be a lovely occasion for all involved.

New equipment has been purchased for the kitchen and our SP8 cleaners are doing a fantastic job of ensuring the hall looks its very best for wedding viewings and general hire.

There was a new macerator installed in December 2022 along with knives, pans and chopping boards.

Just in case you aren't aware, residents of Stourton and Gasper receive considerably reduced hire rates, for events, parties and weddings.

Full information is on the website **stourtonmh.co.uk** and there is a booking form to complete for any bookings or enquiries.

My details are available in the hall on the board, and in the kitchen, and I aim to respond to any booking enquiries within 24 hours.

The NT have instructed a team of painters & craftspeople to freshen up the external paint on the hall and the courtyard in general, starting mid-May. As well as painting, the wooden frames and doors will be sanded and varnished, and all original features carefully protected and retained.

The downpipe on the roof above the corner of the kitchen, has caused some damp issues, evident on the kitchen ceiling but they will be addressed with the overall refurbishment.

As we've recently, and very sadly, lost two incredibly valuable committee members, our chair Audrey Hoare and our treasurer Johnnie Gallop, I'd like to acknowledge the amazing Stourton Memorial Hall Committee that have selflessly given their time and energy and worked tirelessly to plan some incredible events, providing joy for the great community they all live in. Most recently, the fabulous Jubilee party attended by many and enjoyed by all.

With the Coronation approaching, the committee have commissioned bespoke mugs along with commemorative wildflowers, befitting of any king, and they will be distributed to the community of Stourton and Gasper.

I'd also like to say thank you to the businesses within the courtyard, as without their continued cooperation and collaboration, the events put on by the hall that have been enjoyed by all, would not have been possible.

Thanks to Sam, formerly at the Spread Eagle, for subsidising the food on many occasions, including community film nights, the much-loved flower show, which will be back this year, past Christmas parties and of course, more recently, the Jubilee party. And to Graham for allowing the Jubilee party band to set up by the Temple. I'm so proud to manage such a beautiful hall for such a great community. My thanks to all.

St Peters Church Report

St. Peter's Church is a significant landmark in the village of Stourton. But it is more than just a landmark: it is a living church. We hold a monthly service in St. Peter's; as well as a weekly service across the rest of the Parish; we are available for anyone who wishes to bury loved ones, or to baptise children. The church continues to be chosen for weddings: we held 7 last year and have 5 this year. We have kept the churchyard well-maintained and are continuing to make improvements there. Away from the graves, we are looking to make a wild area.

The church was beautifully decorated for the NT Illuminations and we had enjoyable and successful evenings. For a lot of people, this may be the only time during the year that they come into a church, so it is important to make their visit memorable. It is lovely to see families writing prayers for the prayer tree, and even praying together.

It has been a busy year without a priest since we are without our only full-time employee, and everyone else has to pick up the slack.

It is expensive to run the church: even to turn the heating on costs at least £50; Stourton has to contribute £7,000 a year towards the cost of the priest and the insurance is expensive. The churchyard needs constant mowing. And we are very grateful to the Parish Council for their support.

The roof is now being replaced with terne coated stainless steel, and we have a few repairs to make to other areas of the roof otherwise our building works are finished.

Our discussions with the Diocese have made slow progress but we do now know that shortly we will be able to advertise for a priest, who we will share with Maiden Bradley. All being well – in that we get a suitable applicant, we might have a new incumbent by the end of January 2024.

Stourhead May update

Audience: Stourton with Gasper Parish Council

Herewith a synopsis of what is happening at Stourhead. These events and activities are supplementary to our core Visitor Business; which in itself is seeing a strong return following the pandemic.

I hope you will agree that Stourhead continues to improve in terms of presentation standards and service delivery, and that we offered a vibrant Easter experience which broadly matched our visitor volume for 2019 (the last business-as-usual trading year).

Whats On activities:

6-8 May: Coronation weekend festivities on south lawn including face painting, lawn games and willow crown making.

27 May – 4 June: medieval games in stableyard for half-term.

9-11 June: Planted Country event. Stourhead are partnering with Planted to run a our free 3-day event bringing together a talks programme, carefully selected stallholders and workshops all centred on nature, sustainability and biophilic design. The event will take place outdoors and outside of the landscape garden focusing on the stables, walled garden, and house drive.

15 July – 30 August: joining Festival of Archaeology to search for the hidden Stourton Manor.

22-28 August: Chapterhouse theatre company performances of The Secret Garden, Robin Hood and Sense and Sensibility.

Conservation projects:

Secondhand bookshop relocation: this team raised c£24k in its first year.

Turner's Lake sinkhole project:

A couple of months ago a sinkhole appeared in the dam holding Turners Paddock pond. The new sinkhole is quite significant and has probably formed over a period of years.

The engineer has indicated that other parts of the embankment have been susceptible to seepage and subsequent formation of soil pipes in the past so there is a requirement to look at the whole embankment to ascertain if there are other sinkholes forming.

EA section 10 places this reservoir in Category A (the highest and 1 of only 7 in NT) so diligence and thorough investigations are required.

Topographic and bathymetric survey whilst the lake levels are drawn down.

Ash Dieback:

As per recent planning submission, PC to note that the 2 ash trees on serpentine path are included in tree management plan.

Wider estate project:

We await approval from Somerset Council regarding our application to install dog poo bins in the wider estate, notably at Alfreds Tower and Six Wells carparks together with updated estate maps and interpretation.

EV charging hub:

Planning currently live for installation of 32 bay EV charging hub in the horseshoe parking bays in carpark.

Access hub:

Planning will be submitted in due course for the installation of an access hub directly outside visitor reception, to house our 4 trampers and outdoor wheelchairs.

Christmas at Stourhead trail:

The 2022 Christmas Illuminated Trail met our target expectations:

Ecology and Environment

- We reduced the number of diesel generators by 80%. This represented a 80% decrease in fossil fuel consumption and therefore carbon emissions.
- Most of the power required for the event came from green energy via the National Trust national green energy procurement strategy.
- Usage of LED lighting has been increased to approximately 90%.
- **An ecological survey** has been undertaken, particularly with regard to the protection of rare bats. The outcomes were as follows:

* Dedicated “bat corridors” lit with low-intensity red lighting. The red lights are significantly less disruptive to bats, allowing them to freely move between existing roosts in various buildings around the estate.

* The historic bridge across the lake was been omitted from the light trail as this has recently been identified as a potential bat habitat.

- **A light pollution plan** has been produced following International Dark Sky Reserve representative comments. The outcomes were as follows:

* Spotlights over the lake have been angled so that their beams do not project any higher than the tree canopy

* The amount of upward facing tree lighting has been substantially reduced

* Where some trees are lit with upward facing lighting, the trees have been selected as having substantial canopies/crowns such that light pollution is minimised.

* The Palladian House is being lit vertically (as opposed to front-end horizontal) to reduce light spill above the house

* All car park lighting has been substantially reduced in intensity, whilst still ensuring safe light levels for customers.

Waste Management

All waste was hand sorted onsite, into separate streams of recycling and composting, which was then transferred to local facilities to be processed.

Waste that can't be recycled or composted will be kept to an absolute minimum, and rather than being sent to landfill will be processed in an Energy from Waste facility to provide power around the region.

Action: as in previous years, we will again meet with representatives of the Parish and Church councils to discuss matters relating to the Christmas at Stourhead trail. Suggested date 20 June.

Lastly, our Curatorial Management Plan (CMP) project manager, Emma Nock, is busy writing the gazetteer of the House CMP and we would be very happy to host a talk for the Parish Council if ever of interest.

Philip Niemand
General Manager

Report from Cllr George Jeans for Annual Parish Meeting 2023

I with the help of others are erecting around 60 flags around Mere as my part with Mere Town Council to celebrate The Coronation of Charles 111 and Queen Camila. I am very pleased the other parishes in the Mere Division of Wiltshire Council are well underway with their celebratory events, that is West Knoyle, Kilmington have joined with Stourton and Gasper plus Zeals all having organized events, well done to all.

The Wiltshire Strategic Planning Committee occasionally decide planning applications rather than the more local Southern Area Planning Committee which I sit on. Recently an application for a proposal in Mere for a Gypsy and Travellers site has been put before the Strategic Committee rather than the Southern Area planning Committee. The planning process can be complicated. Wiltshire has no DPD (Development Plan Document) to include a 5 year land supply for Market Housing or Gypsy and Travellers sites, it finds itself harder to refuse sites than it would if it had specified sites. This lack of DPD was one of the reasons a development of 4 Gypsy and Travellers pitches were allowed yesterday in the open countryside where most development would not be agreed.

I get many complaints regarding highway condition. Wiltshire Council has been awarded £22,924,000 from the Government's Highways Maintenance Fund for 2023/24 to pay for a range of highways maintenance and improvement programmes including resurfacing, new road markings, replacing traffic signs and signals, and filling potholes. The council has also received an additional £3,684,800 from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Pothole Fund which will be used to target pothole hotspots around the county. Some say the Mere Division's potholes could use most of the £3.5 million.

Highways of Wiltshire in many areas are in a poor condition in my opinion. Wiltshire Council is working with a new local highways maintenance contractor from Saturday 1 April, as Milestone Infrastructure begins its £80m, five-year contract to help make the county's highways more resilient. Milestone Infrastructure will also employ the council's Parish Stewards, who work closely with Wiltshire's town and parish councils to fix small highways issues in their communities. Focusing on Wiltshire's carbon and social value commitments will be a key driver for Milestone. People with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and care leavers, will be offered employment and training opportunities.

I understand eventually Wiltshire possibly could get an overprovision of school places as the projections allow for over 55 accommodation etc., this category does not usually produce very many children.

Wiltshire Council encourage their councillors to continually ask, have you or someone you know considered fostering. Wiltshire Council still campaign to find more foster carers for children in Wiltshire. Fostering with your local council means all money is spent on frontline services and the child is more likely to be able to stay close to their school, friends and family networks. On my travels I note this campaign is not just limited to Wiltshire.

I am happy to try and answer any questions on any Wiltshire Councillor subject.

PCSO Report

Good afternoon,

Firstly, I hope you are doing well.

Secondly, please find below the policing report we have from JAN 2023 – APRIL 2023

- We have had no reports for your area in regard to RTC's

I have been made aware of local concerns around vehicles speeding PCSO HUNT and PC OBERN who are now covering your area will try and get out on speeding enquires in the near future to address this concern.

- We had a Ticket machine damaged at Stourhead where a machine was damaged by unknown suspects causing minimal damage. but this was the only one report of this kind within your area.
- We have received one report of Hound dogs gaining access to the grounds of Stourhead, all parties involved were spoken to, to ensure this does not happen again.
- We have had one report of a driver, driving whilst over the prescribed limit of drugs, this driver was arrested and is currently under investigation for the offence.
- You have a very low level of antisocial behaviour occurring within your area which is good news.
- Lastly there have been a couple of Domestic related incidents reported to Wiltshire police but there are no patterns or themes around these incidents.

Furthermore, I end on speaking about the Bobby Van that Wiltshire police offer which is a free service. If you are not already aware; Anyone can refer someone to the Bobby Van so any residents (anywhere in Wiltshire) can book an appointment if they are over 60 (or over 18 and over and registered disabled) or you can book an appointment for a friend, family member or neighbour etc. Their contact number is: 01225 256867, their email address is: bobbyvan@wiltshire.police.uk and their website link is: [Bobby Van \(wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk\)](http://Bobby Van (wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk))

The Bobby Van are an amazing tool to assist Wiltshire police, they offer a free home security service as well as a stay safe online service which will hopefully prevent any fraud related offences occurring. They will be easily identified and have valid ID on them to prevent any concerns for the local resident.

I hope this information finds you well and assists in your meeting this evening. Again, apologies I am unable to attend but if you require anything further, please do not hesitate to email me.

Hope this info finds you well and assisting in your local meeting

Kind Regards