

# STOCKTON'S NEWS

keeping you informed ....

**December 2025**

**Issue 182**

**Magazine Deadline:-** 15th of the month  
emails: *Magazine Items* - [stocktons.news@gmail.com](mailto:stocktons.news@gmail.com)  
*Adverts* - [stockton.ads@gmail.com](mailto:stockton.ads@gmail.com)  
**Web Page:-** [www.stocktonsnews.org.uk](http://www.stocktonsnews.org.uk)



**Mary Lee, Sheila Stevens and Sally Humphries**

Three longstanding W.I. Committee Members who stepped down from their roles after many years were presented with bouquets.

# Heart of England Farms



## Festive flavour to savour



Heart of England Farms have been rearing christmas poultry for over 40 years. Specialising in free range bronze turkeys, cockerels, white turkeys and geese we can offer something to keep every tastebud happy! With sizes ranging from smaller 3kg cockerels to beautiful 11kg+ turkeys, whatever the size of your gathering we have the ideal solution.

Our bronze turkeys have free range in open fields, the perimeter fence is to keep the wily fox out rather than the birds in! The geese wander at will being allowed acres of space for grazing, and our cockerels and ducks are allowed the time to reach maturity resulting in the tastiest birds ever!

All our birds are the 'Ultimate in 'NON Ultra Processed Food'.

No added oils, fats, enzymes, starches, protein substances, flavourings or preservatives. And definitely no added salt or sugar!

A totally natural product, the way food should be.

For prices and ordering please visit our website, however for any individual questions do not hesitate to give us a call. Collection days are the 23rd and 24th December or delivery can be arranged as required.

[www.heartofenglandfarms.com](http://www.heartofenglandfarms.com)

*"Totally natural, the way food should be!"*

01926 843460

Henley Road, Claverdon, CV35 8PS

Fresh Christmas turkeys, cockerels and geese  
at  
**Heart of England Farms**  
the ultimate in  
**'NON Ultra  
Processed Food'**  
[www.heartofenglandfarms.com](http://www.heartofenglandfarms.com)  
01926 843460

## Stockton Football & Cricket Club

Napton Road, Stockton CV47 8JU **Facebook:** [@StocktonFCCC](https://www.facebook.com/StocktonFCCC)

**About Us:** We are a non-profit, Community Amateur Sports Club, run by a team of volunteers for its members & the wider community.

### The Club House

Recently extended to include disabled facilities and additional changing rooms.

**Well stocked bar with Sky Sports & BT Sports.** Pop into the clubhouse or see Facebook for information on upcoming

### Our Teams:

**Stockton Football**

(Mens, Girls & Boys)

**Stockton Stars Cricket,**  
**Stockton Ladies Netball,**

**Stockton Petanque,**  
**Warwickshire Grizzlies**  
**Baseball,**

**SFCC Darts Team**

# *Southam Carpets*

Carpets, Vinyl flooring, Karndean,  
Blinds and Curtains.

Free quotes and advice.

Professional installation.

**Quality, Value & Service since 1979.**

**01926 814944**

[www.southamcarpets.co.uk](http://www.southamcarpets.co.uk)  
39 Coventry St. SOUTHAM CV47 0EP



## **C PULLIN & SON Monumental Masons**



Five generations of quality  
manufacturing  
and service from a family  
business.

All aspects of monumental  
Masonry

Showroom at 19A High Street,  
Leamington Spa, CV31 3AW  
01926 426435

[www.pullinsmemorials.co.uk](http://www.pullinsmemorials.co.uk)  
[contact@pullinsmemorials.co.uk](mailto:contact@pullinsmemorials.co.uk)



**LOCKE & ENGLAND**  
**AUCTIONEERS & VALUERS**

## **Auction Sales & Valuations**



Valuation, collection & auction service  
of individual items through to complete  
property clearances.

Call for a free no obligation collection  
quote or email [info@leauction.co.uk](mailto:info@leauction.co.uk)

**SALE ENTRIES INVITED**

12 Guy Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 4RT

**01926 889 100** [www.leauction.co.uk](http://www.leauction.co.uk)

### **Advertising Rates per Issue:**

- A5 page size 1/4
- Greyscale £6.50
- Colour £13.00

- A5 page size 1/2
- Greyscale £13.00
- Colour £26.00

- A5 page size Full
- Greyscale £26.00
- Colour £52.00

**50% discount for 6 or  
more consecutive issues.**



Tomlow Road, Napton, Warks  
Specialist nursery growing and selling  
Bamboos, Grasses, Hardy Perennials,  
Shrubs, Alpines

Open March to November:  
Hours: Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
Sunday & Bank Holiday Mondays  
throughout the year  
10.00am to 4.00pm

Other times by appointment.

**Tel: 01926 812737**

**[www.bridge-nursery.co.uk](http://www.bridge-nursery.co.uk)**

Follow our brown tourist sign at  
Napton crossroads on the A425  
Southam to Daventry Road

## **W. Goodwin & Sons** Funeral Directors

38 Coventry Street,  
Southam.

**Telephone: 01926 812445**

**Private Chapels of Rest  
Monument Service Provided**

## **LELEX CARPETS**

Free Estimates  
Time convenient to you

Carpet, Vinyl & Laminate  
Samples Available

Professional & Friendly Service

Local Reliable Tradesman  
Qualified & Insured

Free Delivery - 7 Day Service

Flat Pack Assembly Service

Phone **JAMIE STRINGER**

on

**Mob: 07900431644**

**Home: 01926245700**

## **NEW TAXI SERVICE** BASED IN STOCKTON

Friendly  
&  
Reliable

Available for all  
Airport/Seaport  
&  
Domestic Trips

Call Steve on  
Mobile: 07891075955  
Tel: 01926 814092

[stephenw26268@googlemail.com](mailto:stephenw26268@googlemail.com)

**Rix  
OAKLEYS**

**Fuelling  
homes, farms  
& businesses**

- SINCE 1927 -



**Heating  
& Aga Fuel**



**Fuel  
Tanks**



**Diesel &  
Gas Oil**



**Lubricants  
& Additives**

Tel: **01675 437 557** | [www.rix.co.uk](http://www.rix.co.uk) | [midlands@rix.co.uk](mailto:midlands@rix.co.uk)

Many thanks to all those who have already contributed towards  
the cost of producing **Stockton's News**  
it is great to have your support.

If you wish to make a donation you can do so by **Bank Transfer** to -

**Account:** Stocktons News **Sort Code:** 40-42-15

**Acc. No.** 91456652

**Reference it Donation**

**Cash/Cheque** in envelope addressed to Stockton's News to -  
Steve Kittendorf - The Limes, Marion Stringer - 12 George Street  
Wendy Rumsey - 1 St. Michael's Crescent.

**The magazine is run entirely by volunteers  
and any surplus monies are used for the benefit of the village.**

Click on the link for this month's magazine.

<http://stocktonnews.org.uk>

# Contents

Archives . . . . .	26
Church . . . . .	8
County/District Councillor . . . . .	16
Garden Jottings . . . . .	23
Local Events . . . . .	13
Pétanque . . . . .	24
Village Calendar . . . . .	11
Village Hall . . . . .	25
Village Matters . . . . .	14
Weather Station . . . . .	26
W.I. . . . .	22
Who's Who . . . . .	12

## Locations of Defibrillators and Bleed Packs

**Telephone Box, The Square  
&**

**Football Club House, Napton Road**

**Stop the Bleed Pack** - For use in a catastrophic bleed and does not contain normal first aid items like plasters etc.

**Dial 999**

and they talk you through how to apply tourniquet and wound dressings.

# STOCKTON CHURCH

METHODIST AND ANGLICANS IN UNITY

The Bridges Group of Parishes

[www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk](http://www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk)

BCP – Book of Common Prayer CP – Common Worship

THE BRIDGES GROUP	7th Dec. <u>Advent 2</u> <u>Purple</u>	14 <sup>th</sup> Dec <u>Advent 3</u> <u>Purple</u>	21st Dec <u>Advent 4</u> <u>Purple</u>	CHRIST- <u>MAS</u> <u>DAY</u> <u>WHITE</u>	28 <sup>th</sup> Dec <u>Christmas 1</u> <u>White</u>
PRIORS HARDWICK	Prep. for Christmas Family Service 9.00am	Evensong 5.00pm	Holy Comm. BCP 9.00am		
PRIORS MARSTON	Morning Worship 10.30am	Lessons And Carols 6.00pm	Holy Comm. CW 10.30am	Christmas Morning Service 10.30am	
WORMLEIGH- TON			17 <sup>th</sup> Dec YFC CAROL SERVICE 7.30pm	BCP Holy Communion TBA	
NAPTON	Holy Communion CW 10.30am	Christingle Service 10.30am	Carol Service 4.00pm	Family Service Lay Led 10.30am	Evensong 5.00pm
STOCKTON	CAROL SERVICE 4.00pm	Holy Communion Methodist Tradition 10.30am	NO SERVICE	BCP Holy Communion TBA	TBA
LOWER SHUCK- BURGH					TBA



## **OTHER CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

30<sup>th</sup> November – 4.00pm Christingle at **Stockton**

18<sup>th</sup> Thursday 5.30pm Priors Hardwick Carol Singing at the Lychgate

22<sup>nd</sup> Monday 6.00pm at Napton: Celebration of the Winter Solstice

24<sup>th</sup> December 4.00pm Lower Shuckburgh Carol Service followed by Mulled wine and mince pies.

24<sup>th</sup> December 4.00pm Crib Service at **Stockton**

24<sup>th</sup> December 6.00pm Traditional Carol Service Priors Hardwick

24<sup>th</sup> December 10.45 **Stockton** for Mulled wine & mince pies.

11.15pm for Midnight Communion Methodist led

24<sup>th</sup> December 11.30pm Napton Midnight Communion CW

THE BRIDGES GROUP	4th Jan Epiphany White	11 <sup>th</sup> Jan Epiphany 1 White	18th Jan Epiphany 2 White	25 <sup>th</sup> Jan Epiphany 3 White
Priors Hardwick	Family Service for Epiphany 9.00am	Evensong 5.00pm	BCP Holy Communion 9.00am	
Priors Marston	Morning Worship 10.30am	Morning Worship 10.30am	CW Holy Communion 10.30am	
Wormleighton				Morning Worship 10.30am
Napton	CW Holy Communion 10.30am	Morning Worship 10.30am		Evensong 5.00pm
<b>Stockton</b>	<b>Morning Worship 10.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion Methodist Tradition 10.30am</b>		<b>Holy Communion CW 10.30am</b>
Lower Shuckburgh				BCP Holy Communion 9.00am

# THE BRIDGES GROUP NOTICE BOARD

LOWER SHUCKBURGH, NAPTON , STOCKTON  
PRIORS MARSTON, PRIORS HARDWICK & WORMLEIGHTON

## Programme for Children and Youth

**Create & Play:** Tuesday mornings from 9.30 – 10.45am (term times) in Stockton Church – for further details, contact: Deborah Dutton on 01926 819016 or [deborahduttoncreative@gmail.com](mailto:deborahduttoncreative@gmail.com)

**Babies & Toddlers Group:** Monday mornings from 9.30 – 11am (term times) in Napton Village Hall – for further details, contact: Helen Eadon on 07811 010440

**Messy Church** – on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month at 4pm – venues TBC

## Mid-week programme for Adults - Home Bible Study Groups

The following groups meet for Bible study, prayer and fellowship to pray for our communities. 4 groups are in person, or 1 is online. If you would like to join, please contact the Group leader below:

Every Tuesday online at 6.15 Zoom	Katie	07965 209 075
Every Wednesday at 8pm in Stockton	Wendy	01926 812694
1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursdays at 2.30pm in Stockton	Jan	01926 817991
Every Thursday at 8pm in Napton	Julia	01926 811476
Weekly (day varies) at 7.30pm in Napton	Angie	01926 812225

## Social get-togethers

Knit & Natter: Mondays at 2pm in Stockton Church	Jan	01926 817991
Knit & Natter: Mondays at 2pm in Napton	Jayne	01926 813227
Coffee & Chat: 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursdays at 10am in Priors Hall	Anna	07870 685124

## Parish enquiries

For initial enquiries about baptisms, weddings, funerals and graveyard matters etc, please contact Susan, our Group Administrator, on 01926 812383 or email: [admin@thebridgesgroup.org.uk](mailto:admin@thebridgesgroup.org.uk). Please note that Susan works part-time but she will get back to you as quickly as she can.

[www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk](http://www.thebridgesgroup.org.uk)



## Village Calendar



### Regular Weekly Village Events

#### ***Monday :~***

Knit & Natter: Church ~ 2 - 4pm

#### ***Tuesday :~***

Create & Play: Church 9.30 - 11.00 am ~ (Term Time)

Cubs & Scouts: Stockton Scout Hut 6.45pm - 8pm (Term Time)

Clubbercise: Village Hall ~ 7.30 - 8.30pm

#### ***Wednesday :~***

Chess Club: Nelson Club ~ 5.30 - 7.30pm - ***3rd & 17th***

Lazy Cat Yoga: Village Hall ~ 7.30 - 9.00pm

#### ***Thursday :~***

Afternoon Bingo ~ Nelson Club ~ Doors open 1.30pm Eyes Down ~ 2.00pm

Beavers: Stockton Scout Hut 6.15pm - 7.30pm (Term Time)

#### ***Friday :~***

Toddlersaurs: Village Hall ~ 9.45- 11.15am (Term Time)

W.I. Craft Morning: Football Club ~ 10 - 12noon

#### ***Saturday :~***

Bingo: Eyes down 8.00pm ~ Nelson Club (Top Room)

***Sunday :~ Games Night with free hot snacks - Nelson Club ~ 5pm 7th***

### Regular Monthly Village Events

#### ***Monday***

Women's Institute: 1st Monday of Month ~ Village Hall ~ 7.30pm ~ ***1st Dec***

Parish Council Meetings: 3rd Monday ~ Village Hall ~ 7.15pm ~

#### ***Tuesday***

Brewed Awakening: Nelson Club ~ 10.00am - 12.30pm ~ ***2nd & 18th***

Folk Night: Last Tuesday of the month ~ Nelson Club ~ 7.30pm

#### ***Wednesday***

Friends Lunch: Every 2nd Wed ~ The Crown ~ 12.30pm ~ ***10th Dec & 14th Jan***

Church Lunch: Every 3rd Wednesday ~ 12noon

#### ***Saturday***

Coffee Morning 1st Sat ~ 10am - 12Noon ~ Village Hall ~ ***6th Dec & 3rd Jan***

Whist Drive: Every 2nd Sat ~ Village Hall ~ 7.30pm ~ ***13th Dec & 10th Jan***

Stockton Cinema: Every last Saturday ~ Village Hall ~ 7.00pm ~ ***31st Jan***

Pétanque Melee ~ F.C. & C.C. ~ All Welcome ~ 2.00pm ~ ***6th Dec & 3rd Jan***

## WHO'S WHO

Parish Council	Chairman	Howard Collerson	813181
	Clerk	Robbie Robinson	814094
	Councillors	John Emberton	814267
		Helen Kittendorf	815376
		Chris Millidge	812991
		Terry Warner	813424
		Richard Rumsey	813730
		Wendy Rumsey	813730
District/County Councillor Member of Parliament		Andy Crump	815745
		Jeremy Wright	01926 853650
St. Michaels	Priest in Charge		
	Administrator	Susan Holloway	812383
	Church Warden	Wendy Turner	812694
	Church Flowers	Wendy Turner	812694
Village Hall Bookings		Helen Kittendorf	815376
Stockton School Little Acorns Toddlersaurs	Head Teacher	Mrs. A. Bedgood	812483
			813789
		Becca Makepeace	07733107197
Group Scout Leader/Scouts Cubs Beavers		Jo Brough	07568 653158
		Toby Leeman	07866 563301
		Jo Brough	07568 653158
Women's Institute President		Sue Gill	07502207380
	Secretary	Joan Ford	810220
Football		Rick Musson	813018
Football Club House		Luke Cole	07710 864192
Magazine Editorial Team		Wendy Rumsey	813730
		Marion Stringer	812887
Advertising Editor		Steve Kittendorf	815376
Magazine Treasurer		Steve Kittendorf	815376

## LOCAL EVENTS

*Events and News from Our Neighbouring Villages*

### **Long Itchington History Group**

***Meeting at Community Centre 7.30pm***

***Www.longitchingtonhistory.org.uk***

**WEDNESDAY 10th DECEMBER STARTING AT 7.30.**

“A Century of Boat Women” - Alarum Productions.

Followed with seasonal refreshments.

For further details phone 07745110666. To request transport call 07771953139

Programmes available on request.



### **Southam Gardening Club**

[thesouthamgardeningclub.blogspot.co.uk](http://thesouthamgardeningclub.blogspot.co.uk)

Tel: 01926 813986 or 815086.



There is no meeting in December.

Our next meeting will be on **Monday January 19<sup>th</sup>** when **Lucy Hartley** will give an illustrated talk ‘**Not just my garden – nurturing a shared ecosystem**’ at 7.15 for 7.30pm at the **Communal Hall, Tithe Lodge**, Little Park, off Park Lane, Southam.

All are welcome. Non-members £4.50. Refreshments included.

Further information: [thesouthamgardeningclub.blogspot.co.uk](http://thesouthamgardeningclub.blogspot.co.uk)  
or tel 01926 813986 or 815086.



## VILLAGE MATTERS

To have your news included please  
Contact by email - [stocktons.news@gmail.com](mailto:stocktons.news@gmail.com)  
or by hard copy to Editorial Team



### Santa's Trail

**4th December 5.30 start**

**Route:** Elm Row, Nelsons Way, Church Street, Jubilee Fields, Laurel Drive

### Join us for our annual Christmas light switch on - Friday 5th December! Football & Cricket Club

**5pm** FREE children's crafts inside the football club

**6pm** family friendly Christmas singing and light switch on the football club car park!

Look out for our club raffle raising money for our facilities and the Stockton School PTA with their bottle bag stall

Fancy a drink? Enjoy our mulled wine, or try our 'naughty or nice' hot chocolate! The bar will be open as usual.

Hungry? We have the amazing Jammin Pizza joining us for the evening!

Stars will be available for those who want to hang them on the Christmas tree, a lovely thought for remembering loved ones or for making wishes.

Want to make a lasting mark? Why not ask about getting your name on a tile in our club!

### Christmas Tree Weekend in Stockton Church

**Sat 6th & Sun 7th**

#### BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Birthday wishes for December go to **Dave Rudge, Jo Adkins & Bayleigh Neal**

and for January go to **Esme Cooper & Paul Cox**

*To include birthdays/anniversary please contact magazine.*

*Tel: 01926 813730/812887 or email before 15th of month*

### **Southam Tractor Run**

Expected to stop outside the Nelson Club 7.10pm  
This years raising funds for Galanos House.

### **Refuse & Recycling**

**Food Waste - Dec 5th 12th 19th 29th Jan 5th 10th** *normal weekly*

**Grey Lid Bin - 3 weekly - Dec 12th Jan 5th & 23rd**

**Blue Lid Bin & Green Bin - 2 weekly - Dec 12th 29th Jan 10th 23rd**

### **Mobile Library**

**Stockton Church 2.10 - 2.30pm**

For further information, ring Mobile Library enquiries on  
01926 851031 or Mobile Library on-line at [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/  
mobilelibraries](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/mobilelibraries).



### **Wheelchair Short-term Loan:-**

Stockton Church - 812383

Stockton's News - 813730/812887

**Southam Pharmacy:** 4 Market Hill, CV47 0HE Tel: 812287

**Opening Hours:-** Mon - Friday 8.30am - 6.15pm Sat 9.00am - 5pm

### **Southam Volunteer Transport Scheme**

Southam Town Council operates a voluntary transport scheme which is available to eligible residents living in Stockton, (over 65 or hold a bus pass), who cannot otherwise get to medical appointments. Residents pay the drivers directly. For more information, please contact the telephone number below.

We are also seeking new drivers to assist us in operating the scheme. If you have some free time and are interesting in helping out as a driver please contact the Deputy Clerk on the email address below.

Telephone Number 01926 815817

[Deputyclerk@southamcouncil-warks.gov.uk](mailto:Deputyclerk@southamcouncil-warks.gov.uk)



## **News From Andy Crump**

**WCC Councillor for Southam, Stockton & Napton**

**SDC Councillor for Southam Central and East and Stockton**

**Mobile: 07771335273 - [cllrcrump@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cllrcrump@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

**[andrew.crump@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.crump@stratford-dc.gov.uk)**

### **The Local Councillor update to Stockton News – December 25**

As well as contributing to Stockton News, I am often in the village and I, also, provide weekly updates on the 3 main local Stockton Facebook pages. I try to be proactive as possible but can't be everywhere at all times, so I rely on community intelligence to alert me to issues. Sometimes it is contractors blocking roads without permission, bus issues, potholes etc – I respond as quickly as possible, often within the hour.

I work hard for our community but am old enough (and pragmatic enough) to realise that, as a councillor, I won't be able to please all the people all the time. I try to communicate as much as possible, as well as regularly attending Stockton Parish Council meetings.

(see report below)

I would just like to thank everyone who helps to maintain the 'social glue' of the village – the Parish Council, village clubs and organisations, volunteers, litter pickers, warm hubs.

I would also to send my condolences to the family of 'Chalkie' White – who I had known for over 50 years, and we had regular 'banter' at Tesco's on a Saturday morning – his jokes were worse than mine. He was also my football manager at Stockton FC and I often received his 'advice' in no uncertain terms. A true gentleman.

### **Report to Stockton PC 17/11/25**

#### **Unitary/Unitaries Councils for Warwickshire**

SDC has voted to respond to the Government about the future governance of Warwickshire to tell them that it (and at least 3 if 4 of the other Warwickshire District/Boroughs) favours a 2 unitary model for Warwickshire. WCC will respond to Government saying its preference is for a 1 unitary model. I support that view too and am happy to discuss why, if residents are interested. The Government's position is that the new councils should (unless there are exceptional circumstances) should cover a population of at least 500,00. Surrey was recently split into 2, with each council being circa 600,000 and circa 700,000.



### **Lack of 5 Year Housing Land Supply causing problems**

Developers are seeking to take advantage of this, with numerous applications in the pipeline in and around Southam, Stockton etc.

Planning Permission for new housing applications.

To speed up house building, Steve Reed, the housing minister is bringing in a change, Local authorities will be prevented from refusing planning permission for projects of 150 homes or more, and will instead have to refer to the Government for a decision.

He will be able to call in the projects, appoint a planning inspector to examine each scheme and make a recommendation on whether it should go ahead.

The final decision will then be in the hands of the Housing Secretary, in a significant shake-up of planning laws.

Watch more applications for 150 builds coming to all areas

[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gift/fa97c9b027572b00?](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gift/fa97c9b027572b00?fbclid=IwY2xjawOJgihleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETBBSXNxbkpBVUpKamw5eU1Rc3J0YwZhchBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg)

[fbclid=IwY2xjawOJgihleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETBBSXNxbkpBVUpKamw5eU1Rc3J0YwZhchBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gift/fa97c9b027572b00?fbclid=IwY2xjawOJgihleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETBBSXNxbkpBVUpKamw5eU1Rc3J0YwZhchBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg)

### **Crossroads**

I am still awaiting the feasibility report and am escalating with a senior officer.

### **Aldi Lights**

Regarding the works, the 4 way lights will remain in place until the end of November. In early December the temporary signals on the roundabout will be removed and reinstalled on the Southam by pass to complete the entrance and central splitter works. During the Christmas holiday period they will be removed until 5/1/25 when work will re-start. Also in January there will be an overnight closure for carriageway resurfacing. Streetlighting is also due to be installed between the Leamington Road and Daventry Rd roundabouts and that is likely to be completed in March 26.

**ALSO SPEAKING TO A CONTRACTOR , ALDI IS LIKELY TO OPEN  
2 or 3<sup>rd</sup> week JANUARY**

I'm using my delegated budget to **provide grasscrete opposite the Crown**, to tidy up the area

I've used my contacts to help facilitate several **successful grant applications** for local organisations, others in progress

## **Emergency Works**

Once again ‘local experts’ have been complaining about emergency works in Southam. The other week it related to the blown cable by the Black Dog that according to some wasn’t an emergency and could be fixed in 2 minutes. This week there was a major ‘gas leak’ in Welsh Road West – that some again didn’t think it was an emergency as no one was working on it – strangely whenever I went past contractors were digging up the road or working in a massive trench. It had to be sorted as it wouldn’t be great if it exploded when a full school bus was driving by, don’t think some people realised the danger, just concerned about inconvenience to them.

## **Flood warnings**

A great way to be Better Prepared for flooding is by making a Personal Flood Plan. Find this and more tips to prepare for #flooding at: <https://www.warwickshireresilienceforum.org/risks/flooding/>

## **Home to School Transport Consultation**

Warwickshire County Council has launched a seven-week public consultation on proposed changes to its Home to School Transport Policy. Find out more and have your say: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7156/have-your-say-warwickshire-county-council-launches-consultation-on-home-to-school-transport-policy-changes->

## **What’s in the Box exhibition @ Libraries**

Heritage and Culture Warwickshire (HCW) are launching ‘What’s in the Box?’, a new mini touring exhibition, set to visit libraries around the county between November 2025 and June 2026.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7164/what-s-in-the-box-new-heritage-and-culture-warwickshire-exhibition-to-tour-libraries>

## **‘Our Freedom: Then and Now’, project**

Warwickshire Libraries are celebrating the success of their ‘Our Freedom: Then and Now’ project, which has brought together communities to explore and share personal stories of freedom through creative workshops and celebration events.

Discover more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7175/warwickshire-libraries-celebrate-local-stories-of-liberation-inspired-by-80th-anniversary-of-ve-day->

## **Project Warwickshire supports vineyard**

A vineyard in North Warwickshire is raising a glass to a regional business support programme that has helped it to grow – in more ways than one!

Discover more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7166/project-warwickshire-supports-vineyard>

## **Anti-Bullying Week 2025**

Warwickshire County Council and partners are supporting National Anti-Bullying Week 2025 – 10 to 16 November – and this year's theme of 'Power for Good'.

Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7171/warwickshire-county-council-supports-anti-bullying-week-2025>

## **Stratford-on-Avon District Council's £350,000 Community Grant Scheme!**

The scheme, developed in collaboration with local and regional partners, will support capital projects that improve accessibility, resilience, and diversity in community spaces.

Eligible projects may include:

- External structural repairs to community buildings.
- Refurbishment or installation of kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Building extensions to improve internal space.
- Accessibility improvements such as wheelchair access, handrails, and raised flower beds.
- Enhancements to play areas, recreation grounds, allotments, orchards, and leisure facilities.
- Creation of new community assets.

Read more: [<https://ow.ly/l8UA50X7Riu>](<https://ow.ly/l8UA50X7Riu..>)

## **Smoke Free 2025**

Throughout the last few months, Warwickshire County Council has been sharing practical advice and guidance to help residents look after their health as winter approaches, as well as highlighting the range of support services available.

**Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7161/residents-encouraged-to-go-smoke-free-to-improve-physical-and-mental-health>**

## **Armed Forces Covenant Duty Conference**

Partners representing agencies across the breadth of public services came together to discuss how the Government's extension to the statutory duty would benefit retired and current service personnel and their families.

Read more: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7132/greater-access-to-local-services-for-armed-forces-community-discussed-at-conference](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7132/greater-access-to-local-services-for-armed-forces-community-discussed-at-conference)

## **Choosing the right NHS service this winter**

In preparation for winter 2025, Warwickshire County Council and health partners are working with hospitals and essential services to reemphasise the need to avoid A&E, unless absolutely necessary.

Read more: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7144/check-the-right-nhs-service-you-need-before-you-check-in-with-a-e-this-winter](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7144/check-the-right-nhs-service-you-need-before-you-check-in-with-a-e-this-winter)

## **Log highways issues and report feedback**

Warwickshire County Council has launched a new platform to support the way customers can report a highways problem or log customer feedback through its website.

Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4953/updates-to-the-way-customers-log-highways-issues-and-report-feedback>

### **Reporting highways issues – or let me know !!**

**[cllrcrump@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cllrcrump@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

Warwickshire County Council is urging residents to report any Highways faults that they encounter while driving or walking in the county via its website.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4085/warwickshire-county-council-encourages-residents-to-report-road-issues>

### **Warwickshire expands surface dressing programme**

Warwickshire County Council's County Highways team is hard at work applying surface dressing to around 120km of roads throughout the county this year - the equivalent distance from Warwick to Wembley - the largest programme ever delivered.

Read more: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7125/warwickshire-county-council-expands-surface-dressing-programme-with-record-investment](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7125/warwickshire-county-council-expands-surface-dressing-programme-with-record-investment)

### **Lias Line active travel improvements**

Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet approved plans to deliver the next stage of improvements to the Lias Line – a key walking, wheeling and cycling route linking Leamington Spa and Rugby.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/7186/cabinet-approves-funding-for-latest-lias-line-improvements>

## **Cost of Living Support - SDC**

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/benefits-support/cost-of-living-support.cfm>

**PAVEMENT PARKING/PARK IT RIGHT – the excuse, I won't be long isn't sufficient – it only takes a few seconds for a collision to occur. THINK ABOUT OTHERS NOT JUST YOURSELF**

**Every week, I get reports of some terrible parking – with cars blocking pavements (especially dropped kerbs), making it impossible for people with mobility scooters or with push chairs to get by, without going into the road. In some cases, too, emergency services vehicles (particularly fire appliances) would struggle to pass. PLEASE THINK OF OTHER PEOPLE, NOT JUST YOURSELF**

**PLEASE REPORT ANY ASB , however trivial it may seem. Small incidents**

can lead to bigger ones, so better to stop them before they escalate .Also, the more calls/incidents the Police have, the sooner they will realise there is a problem in a certain area. PLEASE ALSO ENSURE YOUR PROPERTY AND CAR IS LOCKED AND SECURE.

Reporting out of hours highways issues can be challenging, the best number for that is 01926 415000.

[streetlighting@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:streetlighting@warwickshire.gov.uk) or 01926 412515 (not all are currently owned by WCC – some owned by town or parish council.)

<https://www.fixmystreet.com/reports/Warwickshire>

It is worth noting for future reference that anything immediately dangerous on the highway should be reported direct to the Police on 999, which is the same process for any pressing issue Out of Hours.

During normal office hours - 8:30am to 4:30pm, WCC call centre is best on 01926 412515

### **Councillor groans –**

I was at the Doctor's today and picked up a Magazine as you do.....was in shock to read that the Beatles have split up!!

There was a documentary on about the Loch Ness monster today but I mythed it I've been asked if this week's String Based Puns Club is going ahead. I'm afraid not.

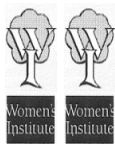
Every morning I announce to my family that I am going jogging, but then I

don't go! 😁

It's a running joke!

I've been invited to a deodorant party to see in the new year Roll-On New Years Eve.

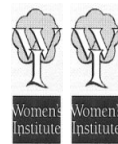
*Andy*



## WOMENS INSTITUTE

Meeting 7.30pm at Nelson Club first Monday of Month

President:- Sue Gill Tel: 0750 2207380



Joan opened our November Annual General Meeting and welcomed our visitor, Ruth McCartney, the Chairperson of Warwickshire Federation. After our usual rendition of Jerusalem, Joan went through the notices and told us the arrangements for this year's Carol Service at Ladbroke.

The members were then requested to add their names to the list of savoury food for our Christmas Party. The Committee will be making the desserts.

Joan told us that it had been a very successful year for us and we had been involved in many projects such as the Coffee Morning in aid of Alzheimer's charity, the Fashion Show, the August Produce Show, cake stall and Soft Toy stall. Our darts team had been successful and the team had been presented with the trophy at the Annual Federation Meeting recently. We had taken part in the Federation Quiz and had held our own quiz. Thanks go to the quizmaster, Howard Collerson.

Three of our longstanding committee members had decided to step down from their roles and Joan thanked Mary Lee, Sheila Stevens and Sally Humphries who had been a great asset and support to Stockton WI over many years. They were each then presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers by Ruth McCartney. Mary will continue to help out and Sally to organise our ladies lunches each month.

The hostess list for the year was then organised after which we all treated ourselves to tea and delicious cakes baked by the committee. After light hearted poetry readings by Sandi and Joan there was a photo competition and the archive table was laid out with so many memories for us to browse through. A very enjoyable afternoon.

Our next meeting will be **Monday 1st December 2025** at the Village Hall for our Christmas Party. Please arrive at 6 for 6.30 pm start bringing a plate, glass, dessert dish and cutlery.



## GARDEN JOTTINGS

from Bridge Nursery - your local Hardy Plant Specialists



*Christine Dakin, Bridge Nursery, Tomlow Road, Napton.*

*Tel: 01926 812737*

*www.bridge-nursery.co.uk*

The end of the year is almost here, a time of year when not much thought or time is given to the garden so here is a little light relief for an armchair gardener.

Match the common names to the Latin ones, all are winter interest plants.

Arbutus unedo	Aconite
Helleborus niger	Winter Sweet
Cornus Midwinter Fire	Poinsettia
Bergenia	Christmas cactus
Acer griseum	Strawberry tree
Schlumbergera	Dogwood
Eranthis hyemalis	Paper bark maple
Chimonanthus	Christmas rose
Euphorbia pulcherrima	Heather
Erica	Elephant ears

November is usually the month when there are few flowers to be found in the garden but not this year. There are roses, primroses, salvia, schizostylis, verbenas, Mexican daisy, hardy geraniums, astrantia and many more. I intend to walk round the garden on Boxing day to see what is flowering then, maybe you could do the same?

***Christine***



The club continues to be active in National and Heart of England Region competitions.

The first round of the European Cup for Clubs took place in October, with two teams from Stockton competing - Stockton 1 away to Coventry PC and Stockton 2 playing a home game against Penkridge.

Stockton 1 and Coventry tied the triples round and reached two games all after two pairs games in round 2, but Stockton could not clinch the deciding game, so Coventry won the match 3-2. Stockton 2 fared better winning all three pairs games and taking the match 4-1, so they now go forward into Round 2 of the competition for a home game against Hampton-in-Arden Lynx.

Six Stockton players entered Coventry's Charity Melee on 25<sup>th</sup> October. Alfie Potter and Steve Neale emerged unbeaten after three rounds with Steve declared the winner and Alfie the runner-up.

Three Stockton pairs played in Round 1 of the Heart of England Winter Pairs on 9<sup>th</sup> November competing against 25 other teams. They each played four games: Rich Rushton/Alfie Potter and Nouri Beladaci/Richard Collyer winning all four, whilst Catherine Black/Steve Neale won three of their four games. Well done to them all.

Stockton's Winter League started on 4<sup>th</sup> October and after seven weeks Sarah Jerger is in the lead with 32 points, just ahead of Nouri Beladaci on 30 points and Steve Neale with 28 points.

With just five weeks to go in the annual Singles League, Nouri Beladaci has a comfortable lead with 26 wins, ahead of Sarah Jerger and Anthea Sansom who are tying on 22 wins, with Steve Neale on 19 wins.

16 players turned out for the November melee and after three rounds there were three unbeaten players. Catherine Black was the champion with a points advantage of 25, well ahead of Nouri Beladaci with +14 and Steve Neale with +12.

The next Open Melees will be on **6<sup>th</sup> December and 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2026**.  
Everyone is welcome – we will provide the boules and tuition on the rules.





## STOCKTON VILLAGE HALL

**Bookings - Helen Kittendorf Tel: 815376**

**email: [helenkittendorf@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:helenkittendorf@hotmail.co.uk)**

***Hourly Rate £10***

Nearly another year over – how time flies! It's been a very busy year at the Village Hall and there has been lots going on with plenty more already planned for 2027.

December dates for the diary: **Coffee Morning** will be on **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>** from 10am-midday, the **Lunch Club** is on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup>** at 12.30pm at The Crown and **Whist Drive** is on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30pm. There is no Film Night and instead we have our **Sleeping Beauty Pantomime** on **Monday 29<sup>th</sup>** at 2.30pm – there are very limited places remaining so please reach out to Helen if you'd like to ticket!

January dates for the diary: **Coffee Morning** will be on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>** from 10am-midday, our brand-new **Quiz Night** is on **Friday 9<sup>th</sup>** at 6.30pm, **Whist Drive** is on **Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>** at 7.30pm and the Lunch Club is on **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>** at 12.30pm at The Crown.

The next Stockton **Film Night** is on **Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January** – if you want to join the mailing list for the Film Night, please contact Steve at [stevekittendorf@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:stevekittendorf@hotmail.co.uk), to find out what film is coming up and the supper on offer.

Next year will see even more events taking place: another Panto, more Murder Mystery and a play - watch this space for details! We are also hoping to start a Chair Yoga Group and a Singing Group (for fun!) – if you are interested in either of these please let one of the Trustees or Committee know.

Over the year we have ensured that the Village Hall is in good repair as well as bringing it into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with WIFI and Solar Panels. The next big maintenance job is to replace the floor to ensure that it remains in good condition for years to come. However, all of this comes at a cost – and all the money we raise through events, other fundraising and grants, goes towards the upkeep of the Village Hall – we couldn't do this without you so thank you to everyone who has supported us throughout the year – it has been amazing!

We know that the Village Hall is a key part of our Community in Stockton and we are committed to ensuring that it continues to exist, providing a space that the whole Community can use.

Wishing you and your loved ones a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

**The Village Hall Trustees and Management Committee**



## STOCKTON'S WEATHER STATION



### OCTOBER 2025

**Headlines - the first half of the month was dominated by a high pressure system but the effect of Hurricane Melissa was felt by the end of the month.**

In October the **average minimum temperature** was 8.9 deg. C, almost one and a half degrees above the average ( 7.5 deg. C.). The lowest temperature was 3.3deg.C on the 25th. The **average maximum temperature** was 14.2 deg. C, very close to the long term average (14.4 deg.C.). The highest temperature was 19.4 deg.C on the 6th. **Rainfall** was 28.5mm, only 40% of the average of 69 mm. The wettest day was the 19th with 6mm and it only rained on 10 days. **Sunshine** levels have been only 53% of the average for October . Winds blew mostly from the west and south-west and south (19 days).

**Trivia of the month** - During the ten day period between 8th and 17th of the month there was only one hour of sunshine. There was also no rain.

*The Weather \Monitor*

### Stockton's Archives

#### STOCKTON AND I by Victor Neal 1896 - 1978 Part 25

My second old vehicle was much more presentable than the first, and carried me on for four years or so when 'Lall' again provided its successor, yet another T-model tonner. When this last one was nearly falling to pieces, we moved on to a 'Chev', this time through one of our old friend Reg Tuckey's many dealings in motor vehicles. And this was like starting to learn to drive all over again, with its gearbox of the now orthodox type rather than the lovable simplicity of the old Ford pedals. I have heard many an old T-model driver speak in tender, nostalgic tones recalling the old 'jiggers' and almost regretfully accepting the inevitability of the newcomers. I must admit, though, that the Chev accepted the hills on my route more complacently than the old Fords. To avoid squabbles that had arisen in this connection before, I had made a deal with the Spa and Warwick people, at so much per load, the load to comprise as much as I liked to put on the lorry. Naturally this inclined me to load as much as I estimated the lorry and I could coax up Ufton Hill. Once I had tried Offchurch Hill on the shorter route via Long Itchington, but stuck there and

frighteningly was compelled to back down again and turn back to go via the Southam road.

I stuck on Ufton Hill, on the stiffest bit near the top, and thought: 'That's done it,' then had a smoke whilst considering the problem and thought: 'Well, if she wouldn't take it whilst running, she won't manage it from a standstill.' I tried anyway, and astonishingly she did it. It seemed a logical deduction that the pause had allowed the engine to cool down, and she had evidently gained from that, so in future I stopped for a smoke at the bottom of the hill and luckily didn't get stuck again.

That was in the T-model's days; the Chev, as I suggested, didn't ask for such considerate, long-standing comradeship and understanding. She took things in her stride and, like most efficient things, paradoxically found it harder to be liked as much.

But then the T-model Fords compelled an intimacy, an intimacy extending to their inmost innards. I daresay by the time we deserted them there was no remote component I hadn't dug out and repaired or replaced. Besides the regular, periodical replacement of the brake and clutch bands in the so-called 'pigshead', which needed a dozen hands to hold everything in place on re-assembly, and yet had room for only two, I had replaced complete engines and even the mysterious and marvellous differential, which invention I always think has never had the credit and admiration due to it – or its inventors.

Oh! and radiators: several of these in quick time and salvaged from various quarters in that bitter February of 1929 – or was it 1930? – when the east wind froze us up even whilst running.

I have what I think is a miraculous tale, or two tales, really, of this time. First, I had loaded up at the Spa and Warwick, and although I thought I had wrapped up sufficiently during this process, I was chugging along through Radford Semele when we began to boil madly. I remember when I pulled up some chap, viewing the clouds of steam, saying: 'What's the trouble, mate?' and I said: 'Oh, frozen up, I suppose.' He looked at me as if I had gone crackers. Who wouldn't, as it's difficult to reconcile freezing and boiling as logical cause and effect?

Now what? I wondered, but would you believe it? – twenty or thirty yards ahead was a roaring, glowing coke brazier, standing on legs exactly the right height to fit my radiator as I ran up to it; men were at work burying gas or water pipes. And more, after thawing out, here was the village pump standing at my side to replenish our lost water.

That was pretty good, and all very cheering in this bitter weather. But a few days later our local Co-op had got me to help them out of a hold-up by hauling a few loads of coal for them from Rugby Station. The bitter weather was continuing, and I got in just the same predicament after loading, and as I was running past Rugby School on my way out of town, there we were boiling away again.

Now, I thought, we don't meet a glowing brazier every time we want one, but immediately and staggeringly, following the thought, here was a chap with a blow-lamp in his hand, which might be quite as effective, and was. He was a kindly and helpful soul and straightaway got to work, pumping up his lamp and putting us right. 'What am I in your debt?' says I. 'Why, nothing,' says he. 'Blow that,' says I, not intentionally punning on his activities, 'at least I must square the cost of the benzene or whatever it is the lamp burns.' 'That's the firm's,' he replies and tears away, making me shout my thanks after him. From these dabbings in repair jobs one easily got a grasp of how a four-stroke engine worked, but a different case was my stationary engine for the sawbench. It was named (quite rightly) 'Wizard', and I still don't know how it worked. I know all about it being a diesel type, or more strictly I have heard it termed a semi-diesel, but the hours I have spent trying to grasp its subtleties! To be fair, it very seldom gave any trouble, especially in its newer days; it would chug away for hours cutting a lorry-load of wood for the expense of about three pennyworth of paraffin. Some chap, who owned a 'Wizard' himself, said his only complaint was that after hours of running he looked in the tank and found he had more fuel than he began with! But when the Wizard did have a fit, no ponderings of mine ever explained the trouble, and I found I might just as well swing her round occasionally until she decided it was enough, and she would oblige once more. More than once I have passed the time awaiting sleep in bed by trying to visualise the intricacies of its adjustments, particularly the overhead rocker-arm with its double adjustments, and more than once I have thought: 'I've got it at last,' but the Wizard would sometimes oblige once and kid me I was right, then next time, humiliatingly, put me back in my place, so to speak. I raise my hat to the inventors who could produce the thing, when I with the finished article working in front of me still couldn't work it out. My brother Wal had moved from Tomlow, and after dallying in Stockton village for a time, still struggling with farming, finally got exasperated at its failure to recover its prosperity, and bought the little bakery and shop at Napton-on-the-Hill, relinquishing his first love of the land and becoming so efficient a baker that he later won some awards with his bread, helped immensely, no doubt, by that old-fashioned oven. I know, since the passing of these two – Wal and his oven – we have lost our last source of luxuriously crisp, real bread; like so many things now, gobbled up in the name of progress. So by the kindness of my Uncle and Aunt at the Blue Lias Inn, I was installed for my business purposes in their yard by the canal-side. Very shortly, I was glad of the help of my father, who was getting near his old age pension by that time; and cousin Fred, too, was often helpful in emergencies. He had a flair for tinkering around with engine troubles, and even quite enjoyed them, you might say. Before this same 'progress' had altered the old Blue Lias it had an absorbing Dickensian atmosphere: four-poster beds in the old rooms; the produce of its

own farm-land – bacon, ham, eggs and poultry. Nestling so snugly in its corner by the road bridge over the canal, it was no wonder that those two young ladies who were trying out a new-style holiday by walking from London to Birmingham along the canal towing-path – no wonder they enthused and said it was the best and most fascinating bed & breakfast of their journey, and would my aunt put them up over some future Christmas?

They should have dropped in and seen the scene – round about Christmas-time, too – on the night of the ‘Sick and Divi’ suppers. Talk about the essence of Dickens: it would need his pen to get anywhere near the right description. The long trestle tables were set up in the best big room, laden with the food baffling my own descriptive powers, and the old-fashioned furnishings surrounding them. In particular I remember those two old musical devices, like large musical boxes, in which you inserted a penny to hear a chosen tune – long before jukeboxes and gramophone reproduction, to say nothing of the radio – with metal discs with protuberances to operate and twang the required notes, which they did in a sweet and non-jarring manner, in sharp contrast to their successors of today.

At all times the inn exuded the conviviality and service of a coaching inn, indeed it might be said to be one, but in the main its ‘coaches’ ran on the waterway, although there were a lot of callers from the road. Its water-borne ‘vehicles’ often tied up for the night outside the front door, and sought – less frequently as time went on – stabling and refreshment for horses and men, and women of course. And there were still characters who weren’t run off a mass-production belt.

Ernie Emerson, affectionately known as ‘Emma’, so loved the Blue Lias and fishing in the reservoir and canal that I should think he spent every spare hour he had there, motor-cycling from his home in Coventry. The colossal knowledge of country wildlife this townsman possessed added to the shame of my own ignorance.

When Messrs Speight, the contractors, took on the huge job of widening the canal locks and incidental work, our area took on a tremendous activity. Around 1932 that was, and they erected an office and complementary buildings straight opposite our sawbench on the other side of the canal. Several of their chief executives boarded at the Blue Lias Inn, and I remember one chap hung up a printed card with his advice in the cosy little room he occupied: ‘If whiskey interferes with your business, give up the business.’

One day we had a boat or two tied up on our side of the ‘cut’. I was fiddling about in our little engine shed when I heard a woman’s screams and dashed out to see one of the office staff opposite plunge into the water to recover a little child, which he safely landed on the office side. I was mystified that the woman on the boat still continued screaming, but my cousin Fred, although no scholar at school, had a quicker grasp of the situation, and further mystified me by racing down the yard, flinging off his coat as he ran and plunged in too, coming up again after a few moments groping around with another baby, still strapped

in its push-chair. I still feel a glow of gratitude for these two gallant rescuers who saved these two little lives while my sluggish brain was failing to see the situation. What must the mother have been feeling? I suppose the rescuer on the office side was as non-plussed as I, though, when he had landed the first child, not aware of the second one, as he stood in puzzlement at the continued screams. Undoubtedly the courage he had shown would have had him in the water again instantly, had he known. Good old quick-witted Fred! I'm glad you were there to help.

## **Part 26**

When I fell for Dickens – long years ago, now – and had ploughed through his works complete, and most of what had been written on him, I easily enough developed a hobby of hunting up his associations, and like many another I have spent many happy hours in this pursuit. If I may mention it here, I have scribbled my little excursions in that direction in a separate volume which I called *The Dickens I Did!* I owe a debt to those enthusiasts who have dug so well into the topographical angle of the 'Inimitable Boz' and particularly to B W Matz for his twin volumes *Inns and Taverns of Pickwick* and *Dickensian Inns and Taverns* (published by Cecil Palmer in the 1920s ).

They were his scenes and most of his characters that I found on my rounds nearer at hand. There was my old respected friend Mr Grant at his bakehouse in Southam, benign, jovial, Pickwickian in appearance and a Dickens enthusiast himself, too. He discovered my leanings that way when one day, for no special reason he fired the question: 'When were the Gordon Riots?' and like a shot I was able to reply 'Not far off 1790'.

Then he says: 'When was the Gunpowder Plot?' Now I thought that was about as well known as 1066 and all that so was able to reply: '1605', which was an easy one. I thought I'd better stop him there so I told him: 'You'd better leave it at that; they were lucky shots for me. I wouldn't like you to imagine I could go on like that.' 'Why were the Gordon Riots so easy?' said he and I told him: 'Why, I'm just in the middle of them in *Barnaby Rudge*.'

I didn't always come off as well as that; he could lose me with Byron and many another subject, but what did that matter? They were very pleasant calls. And, I must repeat, our favourite author should have discovered Southam, for in this very bakehouse my old friend pointed out to me a length of rope hanging high on one of the beams, which he had been assured was the one by which they had found old So-and-So hanging dead (I forget the name: he was long before my time and I believe Mr Grant himself only knew of it by hearsay).

There was more thick Victorian atmosphere almost next door where through a similar enclosed yard was to be found the old blacksmith's shop, now quiet, bellows silent and minus the clangourous music of the anvil and the captivating sparks of the *Wagstaffes'* earlier years, and the aged couple were too advanced in years to be affected by the churning of the mass-production belts.

That all made it the more delightful when, our deliveries carrying us round to the other side of our little town, we found the other blacksmith's shop still in

lively working order, and its proprietor, Len George, still ready to spin us a yarn in between those mysterious, magical notes tapped out on the anvil. Only a couple of doors away was octogenarian Mr Harry Pratt, one time gardener, etc, who could tell other interesting tales as well as the one I have already related, of how he had spoken to a man – his grandpa – who was at Waterloo.

Next door was the little cobbler who had an enormous interest in boxing, and in accumulating unique records of the properties of Southam – I mean properties of the bricks and mortar type – by attending sales as they cropped up, and carefully filing his notes about the purchasers and the price paid. His notes in general – perhaps we could call it his diary – would be referred to on small points cropping up in conversation and would continually astound one by the curiosities they contained, right down to the particular weather on the occasion under discussion.

Still on that same side of the street, a stretch of garden wall takes us to the farm house, where I once remarked to Miss Reynolds, after once more negotiating the path with my sack on my back: ‘I always think of the old song, you know, ‘where the cobblestones harass the feet’,’ and she replied: ‘Yes, but that’s not all, though, that’s alike,’ and she broke off at that, and some sensitivity bade me leave it at that, and as I walked away I thought: ‘There’s a quaint little house / In a quaint little street / In a quaint little old-fashioned town,’ and remembered that her father had died not long since, and she was getting near to leaving her old home and I could imagine her loving ‘...every mouse in that old-fashioned house / I love every cobble and brick.’ I am a little hazy as to the rest of the song and wouldn’t guarantee I am word perfect in what I have quoted, but you know what I mean.

Still on that side of the street we come next to the cottages usually known as the ‘Saucy Six’, with the front doors at the back, as we might say, and wherein – I am told – used to reside the postboys occupied at the coaching-yard of the Craven Arms, whose rear entrance was on the opposite side of the road. Long before my time, this, of course, and so too was the house which, I should have said, was sandwiched between the farmhouse and these cottages, for that carried the date 1626, which conjures up the possibility of its having been seen by Charles I when he stayed that night at the Manor House on his way to the battle of Edgehill.

The house was sixteen years old then, and I see no reason why some of the King’s followers shouldn’t have billeted themselves there. Solidly stone-built, it looks to me as if it could last as long again or longer, and I resist any comment on many a building erected since then, mod cons though they might have. I also try to resist any comment on individuality – in building as in many another line – versus the ‘peas-in-a-pod’ mentality followed too often by councillors and planners. I’m no glass, gloss and concrete man: too cold-looking, even if the last is good for our local cement trade. I’d rather think of the Cotswolds.

It was grand also to deliver our logs down Oxford Street – the Southam one! – through dim alleyways and passages cut through the buildings themselves, breathing an atmosphere of tranquility typical of their period. In a few cases I had to carry my sacks through front room and kitchen as the only way to the outbuildings behind; not a very convenient arrangement for the occupiers but which brought its occasional compensations to me when, for instance, I stepped through one door and found, instead of the usual furniture, the walls lined with shelves crammed with books, BOOKS, glorious books; nothing else, only a reading table with more books on it and its attendant chair.

I soon got rid of the contents of my sack and returned to this Aladdin's cave of more than six hundred volumes of Everyman's Library alone, to say nothing of the rest, and express my delight to its fascinating owner, Mr Sherriff, who was short of an arm but possessed so much more in the way of knowledge that I lacked. I needn't say how well we got on. He even advised me to learn Greek, which he had taught himself, as a further aid to literary treasures and pleasures. So far, I haven't gained those particular treasures, at least not first hand.

There was another side to this delivery round, exemplified by the fishmonger's remark – we chanced to be delivering our respective goods close together in Pandyke Street – when I couldn't help hear one of his customers grouching about the size of his herrings (I forget whether they were too large or too small). I said sympathetically: 'It's a job to please 'em all, isn't it?' and he replied with more emphasis than I'd expected: 'Job? It's bloody impossible!' Which takes me to Bishop's Itchington and my most outstanding grumbler.

Going round so many customers in six villages, it only dawned on me gradually that this woman was for ever grouching that her logs wouldn't split and she couldn't chop them for firelighting. This was the point I had been proud of as one of the biggest factors in gaining my clientele, so when I realised that in spite of my more careful selection she still insisted the wood wouldn't chop, I deliberately picked out every single piece for her, so that she should have 'easy choppers'. The next time round I was wondering what was going to happen, and still she grumbled, so I, rather riled, said: 'Now look, Mrs —, I'm going to give you a pound for every piece you show me that won't split, and I mean that.' I'm not one to throw hard-earned money about but there could be no doubt about that special selection, but she beat me by saying: 'Ah, well, I've burnt them now as logs on the back of the fire.' I should like to say that cured her, but the best I can say is that it improved her, and only for a short time.

Bishop's Itchington balanced itself up, though, with another lady who, at one of the coal shortage times, welcomed me with: 'You're like an angel from heaven,' which almost blushing – for she was a nice young thing – drew me to tell her that I didn't flatter myself it was me she wished to see so much as my logs.

We had another grouser in Prior's Marston (where we were later to be involved in chair-making) a man, this time. He hadn't been in the village long, which



made it all the more irritating. He grouched about something or other so often that one day I said to father: 'If this chap grouches today I'll fetch the wood back.' I dumped the wood in his hovel and he paid me at the door, then as I returned from another customer, my father says: 'He's been out grumbling again.' So I got an empty sack and was picking up his logs again when he came out and asked what I was doing. I offered him his money back and said I didn't want his sort of customer, reminding him that I had a lot of good, satisfied customers in Marston and didn't want him to start upsetting them. He climbed down a lot and defended himself by saying that he didn't make a practice of complaining behind my back but told me to my face, so I capitulated and gave him another trial, and I think we got on all right after this clearing of the air.

I could compile a list of characters in Prior's Marston and move on to Napton-on-the-Hill, the most difficult place in which to deliver as every hovel was up a steep hill or down one, with a sack on my back, remember. Harbury, too, taking in Depper's Bridge on the way and Bascote and Bascote Heath on the way back. But that would keep us away from Stockton too long.

Yet I can't resist relating another Bishop's Itchington story: one day I was intrigued to find herbs laid out to dry on the pathway of one of my customers. My octogenarian friend tells me they are ground ivy and agrimony and explains that some years ago his doctor had diagnosed the pains he suffered from as due to gall-stones. At his age an operation was not advisable, so there wasn't much he could do about it. A friend of his advised a herbal remedy, which he bought from a dealer, and found it gave him so much relief that he daren't leave off in case the trouble returned. After a while the friend suggested that, as he lived in the country, he could gather the ingredients himself and save money as well as amusing himself. The old chap lived to a ripe old age and as far as I know – for he outlived my firewood-delivery days – he didn't die of his gall-stones



Uncle Fred Neal, his son Bert in Bears outfit and brother Wal in clowns mask - May Day 1910

## Victor Neal



Photo's from Victor Neal's collection kindly given by Grandson Lawrence Neal





**Victor Neal**

**Julia Prior**  
drawings & sculptures  
of animals

**portrait commissions**  
**The Cutting Gallery**  
Station Road, Stockton  
Southam, Warks. CV47 8HA  
Tel. 01926 817572  
Email. [Juliapriorart@aol.com](mailto:Juliapriorart@aol.com)



**THE NELSON CLUB at STOCKTON**  
**Napton Road, Stockton Tel: 01926 812613**  
**OPENING HOURS:-** Mon - Thurs:- 5pm - 11pm Friday 4pm - 12.00 midnight  
Sat 2.00pm - 12.00 midnight Sun 12 Noon - 11pm

**December 6th ~ Children's Doormat Event**

**8th ~ Seniors Christmas Meal**

**13th ~ Centrepiece Making**

**20th ~ Third Alert ~ Live Music**

**Tractor Run approx. 7.10pm**

**21st ~ Festive Family Quiz**

**New Years Eve ~ Road Hogs ~ Live Music**

Join us for sporting events with BT and Sky Sports  
For last minute events or changes to the current planned events please see the following:

**Web page:** <http://nelsonclub.co.uk/index.html>

Find us on **Facebook & Twitter**



your local  
professional  
chimney

Full Range of  
Chimney Sweeping Service  
Open Fires,  
Wood/Multi Fuel Stove  
Also Oil Rayburn & Aga Cookers  
Birds nests Removal  
Cows & Bird guards Inc Fitting

Please Contact Martin on  
07816 337962  
email: [theshiressweep@gmail.com](mailto:theshiressweep@gmail.com)  
[www.theshiressweep.co.uk](http://www.theshiressweep.co.uk)



Love Ballet  
Dance Company

♥♥ **LOVE TO DANCE?**  
**SOUTHAM CLASSES**

**FREE TRIAL CLASS**

Ballet	Commercial
Tap	Contemporary
Modern	Mini Movers
Gymnastics	Funky Dance
Musical Theatre	Cheerleading
Street Dance	Adult Classes

★ confidence ★ fun ★ friendships

Professional Purpose Built Dance Studios in  
**Southam**

[www.loveballet.co.uk](http://www.loveballet.co.uk) 07921 853773