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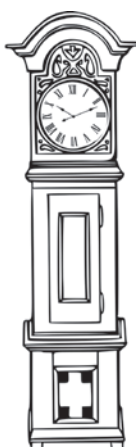
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Welcome



A New Year, A New Start, (And He's Behind You)

As we bid farewell to 2023 and welcome 2024, many of us may be feeling a mix of emotions. Some may be relieved to leave behind a year that was full of challenges, uncertainties, and hardships. Some may be hopeful for a better future, with new opportunities, goals, and dreams. And some may be excited for the festive season, with its traditions, celebrations, and joys.

January will bring me one of the greatest joys of the year: the All Stretton panto, which I'm looking forward to immensely. As you'll probably know, panto is a form of musical comedy theatre that is usually performed around Christmas and New Year. It features familiar fairy tales, nursery rhymes or folk stories, but with a twist: the characters are often exaggerated, the jokes are often topical, and the audience is often involved. Panto is a tradition that dates back to the 16th century, but it is also a tradition that adapts to the times. Every year, panto writers and performers come up with new ideas, new scripts and new surprises to delight the audiences.

The All Stretton panto this year is: Peter Pan-to and you can find out more about it and where to buy your tickets on page 11. Before I proceed, I want to make it clear that I have no personal stake in endorsing the All Stretton panto – which hardly seems to need publicity anyway, as it always fills up the seats in no time. I am not actually a fan of panto *per se*; but the cast, crew and of course the script writers at All Stretton never fail to surpass themselves. Laugh? I nearly bought my own beer.

So, as we enter a new year, let us embrace a new start. Let us set our intentions, make our plans, and pursue our passions. And let us also enjoy a new panto. Let us laugh, sing, clap and cheer. Let us join the heroes, boo the villains, and help the fairy godmother. Let us be part of the story, and part of the fun.

Happy New Year, and happy panto time!

Dave Editor



*A wintry scene near
Rushbury, by Peter Steggles*

Stretton Focus prints a wide range of articles and letters. The views expressed in these are those of their authors and not necessarily those of the Board of Directors. The Editors exercise their right to edit any articles, letters, etc submitted for publication at their discretion without consulting the author.

Stretton Focus

Community Voice of the Strettons

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These should be made to the editors by email to

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If you do not receive a response within 48 hours please check the address carefully and send your email again.

If you are unable to use email, your material may be submitted to

Wrights, Estate Agent,

32 Sandford Avenue, Church Stretton SY6 6BW

clearly labelled 'Stretton Focus'. These items are collected on the deadline date.

When are the deadlines?

The deadline for receipt of all submissions by all methods is

12 noon on the first Monday of each month

for the following month's edition.

If the Monday is a Bank Holiday, the deadline will be 12 noon on the Tuesday of that week.

No submissions will be accepted after the deadline unless prior arrangements have been agreed with the editors.

For the **February** issue the deadline is

Tuesday 2nd January, at 12 noon.

For the **March** issue the deadline is

Monday 5th February at 12 noon.

The **February** issue will be distributed on **Friday 26th January**

Advertising (Business)

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As well as by subscription (see left) *Stretton Focus* may be purchased directly from Vine & Co (Sandford Avenue), Co-op, Family Shopper, Church Stretton Library, Entertaining Elephants and Mayfair.

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*Night Sky in the
Shropshire Hills*
Photo: Matthew Halstead

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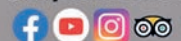


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A Moving Experience

Every High Street in a small town has shops and businesses that anchor the local economy, drawing in customers from around the local area, who then support other smaller businesses as a consequence. In Church Stretton, James Russell's Outdoor Depot is one of those businesses, and the business's relocation into larger premises indicates the commitment he and his wife, Emily, have made to our town.



James's career, with Samsung, Hewlett Packard and then Ricoh, meant travelling a lot, which took him away from home and the baby he and his wife were expecting. But with a Master's in Business Administration in his toolkit, James was already planning a different kind of life by the early months of 2010. The outdoors, cycling and walking have long been James's passions – his way of releasing the pressures of everyday life – and his first idea was to open a cycle shop, but he learned that others were exploring the same idea, so a re-think was necessary.

The Outdoor Depot was already a going concern on Sandford Avenue, and James could see the potential for growth when he learned that it was for sale. So, in June 2010, he and Emily found themselves the proud owners of The Outdoor Depot as well as the proud parents of their first-born, baby Oscar.

There is, of course, competition in every business sphere, and for the outdoor and adventure activity sector much of the competition comes from larger businesses and the internet. So how does a small business in this highly competitive sector, located in a small town, make a mark? James explains, "We offer a custom-fitted boot service, which ensures that our customers have comfortable, fit-for-purpose footwear. This is really important for anyone walking rough terrain, where well fitting, warm and waterproof boots are essential for safety as well as comfort. Our customers understand that, and really value the service."

Offering quality products are also important for James and Emily. They hand-pick products from many British companies, and keep in touch with the latest in technology and production techniques, especially on outdoor fabrics.

The hardy souls that tramp our hills all the year round value this attention to detail, which is just one of the ways in which the Outdoor Depot is set apart from its competition, allowing it to maintain its position as the only independent outdoor shop in the West Midlands.

When the two premises that had housed banks on Sandford Avenue were left empty, James saw an opportunity for expansion. Ever resourceful, he reset his sights on the old Barclays building on the corner of Beaumont Road and Sandford Avenue, after an abortive attempt for the TSB premises. After much negotiation, and months of hard work to re-fit the interior for its new purpose, the new Outdoor Depot opened at the end of October. James again, "This place is more spacious, and it's easier to have different sections for different purposes, like accessories and fitting areas, as well as expanding our range. We retail a little on-line, but personal shoppers from the local area, as well as visitors to the Strettons, are our main customers. They value our expertise and the advice and local knowledge we provide." Many of you know that James is an accomplished trail cyclist, skier, rock climber and paraglider pilot and he's often out on the hills taking photos and walking. His local knowledge is almost matchless, so advice from him is worth listening to.



Clearly, James and Emily have their fingers on the business pulse with their expertise. Your intrepid reporter (that's me, folks) was there on a Friday lunch time, and interviewing them between the constant stream of customers needing their help to choose and fit their purchases was a bit of a challenge. It was half-term week from school, and the couple's two boys were there, watching and quietly learning. I asked if they might take over the business one day. "Mm," they both replied, looking around with shy and thoughtful smiles. "Maybe. One day."

Christine Williams, Resident Journalist

Historic Church Stretton – The Coming of the Railway

The arrival of the railway in the mid 19th century brought a gradual but fundamental change to Church Stretton. Road travel by horse, cart or coach remained only for local journeys. The Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway Company was formed in August 1846 to build a line to connect with the Newport, Abergavenny and Hereford Railway at Hereford, so providing a link to the industrial and mining areas of South Wales.

The 27½ mile long Shrewsbury to Ludlow section was formally opened on 20th April 1852. There were



As part of the celebrations the town declared a public holiday. At 11am, led by Dorrington's brass band, nearly all the inhabitants of the town and many hundreds from the surrounding neighbourhood proceeded down Lake Lane, soon to be renamed Station Road, to the station to await the arrival of the train. This slowly passed through at noon and was greeted by the crowds on the bridge and platform cheering and waving handkerchiefs.

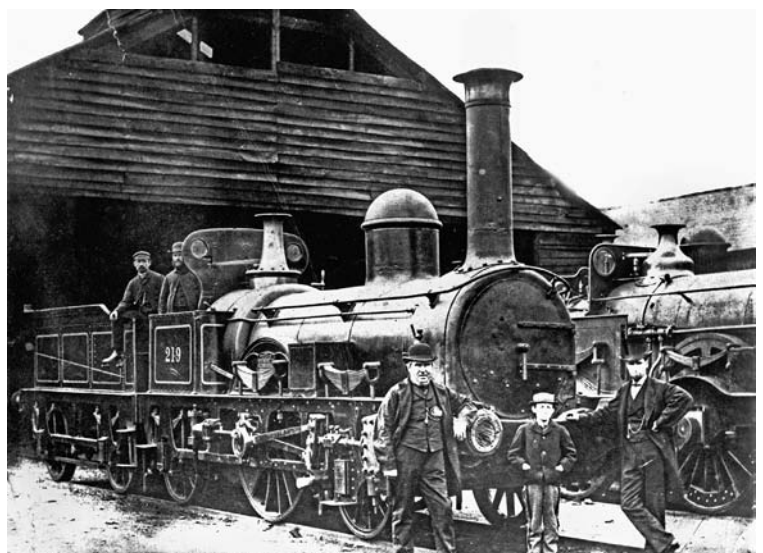
Then followed an afternoon of sports and games, followed by tea for about 800 residents of the

stations at Conover, Dorrington, Leebotwood, Church Stretton, Marshbrook, Craven Arms and Stokesay, Onibury, Bromfield and Ludlow. The Ludlow to Hereford section was opened a year later. In the 1930s halts were provided at All Stretton, Little Stretton and Wistanstow. In 1863 the Shrewsbury and Hereford Railway became a joint L&NWR (later LMS) and GWR line and remained so until nationalisation on 1st January 1948.

Church Stretton Station had two platforms, a booking office, waiting rooms for both ladies and gentlemen, a cattle landing, goods warehouses, a coal wharf, weighing machines, turntables, sidings and later a signal box. The original station buildings still survive north of the Sandford Avenue bridge.

Celebrations for the first train

The day was ushered in by a peal of the church bells. The first official train, which contained a large number of the gentry and tradesmen from Shrewsbury, ran from Shrewsbury to Ludlow and back. It had 25 carriages carrying 300 passengers drawn by two engines belonging to the Shrewsbury and Chester Railway.



Photos: Top: The original station. Mr Dawson, the station master, is on the right.

Middle: View from the Sandford Avenue bridge looking northward.

Bottom: A GWR Vulcan 2-2-2 loco built in 1854, photographed in 1870 at Shrewsbury sheds.

town and an official dinner for 70 gentlemen in the Town Hall. The meal was described as hearty and was followed by 17 toasts, the final one being the traditional 'all friends around the Wrekin!' Even the inhabitants of the workhouse were remembered, with a special meal of roast beef and plum pudding with a due proportion of ale.

The local newspaper reported that 'various rural sports took place after dinner in the Crown Meadow (between

the hotel and the station). The day's proceedings concluded with a public dance in the Market Hall. There were about 150 present, and the festivities were kept up until a late hour. There was sufficient food left over for next day when upwards of 60 of the aged men and labourers in the town were plentifully supplied with bread, beef and ale'.

*Barrie Raynor and Tony Crowe
from Church Stretton through the Ages*

Little Stretton History

It is essential that the men who died in World War One and are recorded on Little Stretton's war memorial, are remembered as more than names on a brass plaque. As part of the 2023 Armistice commemoration exhibition held at Little Stretton Village Hall, biographies of the 11 men, listed on the village's war memorial, have been collected together and presented to All Saints Church in a folder to be placed next to the memorial. Visitors will be able to read about the men's lives and set the stories against the introduction which describes the society in which the men grew up. Hopefully readers will then feel greater affinity to the eleven victims of war.



David Haigh handing the folder to Church Warden, Moira Matthews

Let's start a Little Stretton archive

Whilst searching for data for the Armistice Weekend it became clear that there are all sorts of historically significant Little Stretton items stored away in homes across The Strettons. Photographs and paintings, diaries that recorded events over a long period and at critical times have emerged. Items of clothing, such as the sporran Bernard Keenan is shown to be wearing on his portrait taken in army uniform, have survived.

To ensure that all this data is carefully recorded and stored it is essential that any Little Stretton material that can be copied or photographed is used to create a Little Stretton Archive. Making radical changes to buildings is an on-going process but it needs to be recorded to ensure that the evolving story of Little Stretton is available to historians of the future. Typical of the radical changes being made in the very recent past are the barns opposite the Manor House and the Primitive Methodist Chapel and the house next door to it are about to go through the same process. So, we need photos etc of current changes as well as from earlier times. History starts every time we blink. Recording memories of visiting or occupying buildings that have disappeared or changed also provides rich data.

With this in mind, please exhaustively search your drawers and memories and send details of anything you find, that you are happy to share, to:

*Dr David Haigh, The Tan House, Little Stretton SY6 6RE
01694 723627, dthaigh@aol.com*

Church Stretton Area Local History Group

Our 15th January talk will be 'Shropshire's archaeological and landscape history through the centuries' presented by Dr Katie Miller. This talk will discuss the vast and diverse archaeological history of Shropshire, stretching back to the Stone Age up until the Industrial Revolution. It will highlight sites and finds of significance from this region and how they play into the larger discussion of the development and history of Shropshire.

Dr Katie Miller began studying and working in archaeology nearly ten years

ago beginning with her anthropology degree at University of California: Santa Cruz. She then went on to complete a PhD

at the University of Bristol where she examined identity and migration during the 3rd to 7th century AD in southern Britain. Dr Miller is currently managing the Archaeology Lab, a volunteer and curation-led project with the Shropshire Museums and Archives.

As usual the talk will take place at the URC Hall and will start at 2pm. Visitors are always welcome. £4.

Photo: Sandra Whitlock





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Following our successful entry of Jimmie Chinn's thoughtful play *Too Long an Autumn* in the Wellington Drama Festival, we are taking the opportunity to repeat the performance here in Church Stretton at the Silvester Horne Institute at 7.30pm on Friday 19th January. Tickets are available from John Vine & Co. and online from www.ticketsource.co.uk.

The proceeds of this performance will be donated to Church Stretton Ring and Ride. We are delighted to be able to support this widely used and much appreciated provision in the Strettons. We hope you will join us for this performance. There won't be an interval in the play but we will have the bar open before and after the performance. We hope you'll join us afterwards when the cast and other members of the Players will be there for you to meet.

The Wellington Drama Festival was celebrating its 50th anniversary and we were thrilled to be rewarded with Best Supporting Actor for John Avery's performance and for Hattie Finch's nomination, also for this award.

Equally successful was our autumn production at the Silvester Horne Institute of Alan Ayckbourn's *Bedroom Farce*. This was a challenging production which was directed by a newcomer to the Players, Barbara Vesty. Barbara is well known in dramatic circles in Shropshire and we were privileged to enjoy her directing expertise for this show. We hope it won't be her last. We welcomed Mick Wiegghell, who took his first part with the Players in the role of Ernest, and also the return of Kathryn Lewis who has had some time out in recent years.



Bedroom Farce was staged for the benefit of Glyn's Garden – their hard-working team, led by Hily Clark, will receive the proceeds from our play and we hope it will enable their continuing efforts to help adults and young people in the community with disabilities, children struggling at school and people recovering from mental health issues.

Looking forward, we are now deciding on the plays we will perform for our main productions in May and November 2024 and we thank all our patrons for their loyal and generous support in 2023.

Ray Philpotts

All Stretton Amateur Dramatics Society: Peter Pan-to News!



Following the recent sell-out performances of both *Allo Allo* in October, and *The Christmas Pudding* in December (All Stretton's festive Christmas variety performance) we're pleased to announce All Stretton's Pantomime 2024...

Peter Pan-to.

Join us as we meet Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, Captain Hook, Smee, the Lost Boys and the Darling Children and experience the wonders of magical Neverland ...

7.30pm 15th, 16th, 17th February (doors open 7pm);
2pm matinee performance on Saturday 17th (doors open 1.30pm)

All Stretton Village Hall

Last year our Platinum Pantomime – *Cinderella, The Shoe Must Go On* – played to a packed house over our four performances, with Baroness Hardup amazing us with her beauty routine, Prince Charmless revealing the secrets of his lunchbox, and Fifi and Bubbles wowing us with their bedtime attire ... Don't miss out on Darling fun this year ... do snap your tickets up quickly and be ready for some Jolly Roger good fun.

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Mayfair News

A fabulous Frost Fair!



Thank you to everyone who joined us at Mayfair on an appropriately frosty November day for our Frost Fair. It was wonderful to see Mayfair so full of people and buzzing with fun, friendship and community spirit. Children and adults enthusiastically took part in our Penguin Trail. We hope that everyone managed to find them all. If not, check out our Instagram or Facebook pages ([mayfaircommunitycentre](https://www.facebook.com/mayfaircommunitycentre)), where you will find pictures of each penguin shared throughout Advent.

We were so pleased to be part of all the fantastic Church Stretton Town Council Light Switch-on festivities. The whole town seemed to join together to welcome in the festive season. None of the festivities could have happened without the input of many, many hardworking volunteers, so thank you.

Free board game afternoon

Are you bored on a Monday afternoon? Why not come and join us at our Board Games Afternoon at Mayfair?

Following the success of the Craft Café, we are trying a new session on a Monday afternoon from 2-4pm where



people can come and choose from a wide selection of board games or cards. People will be on hand to explain the rules, but you will probably recognize some old favourites. There'll be a chance to try something new – or bring your favourite game along.

It'll be completely relaxed, warm and welcoming. You can help yourself to hot drinks, and there'll even be some biscuits! (Donations welcome but not necessary.)

Join us for a free, fun and friendly afternoon in the Mayfair Lunch Hub (in the Community Centre building) **starting on Monday 8th January.**

44b fun and fitness!



44b's meet at Mayfair every weekday to take part in a wide variety of activities promoting independence and wellbeing for adults with learning disabilities or autism. Last year we took part in some taster sessions with Wolf Yoga – special needs yoga which is adapted so that people of all abilities can join in. 44b's enjoyed this so much that we have now

booked monthly Wolf Yoga sessions for the year ahead as part of our health lifestyle programme for 2024. If you would like more information about 44b's, you can get in touch with the team at Mayfair on 01694 722077.

Get Moving at Mayfair!

If you're looking to get fitter and healthier in 2024 then we have a wide variety of dance and exercise classes available. You may be interested in our Mayfair Health Walks, too – free, friendly group walks to suit all abilities, led by trained walk leaders. If you would like further information about the walks or any of the classes below you can find this at www.mayfaircentre.org.uk/activities, or you can give reception a call on 01694 722077.

Monday Yoga with Liz Monday, 5.15-6.45pm

Small class for all levels of experience. Beginners welcome. Includes floor work.

Zumba Gold with Wendy Tuesday, 9.30-10.30am

Low impact, latin-inspired, easy to follow exercise. Dance yourself fit!

Upright and Active with Wendy Tuesday, 10.30-11.30am

Maintain strength and balance, along with promoting health and posture.

Be Strong, Be Steady with Wendy Tuesday, 12.15-1.15pm

Gentle exercise to improve relaxation, coordination, balance and posture.

Gentle Yoga with Mary Tuesday, 10.30am-12 noon

Gentler practice to help you to relax, improve and increase flexibility and posture.

Eastern Mystique with Angela Tuesday, 4.45-6pm

Shimmy your way to improved core strength. Balance based on belly dance moves fused with other dance styles.

Chair Yoga with Mary Wednesday, 10.30-11.45am

For anybody who is unable to practise yoga on a mat. Gentle exercise and relaxation in a seated position or standing with the chair for support.

Angela's Just Dance Wednesday, 6-7pm

Move to music at your own ability as you follow short combinations or embrace freestyle fun.

Strength, balance and flex with Nina Thursday, 12.15-1.15pm

Gentle approach to exercise: no jumping or floor work, ideal for 55 years+. Standard class includes more seated exercises.

Strength, balance and flex PLUS Thursday, 1.30-2.30pm

As above. The PLUS class is mainly standing exercises, but still no floor work.

Tai Chi Friday, 9.30-10.45am

Combining relaxed, fluid movements with a calm, yet focused mental state.

Help us plan the future of Mayfair

At Mayfair we want the community to shape what we do. We are putting together a strategy for the next 5 years, and we need input from across the community on what Mayfair can do for you. What works well at Mayfair? What could Mayfair do better? Is there anything in the community that you currently need or that might be of use to you? Please help us answer these questions and support

Mayfair in supporting you. We have a quick survey on our website homepage: www.mayfaircentre.org.uk or you can pop into Mayfair and pick up a paper copy. We are also keen to chat to groups of residents and gather more in-depth views through conversations. Just give us a call on 01694 722077 to arrange this with us, or to put your name down for a 'focus group' chat.

Digital Support for everyone

The digital support team at Mayfair is there for anyone who would like help with a digital device or issue. Whatever your level of digital knowledge, if you need some support, please get in touch. You may have a specific problem with your phone or laptop, you may have concerns about online security or you may have never used the internet before. Our friendly digital volunteers can provide one-to-one support and talk you through your queries. Call Mayfair on 01694 722077, or email digitalsupport@mayfaircentre.org.uk to book a support session.

Moving to Net Zero



Students from Church Stretton School are helping Mayfair in an effort to lower the Centre's carbon footprint. A new project, lasting several months, will provide a complete audit of energy usage, as well as looking at improving recycling. With the help of Helen Vaughan, Trustee, and David Howard from Stretton Climate Care the students will produce an action plan for trustees and staff to help Mayfair along the road to Net Zero.

New time and room for Craft Café – Every Wednesday, 10am to 12.30pm, our Craft Café is now moving to Mayfair Art Room so we can get the paints and other messy activities out. Pop in and have a go at this free group, try different crafts and meet new people. Everyone is welcome – whatever your interests and abilities. No need to book. We'll have the kettle on for a free cuppa! Call Mayfair on 01694 722077 for more info.

Continued overleaf...

Upcoming Screenings at Mayfair:

All Mayfair shows can be booked online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/mayfair-community-centre however we recommend calling Mayfair on 01694 722077, or visiting reception to book, to avoid online booking fees.

Thursday 4th January, 1.30pm

Family Film – *The Bad Guys*, Arts Alive (U)

Adults £3, Children £2, free drinks provided and refreshments available to purchase.

A perfect family treat for the school holidays. The latest action comedy from Dreamworks Animation – *The Bad Guys*. A crackerjack criminal crew of animal outlaws are about to attempt their most challenging con yet – becoming model citizens.



Friday 2nd February, 7pm

National Theatre Live – *Dear England*

Adults £15, U18s £10, refreshments available (donations only)

A new play by James Graham, directed by Rupert Goold.

Gareth Southgate has brought hope back to the England squad but, with the nation's expectations upon his shoulders, what happens when football doesn't come home?

Joseph Fiennes (*The Handmaid's Tale*) plays Gareth Southgate in James Graham's (*Sherwood*) gripping examination of nation and game.



Sunday 11th February, 2pm

The Royal Ballet – *Manon*, Running time: 195 minutes (including 2 intervals)

Adults £15, U18s £10, refreshments available (donations only)

Choreography – Kenneth Macmillan, Music – Jules Massenet, Orchestra of the Royal Opera House

Torn between her desire of a life of splendour and riches and her devotion to her true love, Des Grieux, the feckless and capricious Manon pays the ultimate price.



Mayfair Lottery Results for November

119

£100

439

£50

270

£20

58

£10



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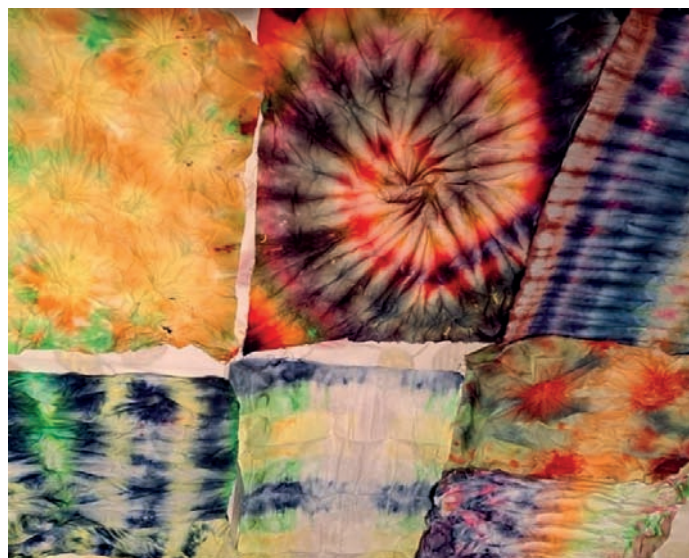
Marmaladies Church Stretton WI

Goodness me, it's 2024 already and time for a catch-up with the Marmaladies, your local WI in Church Stretton. As ever we've had a fun and varied set of meetings and the associated craft club has also managed to meet and create, once a month. The Friday walking club has been very successful and we have looked to start an occasional book club. We have had a few coffee mornings and trialled an evening drinks event in December. This means that you could have seven to eight things a month but can also choose just to join the monthly meeting.

In April we had a talk about Tan House in Little Stretton but had to postpone the visit to The Proper Good Dairy until later due to illness. We quickly arranged an evening of fun and games at one member's house, which was a resounding success. We went to the dairy in July and, after a talk, had a walk with the cows over the farm and a look around the facility. All with a complimentary bottle of chocolate milkshake and tea and cakes of course.

Part of WI's remit is to include the general public in meetings occasionally and this year we had a talk, open to all, about training women spies in the second world war. Amazing stories of incredibly courageous women. In September we took part in line dancing with cowboy hats and a good 'Yeehaw' followed by a thought-provoking and informative talk on Forensic Psychology in October. We also gave out a book for everyone to keep and use it as the basis for a book club in November. People enjoyed this so we decided to run it two to three times a year to see how many people were interested on a regular basis. Christmas brought us to the Christmas party where we had a bring and share, some games and a secret Santa jar of goodies.

The craft club has had a huge variety of activities this year, ranging from macramé, painting in the pointillism genre and tie dye which was such fun and a total blast from the past. We also made felted animals, pictures based around sea glass, quilling and beautiful coasters made with serviettes and a lot of glue. Easter had us making various bunny-shaped containers for eggs and the Christmas grand finale let us make several different decorations from gonks and wreaths to star bunting etc. Who knows if we have found a new craft to build and grow or if we're just having immense fun on the evening with a group of supportive friends.



Tie Dye

Next year's programme is already in place and includes reviewing last year's resolution to promote clean river water, by looking at the cleanliness of our local Shropshire waterways. Other highlights include:

- In May we'll be having an open meeting looking into the history of Mary Quant with a selection of her iconic designs.
- We'll be visiting Glyn's Garden as well as a trip to the Ludlow gin distillery.
- A car scavenger hunt, a speed dating format, (getting to know people in our group).
- Qigong, a gentle Chinese exercise form.
- And finally, making a needle-felted picture.

We also support a variety of groups such as donating packs of useful things to the local refuge at Christmas, donations to a group supporting women's groups in Africa, tea and cakes for a craft fair and visiting care homes for a chat and a cuppa, to name a few.

The craft programme, book club, coffee mornings, evening drinks and walking are announced throughout the year so please contact Marmaladies if you would be interested in any of the activities we share in our community.

Marmaladies WI is primarily an evening-based group catering for many of our members who work or have day-time responsibilities. We are always keen to welcome new members and new ideas for off-shoots, so why not come along to our next meeting and see if you like us. We normally meet on the second Thursday of each month, at Mayfair, at 7.30pm. Off-site visits will be notified at the time.

Please contact me, Carol Greswell on 07803 581580, or email marmaladieswi@gmail.com for details or just drop into a meeting when you can.

Carol Greswell



Christmas Crafts

CSTC Community Matters

Christmas lights switch on

In a departure from previous years' events Church Stretton swapped cars for sleighs, closing the High Street and Sandford Avenue to allow a street fair, Christmas Market and entertainment, and over a thousand residents came out to see the lights switched on from the main stage where locals and school choirs had been entertaining all afternoon.

Mulled wine, beer, gin and food were on offer alongside Christmas gifts, bouncy castles and fairground rides. The Mayfair Community Centre held their Frost Fair, whilst in the Silvester Horne Institute, Santa (who some thought had a passing resemblance to Cllr Mark Morris) greeted every one of the 250 children with a hearty "Ho Ho Ho" in a marathon four hour session. With an increase from 80 kids the previous year, the reindeer were called back twice to restock whilst Elves were seen scouring the town for more gifts.



The town's Rotary Club provided the 'Tree of Light' in the Square raising funds for Hope House, First Responders and the Air Ambulance by selling decorations to be hung on the tree, which together with a collection and carols on Christmas Eve, they hope will raise £4,000.

A massive thank you to all involved in organising and planning the day and a particular thank you to Cllr Nicola Carter and Cllr Ryan Foulkes for their leadership and hard work to make this happen.

SWS Broadband

In last month's *Focus* we reported that residents had noticed the erection of telegraph poles to support SWS's rollout of alternative broadband, and we promised to look into what was happening. A month on, we have learned that SWS has been taken over by Voneus Limited, part of Voneus Investment Holdings Limited who have been busy acquiring local broadband companies like SWS. This comes against a background of consolidation in the industry as a raft of challengers, who popped up in reaction to Boris Johnson's race to connect every home to superfast broadband by 2025, find themselves struggling. Interest rate increases have sparked a financial crisis amongst many of the debt-funded challenger companies whilst cost of living increases have dampened take up.

This has left the industry looking to cut rollout costs and seek ways to connect customers to the existing, not alternative, networks. With 79% of homes already connected to superfast networks it looks less rosy for rural communities whose remote locations make it difficult and expensive to connect.

The contracts to connect rural communities were let directly from Westminster without many of the historic planning and other safeguards under a £5bn scheme, but a wave of business failures have put this target under threat. In the Strettons, the Government contract awarded to SWS still only covered the town, with no plans to connect the six villages and the homes in between.

We have always enjoyed a good relationship with SWS and in particular valued their assurances that they would not need to erect new infrastructure because they would piggyback on the existing Openreach operation.

We were concerned therefore when the meeting arranged with SWS to discuss what was happening was cancelled by Voneus, and although an alternative meeting was promised this has not yet been scheduled.

For those *Focus* readers who venture beyond the Sunday Times bestsellers list, I would like to recommend the Cabinet and pole siting code of practice and The Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England which require the provider to consult with organisations like CSTC, and that this is particularly relevant in an AONB. The codes of practice also require providers to talk to the local authority, Shropshire Council, to determine the status of areas where they may wish to operate. Shropshire Council were very helpful and confirmed that they have not spoken about this, and that this contract has been let directly from Westminster and not, as previously, via them.

We shall continue to investigate this matter further and keep residents involved.

Train services on the Marches Line

Following the severe disruption caused by the closure of the Dinmore Tunnel (as mentioned in previous issues of *Focus*) a meeting was arranged with senior management from Transport for Wales (TfW) and the Marches Rail Users' Alliance (MRUA) to discuss the current poor performance of the line through Church Stretton.

As always, the team from TfW were very helpful and frank, and began by stating that they “owe all of our customers an apology”. However, the position which they described was troubling and in my estimate it will be 2025 (sic) before there will be lasting improvements.

The challenges begin with the line itself, which has seen little investment and still operates on semaphore signals for long stretches. Further, there are no passing loops meaning that trains cannot pass: if a passenger service finds itself following a slow freight train, that is where it will stay.

Meanwhile, passenger numbers are up and continue to grow. In fact they are now higher than pre-Covid, possibly the only line to have recovered this strongly reflecting the high leisure element with less impact from working from home. However, whilst these higher numbers help make the Marches line the most profitable of TfW’s routes, when trains are cancelled or are formed of only two carriages, this leads to serious overcrowding.

Another key challenge impacting the route is the troubled introduction of the new class 197 trains. It has been widely reported in the railway press that deliveries of the new trains are late and TfW are clearly disappointed with this. However, there appear to be few contingencies in place and although the new units are late, the old trains have been sent back to the leasing company. This situation is exacerbated by problems with the wheels on the new trains which appear to be affected by the cold weather. Whatever the cause, 12 sets have been withdrawn awaiting maintenance against a planned maximum of four at any one time, which amounts to nearly 40% of the current fleet. Other delays in getting the units accredited by Network Rail on all of the routes adds further pressure, and although TfW were keen to stress that all of their depots now had their full allocation of drivers, utilisation was being complicated by the need to split and join trains to maximise coverage, for example splitting a four-car train into two, two-car trains. This lowers the frequency of trains being cancelled, but increases overcrowding. Data shows that at present 55% of trains currently comprise two cars and 24% are three car. TfW predict that this will improve and by October 2024 80% of trains will have five cars and the other 20% three carriages.

The need for better communication was emphasised to TfW and the importance of avoiding last minute changes and cancellations was stressed. If there is a problem, giving passengers the maximum notice gives them the best chance of minimising their disruption.

We will continue to work with the MRUA, TfW and others to influence timetable changes and to keep residents updated.

Community Service Awards

Residents are invited to nominate neighbours and friends for this year’s Community Service Awards, designed to recognise some of the unsung heroes who help and volunteer, often behind the scenes, and who keep many of the services, upon which the town relies, afloat.

Nominations will be open when you read this, and have to be submitted by 29th February 2024. The awards will be presented in April.

Further details and a nomination form can be found on the Town Council website.

Neighbourhood plan

After delivering 2,000 leaflets to all homes, countless posters displayed, collection boxes in the shops, four drop-in sessions (three public, one for developers and property professionals) and a new, dedicated website, the initial neighbourhood plan consultation ended on 22nd December. Thank you to everybody who has contributed. We will tot up some statistics and let you have some facts and figures next month.

The purpose of this initial consultation has been to get your ideas before pen is put to paper drafting anything so that it is a true consultation before, and not after, the event. Once the final bowl of turkey soup was eaten and the mince pies finished, the team started assembling and sifting the comments and passed these on to the Technical Support team led by Dave Chetwyn to make some sense of the comments and start drafting an initial plan.

Keep an eye on the website for updates as things happen: www.csneighbourhoodplan.com.

And by the way, the consensus is now that neighbourhood planning does not merit capital letters, hence my transition.

A special thankyou to Margot whose picture was judged the winning entry as the ‘face’ of the neighbourhood plan, and who received her prize from the Deputy Lord-Lieutenant Clarissa Daly and NHP Chair Sue Manns in December. Watch out for a photo next month.

2nd Long Mynd Scout Group (2LMSG) AGM

I was honoured to be asked to join the local Scout AGM where the amazing work of the 2LMSG was showcased. It is always a privilege to see young people with the confidence and skills to address a room full of adults, skills and experiences which I know personally will stand them in good stead with future employers. When applying for their first jobs, years of attendance with the scouting movement – with its demonstration of attendance, tenacity and time-keeping, will help set them apart. As recently as 2021, my son, applying for speciality training as a junior doctor, found a space reserved on the application form to record experience in scouting, Duke of Edinburgh and cadets. They knew that the teamwork so critical in the emergency room and the operating theatre starts with organisations like the 2nd Long Mynd Scouts.

It is particularly pleasing therefore to see Church Stretton’s scouting community thriving, with 115 young people, and 18 adult leaders under the incredible direction of Group Scout Leader, Terry Davis. At a district scout meeting last year I learned that over 60 young people in the district were unable to attend scouting because

Continued overleaf..

of a shortage of adult leaders but Church Stretton is an exception to this challenge with sufficient leadership resources to accommodate all comers. I am in awe of what they achieve.

I also had the pleasure of presenting long service awards to Brian and Christine Faulkner, 50 and 40 years' service respectively. Ninety years of helping the young people of the town reach their potential. Thank you to them and everybody involved.

Remembrance Sunday

Despite the rain and cold the town turned out in force to commemorate Remembrance Sunday with a full procession through the town to St Lawrence's Church and then on to the town's war memorial where the laying of wreaths was led by Deputy Lord-Lieutenant Col Michael Evans as representative of the King. The area around the memorial was as packed as it had been in previous years as bugler James Heywood sounded the Last Post, and wreaths were laid by over twenty local organisations.

Local services were held on Saturday 11th, and on Tuesday 7th children from St Lawrence's Primary School attended the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Cunnery Road in an exercise to place Union flags on the

graves of each of the veterans resting there. This event is held every year, and it is an opportunity for the children to place the events of Remembrance Day into context.

As always a big thank you to Nigel Marsden, Lt Col Pete Stowell and all of the RBL for their work in organising these events.

B4371 Church Stretton-Much Wenlock Road Closure

The B4371 will be closed at the Much Wenlock end for twelve weeks between 22nd January to 21st April 2024 to facilitate drainage work.

And finally...

Regular readers of *Focus* will recall nearly three years ago the plan produced by the Town Council entitled "Fixing the past, living in the present, planning for the future". It's been a long road but the prize of completing the neighbourhood plan and delivering real tangible improvements has always been our vision. The Housing Needs Survey was a pivotal moment with an outstanding 40% response rate and which laid the foundations for planning the future. With the neighbourhood plan the community is now well on the road to achieving that goal.

Andy Munro, Mayor

Stretton Choral Society

Old Wine in New Bottles?

In our summer concert of 2024, Stretton Choral Society members will be performing two entertaining works, both created in the later twentieth century to present familiar words and stories through a new musical idiom. Joseph Horowitz' *Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo* is a re-working of the bible story using lyrics written by Michael Flanders (of Flanders & Swann fame), while George Shearing's *Songs and Sonnets* are jazz-inspired settings of familiar verses from Shakespeare. These, with a few other works to complete the programme, will be presented at our concert in the Silvester Horne Institute on the evening of Sunday 12th May.

Do you like the idea of singing in a choir? Perhaps you find the traditional choral repertoire of nineteenth century (or earlier) church music daunting? Or you're put off because you've never had any formal choir training?

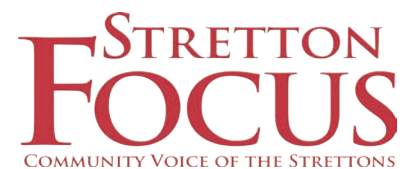
These fun and more modern pieces could be the ideal opportunity to give it a try. Although we aim for high standards when we perform, we are a very welcoming group, open to anyone, of any level of ability and experience, and definitely no auditions! We will rehearse every Thursday at 7.30pm in the United Reformed Church, High Street, Church Stretton, starting with our first rehearsal on Thursday 11th January. New members are always very welcome; just arrive at about 7.20pm and introduce yourself. We will provide the score, introduce you to others singing the same vocal part and help you to learn the music. After a gentle vocal warm-up our Music Director Michael Turner will ensure every rehearsal is a productive, entertaining learning experience. Do come and join us!

Mark Tocknell



Reader Survey Response

By the end of November, 493 completed questionnaires representing over a third of our readership had been returned! This was a marvellous effort on your part for which we are truly grateful. We shall be waiting a little longer to see if we receive a few more questionnaires. Then we shall be looking forward to starting to analyse the results in the New Year. From having looked through several of the questionnaires it is interesting to note that most were completed by those of you over 60 years of age and that you have provided dozens of suggestions for additional topics for future issues of the magazine. It will take some time for us to complete the analysis. Please be patient and rest assured that there will be a full report summarising our findings in *Focus* sometime in the spring. Thank you all once again. We are delighted to have your support.



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Friends of Church Stretton Library



High Leasowes



On a cold January day, we hope that you will join us in the newly refurbished library to hear this inspirational story and enjoy photos of the fields at their best. Entrance fee £5, payable on the door. All proceeds will go to Friends of Church Stretton Library.

New Library Shelving

By the time you read this, the old shelving in the photograph below will have been replaced with new, modern and more versatile shelving. This will allow the space in the library to be used more effectively. The library will be able to cater for events with a larger audience, including class visits from local primary schools.

We are delighted this has finally happened as it has been an ambition of ours for some years. It was only made possible by a magnificent donation of £10,000 from Friends of Church Stretton Library to Shropshire Council. The remaining funding has come from the Arts Council Library Improvement Fund.

Wednesday 17th January at 2.30pm in the Library

This illustrated talk by Sandra Whitlock will describe the activities that have taken place at High Leasowes during 2023 and the management plans for the future.

In September 2022, three fields on the eastern edge of Church Stretton were advertised for sale. Fearing that they would be purchased for development, local residents, Sandra and Peter Whitlock, launched an appeal to raise the £400,000 that would be needed to purchase the fields and ensure that they would be managed for nature conservation and remain an amenity for the local community.

The appeal to raise funds to buy the fields was based upon the need to 'secure the land for nature and for people'. The appeal publicity said that:

"At a time when our wildlife has never been more threatened by climate change and development, this area could be managed as a 'stepping stone' for nature, which would increase the habitat for birds and butterflies and reduce the risks faced by isolated wildlife populations."

The community responded rapidly and magnificently to the appeal. Their bid was successful and the fields, now known as 'High Leasowes', were purchased through Middle Marches Community Land Trust. Their vision is to create an area rich in wildlife and a place that people can enjoy.

The High Leasowes Management Committee are managing the fields to improve habitat and increase biodiversity, whilst also providing space for people to quietly appreciate the area. In doing so, they have been helped by many volunteers and local organisations who have contributed an enormous amount of time and effort to care for the fields.



Shelves emptied and books stored, ready for the new shelving to be installed



The library had to be closed for two weeks in December, as much needed work to treat damp and repaint the walls took place. This repair work has been paid for by Shropshire Council. When the redecorating was completed, the old shelving was taken out and the new shelving was installed.

Other libraries across Shropshire are also receiving funding from the Arts Council for improvements, but Church Stretton is the only library that could afford a complete refurbishment. This would not have been possible without your support – through your donations to Friends and your attendance at our many fund-raising activities. Thank you!

If you are interested in helping to run events or helping with some of our admin work, please do get in touch with us. We would love to hear from you!

We look forward to bringing you photos of the revamped library in the next edition of *Focus*.

Traders Support 2023

We would like to thank the following local traders who continue to support our work:

Books By Moonlight – There is now a Friends of Church Stretton Library section in the shop and £1 is donated to Friends for every book sold from that section. Why not pop in for a browse?

Rural Charity Furniture Shop sells second hand books for Friends. If you have any spare, good quality **paperback fiction** books you no longer want, please drop them off at their shop.

The Outdoor Depot, Peppers and Stretton Print & Supplies – Thank you again for selling our Friends of Church Stretton Library calendar this year.

Glyn's Garden – Thank You

We would like to thank Hily Clarke for her inspirational talk about Glyn's Garden which she gave back in November. It was fascinating to hear how providing access to nature and gardening can help people recovering from illness, both physical and mental. It was also extremely uplifting to hear how so many individuals and organisations in the Strettons have helped support this project in some way. The community spirit in the Strettons makes it a wonderful place to live! We collected £250 on the door and this was split between Friends and Glyn's Garden. Glyn's Garden received an additional £117 in donations for the items they sold on the day, making the total raised £242. This will go towards paying for the outdoor furniture they want to install.

Sheila Davies



Hily Clarke of Glyn's Garden and Sheila Davies, Friends of Church Stretton Library

Church Stretton Library

New Shelving

By the time you read this, installation of our new modern, versatile shelving will be complete. Please see the article above from the Friends of Church Stretton Library for full details. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Friends Group for all their fundraising activities, and to anyone who has donated or supported the group in any way. We have also received funding from Arts Council England for this project, but without the additional support of the Friends, only a fraction of the shelving would have been replaced. The new shelving is a true community effort, please come in and see us in our new revitalised library!

Knit, Crochet and Craft at the library – Church Stretton Group

This new group will have its first meeting on Saturday 6th January 11am-1pm, and then every first Saturday of the month after that.



Do you enjoy knitting, crochet or another craft? Why not come along and bring a project to work on in the welcoming, relaxed, supportive environment of Church Stretton library.

For more information please contact the library. There is no need to book, this will be a drop-in group. All skill levels welcome.

Exhibition: The Story Room – an interactive exhibition by Louise Jackson and Katie Waller

Thursday 11th January-Tuesday 6th February.

Suitable for pre-school groups, schools, children and families.

Learn about the work of authors and illustrators. Find out about the process of writing a book. Fuel your imagination for telling stories!

Catholic Voice

“Christ yesterday and today; the Beginning and the End; the Alpha; and the Omega. All time belongs to him; and all the ages. To him be glory and power through every age and for ever. Amen.” These words are used in the ritual for the Easter Vigil, as the priest prepares and blesses the Paschal (Easter) Candle. It serves, like a number of visual rituals and sacramentals, to remind us that our time is a precious gift from God. As Pope Francis reminded a group of German Altar Servers (2014):

“Our life is made of time and time is God’s gift, and it is therefore important to make use of it by performing good and fruitful actions. Perhaps many teenagers and young people waste too much time in futile activities: chatting on the Internet or on mobile phones, watching ‘soap operas’ on TV, technological progress that should simplify and improve the quality of life, but sometimes distracts you from what is really important. Among the many things to do in our daily routine, one of the priorities should be reminding ourselves of our Creator who allows us to live, who loves us, who accompanies us on our journey.” (5th August, 2014)

Our life in this world consists of time, of fleeting, never to be repeated, moments. We live in a world with the most advanced labour-saving devices, but what do we do with the time that we save? We often fill it with more activity, more work, more experiences, more distraction. The seasons and rhythms of life can become collapsed, distinctions

between work-life balance, impositions and freedom may become blurred until the structure of our life crashes into a stressful unfulfilled and miserable heap.

As human beings we need to live the gift of our lives well, to slow down, savour, and enjoy each day and learn to be ‘present’ in the day. Before ‘mindfulness’ came into vogue, the Church was already teaching her children to live in the present moment. As St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), a dynamo of prayer and reformer activity, once wrote “If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient, but I only look at the present; I forget the past, and I take good care not to forestall the future.”

In addition to creating structure and seasonality in life, may we also learn to live without fear of our past or for the future. We need to develop a deeper trust and confidence in life; confidence and trust in God, which then grows in our relationships and outlook with one another. The modern saint St Padre Pio (1887-1968) used to say: “My past, O Lord, to Your mercy; my present, to Your love; my future to Your providence.” It is a wonderful sentiment for those who wish to sanctify their lives and find a deeper quality and peace.

May we learn to live a better quality of life this year as we embrace the new year of 2024 remembering “The future starts today, not tomorrow” (Pope John Paul II). May God bless us all this year.

Canon Jonathan Mitchell



After the success of our first Dementia Awareness session run by Dementia Friends Ambassador Sarah Griffiths, we are now scheduling more sessions for 2024.

Given statistics such as one in eleven people over the age of 65 have dementia in the UK, these short and thought-provoking sessions are intended to introduce the wider community to dementia, explain how it can affect an individual and what you can do to help people living with dementia in our community. Big or small, every action counts. Sessions will last approximately 45 minutes and are free to everyone. To reserve your place, please contact us at csdementiafriends@gmail.com, or pass us a message via the Library, Mayfair Community Centre or the Town Council Offices.

Public sessions will be held on the third Wednesday of every month. The first two Awareness Training sessions of 2024 are:

Wednesday 17th January, 10.30am at the Library
Wednesday 21st February, 10.30am at the Library

Future sessions may be in different locations or in the evening for those unable to make it during the day.

Also, please don't forget our Memory Cafés are held at the Library every second Wednesday of the month, 1pm to 3pm. Aimed at those living with dementia and their carers/loved ones, these themed cafés allow us to chat, laugh, reminisce on specific topics, and of course have some tea and cake! These sessions are free, please just turn up and have fun!

The first two Memory Cafés for 2024 will be:

Wednesday 10th January, 1pm at the Library
Wednesday 14th February, 1pm at the Library

If you would like any more information on what we do, our AGM report or survey results, or you have other ideas for things we could be doing, or indeed if you'd like to volunteer with us, please contact us via the email above, or our Facebook page 'Church Stretton Dementia Friends'. We'd love to hear from you!

Vicky Munro, Chair

Pete Carroll

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The Long and Winding Road that leads to... Democracy

A happy welcome and shake of the hand greeted me at Shropshire Council Chamber on the 31st October. This was Ashley who had kindly allowed my application permitting attendance to the hearing at roundabout 2pm. After having been first touted 35 years ago (hello Shropshire!) here was yet another opportunity to see first-hand if the latest plans for the Shrewsbury Northern Bypass (the North West Relief Road) would get the green light.

Vociferous and disapproving demonstrators, closely watched by local police were kept stationary outside, whilst they held up their polite banners, opposite the column dedicated to Lord Hill.

Inside the Chamber, bouts of applause burst out amongst a few opposers every time those allotted time to do so spoke in opposition to the plans. The exhausted Chairman articulated to people that this was a hearing and so put a stop to the 'road rage'. However, one lady was eventually driven out when she chose to incite a further violation of applause; as she was being escorted she muttered 'you call this democracy!'

Moving forward, those in favour of the plans spoke of dangerous 'rat-runs' of vehicles of all sizes causing damage, nuisance and environmental problems. They consistently speed through the very narrow lanes to avoid the clogged up A5/A49 trunk route.

The council pointed to the likely positive reduction in traffic and pollution throughout the town by having the road built. Planting of more trees is also planned.

A 'slow-down' proposal was discussed by councillors to defer on the basis of getting:

- 1) support-backing from the Environment Agency to approve plans; and
- 2) reducing the intended speed from 60mph to 50 (or 40?) so as to provide a more 'winding road' to avoid 'veteran' trees having to be cut down.

Fair to say:

- 1) the EA had, previous to the hearing, made clear they would not get involved in either driving the plans forward or reversing them; and fairer indeed, it was decided
- 2) that to try and draw-up a slower more winding road-plan would clearly amount to creating further delay, in more ways than one! In any case the councillors did not give way and voted 6 to 5 against that proposal, so they missed the bus with that one.

At fast approaching 6pm, the council voted 6 to 5 in favour of the planned North West Relief Road, and so the 35-year journey finally came to an end. Soon enough the road and bridge builders will take the handbrake off and proceed with sighs of 'relief-road'! At this juncture motorists must wait until we observe a safe opening.

Everyone slowly left the chamber in typical British peaceful fashion, with little if any overtaking. There were no cheers or applause, neither balloons or fireworks.

Those who recall the completion of the M25 will remember how it became a 'racetrack', especially at night

with proud boasts of lap-times! Speed cameras put a stop to that.

Here, when the Shrewsbury Circular is completed there'll be no such worries, for one thing the relief road will only be single carriageway. Once complete, the tedious roundabouts, traffic lights, and idyllic reduced pace of life, will continue to provide a special something for the long and winding road, that (eventually) leads to your door!

The number of 'on the road' references herein is probably not exhaustive. Although I have done my utmost here to show due consideration to other road users, I politely raise my hand because I know I'm not perfect!

Take delivery of a Happy New Year.

Mike France

Can you help?

I live in Stoke-on-Trent and also used to live in Paphos Cyprus. I had lovely neighbours in Cyprus called Steve and Janet Mawby, who I know moved to Windsor Place in Church Stretton. We always kept in touch for many years but for the past 12 months I haven't been able find them.

I know they came from Blackpool way originally. I have also contacted the local paper there too.

I would dearly love to get in touch with them again and wondered if any of your readers could help?

Julie Lees

Editors Note: If you are able to provide any information, please contact us at editor@strettonfocus.co.uk or via Wrights Estate Agents and we will pass the details on to Julie.

Jelly Fungus



Jelly fungus is usually found on dead or decaying wood. This one is on some gorse in Townbrook that was as a result of burning control. It also likes hazel, birch and ash. When you touch it, it wobbles like jelly and is wet to the touch. It's gorgeous stuff.

Jacki Taylor

White Poppies

I would like to thank people in the Strettons who wore white poppies in November to salute all people killed in warfare – that includes people in the armed forces and civilians of all nations, not just our friends. Wearing a white poppy is also a promise that the wearer will support peace initiatives.

I have been ordering and distributing white poppies for many years. Now it is time for me to sit back and hand over my stock of poppies and literature to someone else. There are no rules and regulations about how this job should be done and of course no wages but you get to meet some nice people! Volunteer(s) please contact me.

*Ruth Davies, 1 Central Avenue, 724304
daviescs@btinternet.com*

Ukrainian Christmas Event

So what do you have to do to ensure snow in Church Stretton? You have to arrange a Ukrainian fund raiser! This is the second time that the day of such an event has seen snowfall in the Strettons. Thankfully the snow thawed and the event was able to go ahead. The evening saw over 80 people enjoy a night of festive Ukrainian singing, dancing and food interspersed with narrative about the reality of the ongoing war. The evening raised an amazing £2,400 all of which will go to support those on the front line of this crisis providing much needed medical and sanitary aid and also equipment such as generators and chain saws. Thank you so much to all who attended and to all who came to help, a special mention must go to Graham without whom none of this would have been possible.

Caroline Crump

Engaging Issues

Caricatures have always had the potential to cause offence, but never more so than in an increasingly polarised society, where questions are increasingly asked about the limits of what is acceptable or not: how free is 'free speech'? Who better than a practising caricaturist to examine the use of satire and its ability to expose and challenge? Nicola Jennings, who regularly draws the editorial cartoon for The Guardian will be with us on Tuesday 9th January.

From satire we move to geopolitics, when on Tuesday 23rd January Professor Stephen Hutchings of the University of Manchester considers the relationship between Russia and what it sees as 'the collective West'. What is the historical and current context, and how might this play out in the future?

Meetings are held at the URC, and start promptly at 7.30pm. A donation of £3 is requested to cover expenses.

Further details can be obtained from our website www.engagingissues.org.uk.

David Howard

Trivia Corner by Ken Willis

Answers on p45

1. The giant sculpture 'Angel of the North' was created by which famous sculptor?
2. The Beaufort Scale is used to measure what?
3. The cheapest squares in the board game Monopoly are which colour?
4. What would be your birth sign if you born on the 10th of March?
5. What name is given to someone that collects stamps?

Correction to question 8 in Trivia Corner in the December edition: The answer to 'What did Dora Bryan want for Christmas in a 1963 song' is 'A Beatle', not 'Two front teeth'.

Strettons Classical Music Group

On Wednesday 24th January at the United Reformed Church, Richard Walker will talk about Sergei Rachmaninov, a Russian composer, talented conductor, and a magnificent pianist. Come to hear about this sophisticated, lyrical and one of the most famous romantics of the classical music.

The talk will begin at 10am, the cost of £3 includes refreshments.

Barbara Hall



January Screenings

There is a choice of venues for this film in January...

The Great Escaper (2023) (12A); 1hr 36m



In the summer of 2014, the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, octogenarian Bernie Jordan made global headlines. He'd staged a 'great escape' from his care home to join fellow war veterans on a beach in Normandy, commemorating their fallen comrades. It was a story that captured the imagination of the world – Bernie seemed to embody the defiant, 'can-do' spirit of a generation that was fast disappearing. But of course, it wasn't the whole story. It was the story we all tell ourselves to make war and old age bearable. The bitter-sweet script explores the reality with wit and a very big heart. Bernie's adventure, spanning a mere 48 hours, also marked the culmination of his 60-year marriage to Irene – the story celebrates their love without sentimentality and with an eye to the lessons we can all learn from the Greatest Generation.



Acton Scott

Acton Scott Village Hall, Tuesday 16th January, 7.30pm

Adults £5, children £3

There is a large car park and the hall has level access.

Acton Scott enquiries: 01694 781260

Church Stretton

Silvester Horne Institute, Thursday 18th January, 7.30pm

Adults £5, under 18s £2

Interval Tea/Coffee included in price; choc ices also available.

Church Stretton enquiries: 07508 072206

Hope Bowdler

Hope Bowdler Village Hall, Wednesday 10th January, 7.30pm

Adults £5, under 16s £2.50

Tickets on the door. Tea, coffee and homemade cakes in interval, also ice creams

Hope Bowdler enquiries: 01694 721376

Anglican Voice

Time Flies

When I started to think about what to write for this month's article I realised that this may well be one of, if not the last article I write for the *Stretton Focus*. As regular readers may know I am approaching the end of my curacy with Stretton Parish and it has been interesting to note the change in people's questions from "How are you settling in?" to "So when are you leaving us?". As we enter into a new year there is always the opportunity to look back at the previous year and to reflect. In my case I have been looking back at some of my past articles that I have written and through some of the archived issues of the *Stretton Focus*. It is hard to believe that the first issue I purchased was the April 2021 issue, the first time I visited Church Stretton and began to wonder if this would be my home for the next few years.

As I looked at issues from before April 2021 I could still see familiar names and faces in the articles of people I have come to know at present, but the familiarity began to fade with each prior issue I read.

I became aware that for a brief time, I have been a part of the story of the life of this community in the Strettons, and looking at those issues has helped me to put myself into the context of this place. Time does absolutely fly; this year will also, no doubt, feel like it will fly past too and so will the



Stretton Parish

one after that and

in those years what will matter to you? One of the things I wanted to experience in a curacy was a place that had a strong sense of community and this is something I have come to value during my time here. There is no shortage of community spirit in the Strettons and it is something that we should all value and cherish. But as I looked over those old articles and snapshots of collective life here, I found myself wondering whose stories have not been told and who could we be missing out?

One of my favourite illustrations from the Bible is that of Christians as being part of a body. Every part of the body is valued and needed with a foot being as valued as an ear or an elbow. It is the same with people; every person has a part to play in the life of the Church and I feel it is no different with the communities here. Everyone has a part to play in adding to the life of our community. We are blessed with many wonderful volunteer organisations and community groups and as we head into the new year let us ask ourselves how can we play our part in the life of this community and just as vitally, how can we seek to help others find their place in the story of the Strettons?

David Andrews

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A Shot of Adrenalin



Hello, I am Finn, I am currently in year 11 and am studying geology, history, triple science, music, mathematics and English literature and language. I have always had an interest in journalism and hope that you enjoy the ensuing article.

I have always loved team sports, and the main sport for me is hockey. But really, I enjoy doing any sort of sports.

The benefits are vast and have been heavily researched by

many individuals, one of these being a study undertaken by Loughborough University where they have researched ‘what benefits does team sport hold for the workplace’. But really, these attributes are applicable to any aspect of life.

Sport improves social skills and communication. It is vital that, in all team sport, effective communication skills are present. Otherwise, how else can you let someone know that the ball is coming towards them, or that a player has someone coming in from behind, about to make a game-altering tackle; really the list is endless. But this is not only used in the matches and games, but wider life, sport helps to develop this valuable skill for the world.

Another benefit is the obvious one, the physical advantage. Physical activity is known to strengthen bone,

Music is my First Love



My name is Maria, and I am 15 years old. I've been dancing since I was 5 years old and I wish to follow a performing arts career. I am really interested in music, my favourite singer is Taylor Swift and my favourite subject in school is drama.

I am going to talk about the music industry, which is my passion. The industry is enormous, and is made up of all

kinds of performance spaces, organisations, manufacturers and promoters, performers and writers who compose music, train and supply performers, and performers who appear

before audiences on stage and screen. Many modern singers write their own songs, but some are written by professional composers. Record labels, promoters, music publishers, recording studios, road crews, set designers, security people and audio engineers are among other people and disciplines who play important roles in bringing music to audiences around the country and the world.

In 2018 the industry contributed around £5.2 billion to the UK economy. Live music performances contributed £1.1 billion of that, 10% up from the £991 million of 2017. Music industry employment reached an all-time high of 190,935, and export revenues were estimated at £2.7 billion. By 2022, the estimated value of the industry was £6.7 billion, and employment was up again, to 210,000. Considering that included two years of the Covid pandemic, these figures are amazing.

Urban or rural?



Being a young individual growing up in what has been dubbed the most rural county in the United Kingdom, I am well adjusted to the nature of life in the countryside. There is beauty in feeding the heifers in the next-door field countless amounts of apples from our little orchard, driving through the Oakley Park estate and spotting the first gangling, fluffy lambs of the

season, gazing at the sun as it bids the Earth farewell and plunges beneath Whettleton Hill – terminating the day. But often, as I watch the golden orb vanish below the horizon, my mind begins to wonder how all the millions of beings residing in major cities find the equivalent level of beauty within their surroundings.

Whenever my father announces, “we’re off to London!” or “let’s get going to Brum!” I experience a buzz of adrenaline – I’m going somewhere different! However, upon my return from such places, I breathe sighs of relief as I walk down our lawn to the house, birdsong swooping down my ear canals. I realise that trekking round a bustling, over-populated, energetic civilisation for only a few hours causes my mind to yearn the serenity that blankets our little county. It could be because I am a sensitive soul and I find pleasure in the little things in life, or it could be because I’ve lived practically in the middle of nowhere for all the sixteen years I’ve been on the planet, but I often find that a lot of the country’s most prized and popular cities are not my cup of tea. The low rumble of vehicles powering down the boulevards reaches my ears and irritates me; the number of ambulances meandering round and round city centres emitting their solemn whines makes me wince; the struggle of finding out exactly where you are in a place that looks identical in every direction – as Londoners would say – does my nut in!

Student Journalists

muscles, and joints – this can help to reduce or even prevent conditions such as arthritis and osteoporosis (the loss of calcium in a person's bones which increases the chance of fractures). Sports can boost your cardiovascular system, this in turn has a multitude of effects; it helps to fight cholesterol and improves your immune system thus making fighting off colds and viruses a relative 'walk in the park'.

The final gain I would like to mention is the adrenalin and dopamine increase in the brain – otherwise known as just plain fun. I can tell you from first-hand experience that there is nothing that quite matches the feeling of sending a player the wrong way and getting out of a tackle in rugby, or making the game-winning serve in volleyball, or making

a buzzer-beating three-pointer in basketball to keep your team in it and send the game to overtime. Nothing, and I mean nothing, quite compares to that rush of endorphins you get when you make that play and your whole team rushes over and congratulates you.

So, if you are able to or have the time this week, I strongly advise you to go out to your local sports club or leisure centre and just give it a go. You never know what wonders might present themselves!

Finley Healy

Last year, Lang Lang, the famous Chinese classical pianist, released an album called *The Disney Book*, containing songs from Disney films. The annual BBC Proms concerts attracted classical music listeners as well as those who sing along with songs of all kinds on the last of the season's performances. This shows that both modern and classical music can appeal across all ages and types of audiences.

As I grew up, a singer called Bruno Mars was my inspiration, and my family listened to him too. Mars has sold over 130 million records worldwide, making him one of the best-selling music artists of all time, and his concert tours are some of the highest-grossing in history. Now, Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo are the artists who really inspire me. Swift is one of the world's best-selling musicians, and she is the most-streamed female performer on Spotify

and Apple Music, the highest-grossing female performer ever, and the first billionaire with music as a main source of income. Rodrigo is still only 20 years old, but she achieved accolades and fame with her performances in the TV Disney+ *High School Musical* series.

There is a family story of what my grandmother said when I was born, "with this name this girl has to be an artist no doubt!" As I have grown up, she has encouraged me to follow my dreams and do something with my passion for music. I have already performed in several productions, the last of which was *Six*, in a teen production at school. I will work hard for more opportunities and hope that, one day, my dream of a career in music will come true.

Maria Valeda-Serrafo

Though, I must mention that I have, on lots of occasions, discovered beauty within this urban chaos. When I visited the city of Lincoln last summer, the sheer magnificence of the architecture, the cathedral and the quaint little streets blew me away, and I couldn't care less about the police cars rocketing by on the distant A46, or the hustle and bustle of people passing me. For me, a key enjoyable aspect of visiting urban areas is being able to observe the way they've been conjured by skilful architects, plus discovering their eventful pasts.

Still, these places, in my opinion, are sorry sights in comparison to the rolling pastures of the English countryside. No low-frequency rumbles, no rowdy gangs patrolling the streets fishing for their up-and-coming victims, and in all the twenty-five years my parents have lived in South Shropshire, no robbers have ever set foot upon our lanes. This safety, coupled with rural vistas, the miles of woodlands offering refuge to humankind and other organisms, the hundreds of hectares of free land makes my

heart soar. However, again, I must weight these beautiful elements of rustic life up against the hard fact that I am miles away from my mates! Going into town for a quick Costa and catch-up is most certainly not an option on a chilly icy morning, without requesting for your parents to drive you in, making meet-ups difficult and highly infrequent, which often miffs me as a teen who enjoys spending time with buddies!

Weighing in all these somewhat contrasting factors, I have come to the fairly firm conclusion that, on a personal level, there is no place I can retrieve true solace other than the rolling hills and pastures of the South Shropshire countryside. I love the beauty and natural chaos of the urban world, but it is in quiet spaces I feel truly at home.

Lucy Ockenden

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Cryptic Crossword by Stan Yelds

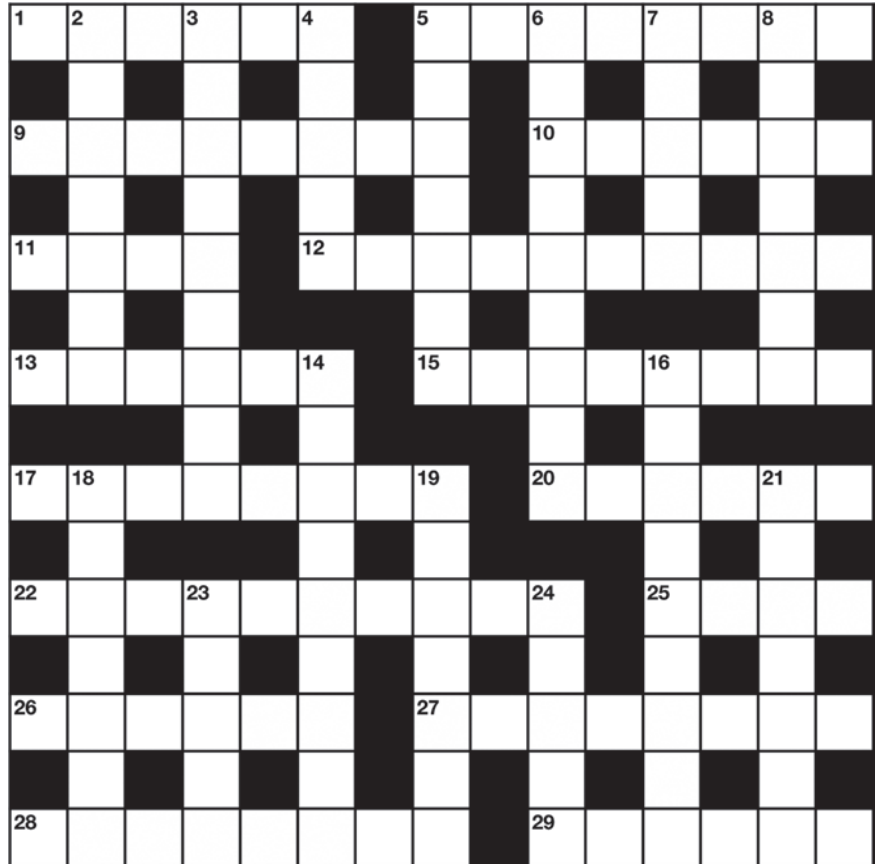
Find 8 17 21 16 (some undefined)

Across

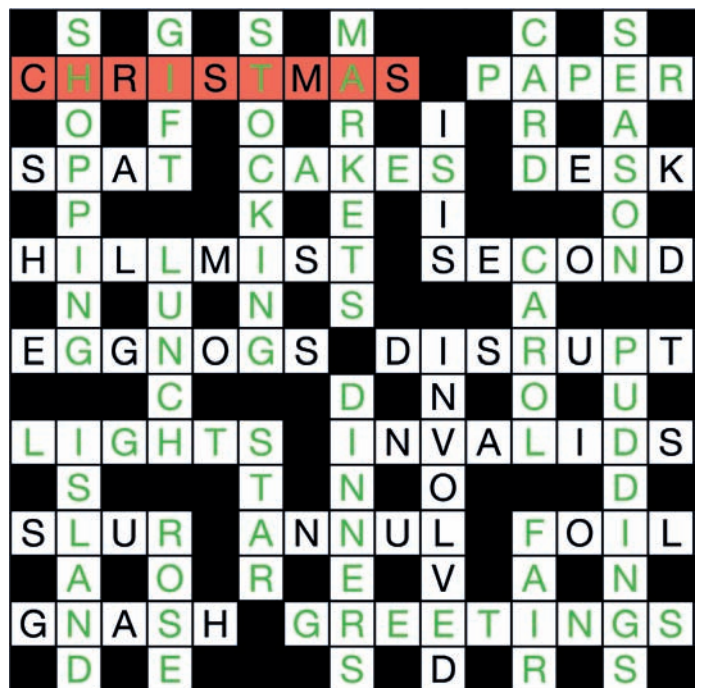
1. Re-aligned Left would ... (6)
5. ... find accommodation for new arrivals; revolutionary lines in the wake of cap (8)
9. Tom, ordinary doctor, makes great sacrifice (8)
10. Couple get back together and make amends (6)
11. Get rid of outbuilding (4)
12. Honest mistake with flower (10)
13. Carriage that's large and gold (6)
15. Made a mistake - must re-order lost fluid (8)
17. Composition for pianolas (8)
20. "S" is for Spanish mountain (6)
22. Give ammunition to old academic in serious conflict (10)
25. Frenchman is after 10 in each test (4)
26. Sounds as if stones are SI units (6)
27. Staying alive in Lviv, trapping a half of Russia in retreat (8)
28. Looks for beautiful girls in audition (3,5)
29. Feast erratically held here (6)

Down

2. Arthur English is swimming in canal (7)
3. Welsh town is untidy and dull - I disagree! (9)
4. Clubs forest tiger (5)
5. Burners operating - safety first! (7)
6. Reported menaces in Bishop's Castle (5,4)
7. Aquatic beast regularly seen in shrimps' pool (5)
8. Produce second edition of "Religious Education with Children" (7)
14. General junk ruins vale (9)
16. Were biers fabricated here? (9)
18. A monastic officer, I deduced (1,6)
19. People uncovered students hiding down one street (7)
21. Roast endive starters in the style of the French at the pub (4,3)
23. Impromptu promotion left one bemused head (2-3)
24. Courage of sensational communicator (5)



December's Solution



Longmynd Commoners

With no background in farming, I swapped my Minnesota desk job for a summer on Shropshire sheep farms.

I had an unexplainable gut feeling that I might enjoy working with sheep, but no prior experience – just a desire to learn and be part of something new. My godfather has a history of working with pastoralists and after hearing my interest, he connected me with the Longmynd Commoners. I had no idea what to expect and, to be fair, I'm certain they didn't either. Why would anyone take a chance on allowing a foreign visitor with no farming experience into their community?



For those who don't know, 'commoners' are

a subset of farmers who own or rent property with rights to graze livestock on common land (in this case, the Longmynd Common) – rights that have been written into law and passed down for centuries. I was fortunate to meet and work with several commoners, all dedicated to their flocks and maintaining the landscape of the Longmynd. Hundreds of years of their livestock grazing the land has created a very specific and important ecosystem. If their animals ever left the land, it would create an irreversible ecological change and the loss of a significant part of Shropshire's landscape history. While their sheep spend most of their lives on the hills, they are brought down to the farms several times a year so the farmers can attend to the health of the flock. Summer is an especially busy time for the commoners, with days spent bringing sheep down from the hills (referred to as 'gathering'), shearing their own sheep as well as their neighbours', treating sheep for any diseases, taking some to market, and turning the rest back onto the hill.

In my five weeks working with the commoners, I joined them on six gathers and six days of shearing at five different farms. The Longmynd Commoners are resilient, dependable neighbours and devoted leaders in safeguarding the historic rights and tradition of commoning. Joining them on the gathers to bring the sheep from the hills back to the farms was eye-opening in many ways. For those who haven't experienced a gather, you might imagine a farmer walking to the top of a single hill and casually walking some sheep back to the farm. But when you're up there in the vastness of the hills with hundreds of sheep spread across several miles of steep



and sometimes dangerous terrain, it's abundantly clear why you need to rely on a dependable community of friends and neighbours to help you. The amount of ground that has to be covered on each gather is immense (averaging about 8 km), so a team of experienced shepherds with all-terrain vehicles and dogs is critical. The group spreads out, and each person is responsible for not letting any sheep break past them. Some of the commoners can fearlessly perform the most nail-biting manoeuvres on quad bikes to get to the hard-to-reach places on the hills. One of the commoners can cover more ground on a gather in a pair of wellies faster than I thought was humanly possible. But even the most skilled shepherds will face hurdles. For example, the bracken on the Longmynd is badly overgrown in some areas such that the sheep don't have enough clear paths to follow back to the farm. Where it's tall and thick, sheep will completely disappear in it, making it impossible to know how many you might have missed. Not to mention that shepherds can't walk through it – it's exhausting and feels like you're walking with shackles on your legs, slowing down work that's already physically demanding. While I was there, we had to redo one of the gathers (which meant the whole group of farmers giving up another half day of work on the farm) because the bracken caused us to miss about a hundred sheep.



The Longmynd Commoners I met take great care to be stewards of the land. They are dedicated to their livelihood. And they are human. It's clear to me that the rolling green hills – the beauty of which is an integral part of Shropshire's identity – look the way they do largely due to the collective efforts of commoners for hundreds of years. And, while outsiders might not hear much about the lives of individual commoners, I can assure you that each of them has their own story – their own struggles, their own successes, and their own contributions to something greater than themselves. There is no denying the combined impact of their dedication and hard work.

During my time on the Longmynd, I also became aware of some of the challenges related to managing the common for its diverse array of users. With its unbroken views, windswept landscapes, and grazing livestock, the Longmynd is enjoyed by tourists, outdoor enthusiasts, and nature lovers – and as you can see, it is also critically important to the livelihood of

commoners. Maintaining the upland heath habitats and the heritage farming system of commoning requires that the National Trust as the landowner and the Longmynd Commoners work well together and that each respects the other. Witnessing the increasingly collaborative efforts between the National Trust and the Longmynd Commoners' Association this summer gives me hope that both the Longmynd's ecosystem and cultural heritage can be protected for future generations.

In my Minnesota life, I spend most of my days at a desk emailing and building spreadsheets. So to pivot to spending all day outside (mostly in the rain but occasionally the sun),

gathering on the Longmynd, wrapping wool, drenching sheep, driving tractors, and going to market ... I could not have imagined how much life this would give me. But the biggest impact of all was meeting and becoming friends with the farmers and their families. Each time I sat in the kitchen of a commoner's farmhouse, listening to discussions about the ins and outs of sheep farming in thick Shropshire accents (only some of which I could understand), I had to pinch myself. It was a true honour having this small community of commoners and their families allow me into their lives.

Sarah Gingerich (Minnesota, USA)

RSPB

Linnets

A cock linnet is a handsome bird. In springtime he will show off his rosy, pink breast and from the highest part of the hedge he announces his territorial claims with a melodious song. The hen linnet will be nesting amongst the thicker parts of the hedge and being duller feathered, is camouflaged well. Linnets also often nest amongst gorse bushes, where they are safe from predators. Seldom do linnets come into gardens but prefer rough areas of farmland and heathland. They feed primarily on seeds, and in winter they can be seen flying over stubble fields in small flocks. Listen for their jazzy calls. You would be unlucky if you did not see some on one of your walks in the hills. They were probably named linnet due to their fondness for flax seeds, the plant from which linen is made. But they have recently taken to using oil seed rape as a new food source.



When people moved away from the countryside into the towns, looking for work, they must have missed the singing of the birds. Young finches, particularly goldfinches and linnets, were trapped and put into cages. Only the singing males were kept; the females were discarded. Their cheery twittering reminded people of the countryside, but it must have been a sad life for the many little birds that were caged. Times have changed and it is now illegal to trap wild birds.

There was a popular music hall song about a couple who did a moonlight flit from their rented accommodation. The wife runs after her husband who is furtively carrying away their possessions. She is carrying her cock linnet in its cage but gets lost. It is an amusing little song but shows how hard life must have been for many people.

Carol Wood



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

The South Shropshire Local Group of the RSPB has a programme of talks and walks throughout 2023/24
Talks (including refreshments) are £2 to Local Group Members and £5 to Visitors, under 18s half price
Walks are £2

See What's On for all our events, and also our website:
group.rspb.org.uk/southshropshire
or **Facebook: RSPB South Shropshire Local Group**

Stretton Tree Notes from the Church Stretton Tree Group



Check the location of this tree on the database map at www.churchstrettontreegroup.co.uk

Name: Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*)

Location: At the entrance to Rectory Field adjacent to the scout hut.

Coordinates: 52.53855; -2.8092735

Value to wildlife: The flowers, rich in pollen and nectar, attract bees and other insects. These in turn encourage birds to visit the tree.

Uses: Grown as a wind break, particularly in coastal locations, as it is salt tolerant. Can be pruned to form a hedge. Provides shade and shelter from the sun. Acorns are used as pig feed.

Folklore: The Greeks adopted it as a fertility symbol; the Romans used the wood to make cartwheels and tools. None known in Britain specific to this species.



Photo by Paul Eade

General: Also called the holly oak, as young leaves are spiny to deter animals from eating them. Introduced to Britain from the Mediterranean in the 16th century. Unusual for oaks, it is an evergreen tree. It can grow up to 20 metres tall.

Did you know: Iberico ham produced in Spain can only be so-called if the pigs used have been fed on acorns from holm oak trees.

Significant UK specimens: Westbury Court, Gloucestershire. This specimen has a particularly splendid knobbly trunk.

Correction: An eagle-eyed reader spotted an error in our previous Tree Notes entry. The photograph used was not a wild service tree but a Swedish whitebeam. We apologise for this mistake and thank the reader in question for pointing it out.

Jane Fallows

Shropshire Wildlife Trust Strettons Branch



Shropshire Wildlife Trust

'Swifts and Us, The Life of a Bird that Sleeps in the Sky'

Monday 29th January, 7.30pm, Mayfair Community Centre, Easthope Road, Church Stretton

Sarah Gibson, author of *Swifts are Us*, will tell her story of discovery, exploring aspects of the swift's life, from its earliest beginnings 50 million years ago to recent revelations about migration routes garnered from geolocators. Her book tells the stories of people in the UK and across Europe striving to ensure a future for swifts. She demonstrates how change is brought about by passionate, determined individuals, whose actions show that everyone



can do something to keep these superb birds screaming through our skies and each summer bring us three months' joy scything over the rooftops.

Sarah will sign copies of her book, which will be on sale.

Admission £3 for members, £4 for non-members. No need to book, but for further information contact Janet Martin on 01694 722361 or strettons@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Shropshire Ornithological Society



Church Stretton branch present

Wild Wales by Nick Martin, preceded by the AGM, on Monday 22nd January at the Methodist Church Hall, starting at 7.30pm. Refreshments provided.

Members free; non-members £3. All welcome.

Church Stretton Gardening Club

NOTICE: AGM 2pm will be on Tuesday 30th January at the SHI followed by an introduction to Wisteria Tours (Garden Visit Holidays).

Sue Forster



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Recipe of the month

Breakfast salmon pud

This is a variation on a dish intended to replicate that great French classic, *Croque Monsieur*. I've messed it up of course and think it works really well as an easy fancy breakfast or brunch for a crowd and it occurred to me, maybe good for New Year's Day. It's a great way to make a little salmon go a reasonable way and is sort of 'fish meets bread and butter pudding'!

The original version called for mustard in the egg custard and Parma ham or equivalent dotted throughout – I've not actually tried this but what's not to like?

With using salmon in place of the ham I've substituted in horseradish in place of the mustard and then jazzed up the flavour with some dill but this is a very moveable idea and you can pop whatever you fancy onto your croissant and then match flavours that work well together. Use a melty cheese of your choice but my foodie niece, who I tested the recipe on, told me she thought parmesan would be too strong and might overpower the salmon!

Adapt the quantities to suit your needs.

Serves 4 generously

Ingredients

8 all-butter croissants halved
200g cheese – or to taste
500ml crème fraîche or sour cream
4-5 large eggs – depending on how much 'custard' you want
300ml milk
Freshly grated horseradish to taste or 1-2 tsp horseradish sauce
Pinch of salt (the salmon will add salty flavour)
Ground black pepper
Chopped dill
100g smoked salmon
Additional cheese to top – optional
Avocado to serve – optional

Method

- Preheat oven to 180 Fan/200 deg C/gas 6.
- Grease a large shallow dish or line with silicon liner. Fill it with the croissant halves in a single layer – they can be slanted and leaning against each other.
- Grate the cheese generously over the croissants.
- In a large jug mix together the remaining ingredients apart from the salmon.
- Pour this mixture over the croissants and push them down into the mixture. You can always top the liquid up with a little more milk if needed – with a large number of eggs it should set fine.
- Dot small pieces of salmon around the dish pushing it under any overlapping croissant.
- Grate over more cheese if you like then pop in the oven for 20-25 minutes until golden, then go and gather the household before serving your masterpiece with the sliced avocado if using.



If you have a smaller but maybe deeper dish you could adapt this to suit by filling the halved croissant with your choice of cheese and then putting them back together again before completing the recipe – this will give you a more golden and potentially crispy finish.

Heidi



Are you in school years 4-6 and interested in playing netball? Flames Netball Club train on Fridays between 5.30 and 6.30pm (term-time only, September-April) at Church Stretton Leisure Centre and would love to hear from you! We have spaces available now and will be offering each player two no-obligation trial sessions before needing to commit to becoming a member of the club.

Flames Netball Club also caters for school years 7-13 and we are always looking for potential new players. Training sessions run between 6.30 and 7.30pm, or 7.30 and 9pm, depending on age group, at Church Stretton Leisure Centre.

Through regular training sessions and matches, our aim is to create a club that promotes enjoyment, friendships, skills development, team and individual achievement and above all, a respect for fellow players, coaches and umpires in

a sporting environment. It doesn't matter if you have never played before, our coaches are here to help and guide you.

Are you a netball coach, or would you be interested in getting involved with netball coaching? We are always on the lookout for new coaches and would love to hear from you! Coaching qualifications and/or prior experience are not essential, and there would be opportunity to complete coaching awards if you wish to do so. Please get in touch for more information.

For further details on any of the above, please visit flamesnetball.co.uk and fill out a contact form to register your interest. Alternatively, you can contact us via email on hello@flamesnetball.co.uk.

Sophie Burgoyne
Performance Lead
On behalf of Flames Netball Club

Church Stretton Rotary News

Latest Church Stretton Rotary Activity

The lead up to Christmas is always a very busy time for Church Stretton Rotary and this year has been no exception.

Remembrance Sunday



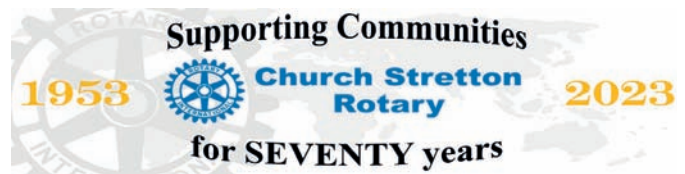
On Remembrance Sunday, our President Pat Stokes-Smith was very proud to lay our Rotary wreath at the Church Stretton War Memorial to remember the 51 residents who were killed or missing in World War 1 and the 31 from World War 2.

Many Rotarians were there to support Pat and also to act as road safety marshals to ensure the event worked safely. The photo shows Rotarians Peter and Carol Burt and Friend of Rotary Julian Hargreaves.

Christmas Tree of Light



For many years the centrepiece of Church Stretton's Christmas Celebrations has been the Rotary Christmas Tree of Light. This year was no different and our tree acted as the focal point of the Christmas Lights Switch-On. We have always received wonderful feedback from the general public about the effect of the Tree and it was particularly popular



during the Covid restrictions. A great deal of work goes on to make this aspect successful and many Rotarians and our supporters put in significant amounts of time and effort to make sure it happens. Our thanks go out yet again to all of them.

The purpose of the Tree is not only to enrich the Christmas Experience of Church Stretton but also to enable the remembrance of lost loved ones and in so doing raise funds to support three excellent local charities – Hope House Children's Hospice, Midlands Air Ambulance and Severn Hospice.

Again this year children and those young at heart have written a message or drawn a picture on a bauble and hung it on the tree. Through their generosity almost £200 was raised which will be used to support the education of children in Guatemala.

If your New Year's Resolution is to do more to help others then why not think about joining one of the World's biggest humanitarian organisations – Rotary International? To find out more about helping our local community or joining Rotary contact me Don Lovejoy on don@djlovejoy.co.uk.

Don Lovejoy



Churches Together

Our next Open Forum is on Wednesday 24th January in the Parish Centre at 7.30pm. Please do your best to come along and support. Your ideas and suggestions are important.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18th-25th January

Thursday 18th 10am – Methodist Church
Friday 19th 8.30am – St Michaels, All Stretton and 6pm for 6.30pm shared meal in URC Hall
Sunday 21st 4pm – United Service – All Saints, Little Stretton
Monday 22nd 2pm – URC
Tuesday 23rd 9.15am – St Laurence's
Wednesday 24th 9.15am – St Milburga's
Thursday 25th 7.15pm – Quakers (at St Milburga's)

Scout Group News



'It's been a fantastic year'

The words of Group Scout Leader Terry Davies to the recent AGM of the 2nd Longmynd. He reported that numbers had increased in every section of the Group and that they had gained four new Leaders.

There had been imaginative programmes from all sections which had brought an enthusiastic response. The two Cub Packs had combined to run a Bring-and-Buy sale in aid of Nepal's 'Classroom in the Clouds' project which had resulted in £182 being raised and which had been made up to £400 from Group funds. The Wednesday Pack programme also includes building a model of the solar system and night-time expeditions with telescopes for the Astronomer Badge as well as a new sports programme. The Tuesday Pack is aiming for the World Faith and the Environmental Badges and one of their members, Robert, gained the Chief Scout's Silver Award before moving up into the Troop.

The Beaver Colony has also extended its programme to include archery and fencing. The Scout Troop is at present preparing for its winter camp.

A highlight of the AGM was the presentation by special guest Mayor Andy

Munro of the 50-year Long Service Award to Group President Brian Faulkner and the 40-year Award to Brian's wife Christine, Assistant Cub Scout Leader with the Wednesday Pack. The meeting closed with an illustrated presentation by Explorer Scout Isaac Hall who attended the mini-Jamboree in Norway in the Summer.

All meetings are held at the Group headquarters in Church Street and are open to both boys and girls. All information from the GSL on 07484 717317.



Monday 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th

Beaver Scout Colony. Ages 6-8: 5.30-6.30pm

Scout Troop. Ages 10½-14½: 7-9pm

Explorer Scout Unit. Ages 14-18: 7-9pm
(Check with GSL for Explorer dates)

Tuesday 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th

Cub Scout Pack (Tuesday). Ages 8-10½: 6.30-8pm

Wednesday 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st

Cub Scout Pack (Wednesday). Ages 8-10½: 6.30-8pm

Fred Reeve

Methodist Voice

Variety is the spice of life

In January, churches around the world observe a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This is when Christians in all denominations come together to demonstrate common values which are much more significant than the different emphases. Each year materials are prepared by churches in a different region. This year it is the turn of Burkina Faso churches to set the theme. They have based their work on the parable of the Good Samaritan and in particular on the words "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour ..." Luke 10:27. During the Week of Prayer beginning 18th January, all Christians in the Strettons are invited to visit a different church each day for short devotions on this theme. This is especially fitting at a time when Churches Together in the Strettons is being renewed after a period of relative inactivity.

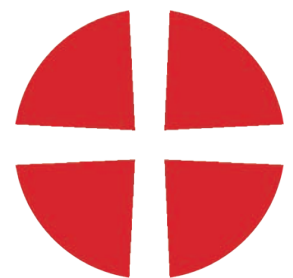
When I pray for Christian unity I don't ask for uniformity, when we shall all adhere to the same mould or do things in exactly the same way. Creation is a model of variety. The world is full of things of every size, colour, texture; every flower has its own perfume, every bird sings its own song. In his poem *Pied Beauty*, Gerard Manley Hopkins celebrates this diversity: he takes pleasure in "things counter, original, spare, strange" and whatever is "fickle, freckled (who knows how?)".

Christian unity does not demand that we worship in the same way or the same building all the time. But it does mean that, as the body of Christ, we work together like parts of a body work in harmony. Just as a body functions best when arms, legs, eyes and ears work together under the direction of the brain so the church of God needs the contribution each denomination can make in obedience to the head of the church, which is Christ.

We hear a lot about the need to be an inclusive community and congregations are called to practise inclusivity, almost as though this is a new notion in the 21st century. The people who gathered round Jesus included men and women, fishermen and civil servants, some were quiet and some outspoken – quite a motley crew. The one thing they had in common was that they wanted to be with Jesus. Methodists are not Anglicans; Quakers and United Reformed are not Roman Catholics, but we are united in our loyalty to the one Lord.

I am pleased that Churches Together in the Strettons is again active. This is a way we can work together while at the same time celebrating what each congregation has to offer.

Ruth Davies



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Happy New Year

The month of January is a month of new beginnings. It is named after the Roman God Janus. Janus had two faces, one looking backward the other forward. New Year is a perfect time to ponder the past whilst looking forward to the future. We may never be able to change the past, but we can use our experiences to change the future. So may we let go of the past and all that holds us back and realise that we can change the future.

There is an astonishing story to illustrate this. A vase was found in an Egyptian Pyramid. It was carefully wrapped and sent to the British Museum. Unfortunately, the librarian, whilst unwrapping the vase, had the misfortune to drop it. Amongst the smashed pieces were a few hard, old, and shrivelled peas which were about 3000 years old. The peas were planted carefully under a glass and amazingly, after just 30 days, the peas had sprouted and began flourishing. The librarian could have dwelt on his mistake but instead those old 'dead' peas were brought to life by the librarian's actions. Past mistakes or difficult circumstances may make us feel like those seeds, hard, shrivelled and useless, but we can remember that everything God created is good, and that we can flourish and grow.

In the popular television programme, *The Antiques Road Show*, people who perhaps have paid a few pence for an item at a car boot sale, come asking for an evaluation of its worth. Then we see the look of shock and joyful surprise when they learn the item is worth much, much more than they expected. When that happens, I think of how God takes people, who may not see themselves as valuable, and yet places a very high value on them.

Actress and comedienne Dawn French said in an interview that as a teenager, just before she was going out to a disco to meet boys and misbehave her father called her



over. Expecting a lecture, she was surprised when he sat her down and said, "You are the most precious thing in our lives and you are beautiful, don't let yourself down". She later said that her father gave her the self-esteem and confidence she needed, which she has never forgotten.

As we look back over the past year and then look forward to the new, may we know for certain that God places a high value on each one of us. We are precious and beautiful in His sight. So, in this New Year, knowing we are valued and loved, may we flourish, and grow.

Happy New Year

Jon Hughes

World Day of Prayer

The first Friday in March every year is the World Day of Prayer (formerly Women's World Day of Prayer).

Each year Christian women from a different country write the service which gives an insight into their way of life, their struggles and successes, their hopes and fears. The service is then translated and sent to WDP committees around the world. This process obviously takes time, so the services are always written about two years ahead. Why am I telling you all this now? The reason is because the service which will be held on 1st March 2024 has been written by Palestinian women.


As the local WDP secretary I have had a pile of the service books since before the war between Israel and Hamas began. I can't help thinking about the women who wrote this service. I wonder what has happened to them, are they still alive even! What is happening in Gaza and Israel

is being seen around the world, the destruction of buildings and fleeing people can only be the beginning of the story. We hear the pain and suffering of the few people who are interviewed or get their story told via social media. Most of us can only imagine what it is really like.

All around the world people of faith have been praying for peace, that the war will end and that both sides will recognize the humanity of the other side. On 1st March, again all around the world, people will be praying but this time we will be using the words of the Palestinian women. The local service will be held at St Laurence's Parish Church at 10.30am. You are all welcome to attend whatever your faith or if you don't have one. We don't know what the situation will be like out in Israel/Palestine by then, but the service will be made suitable to reflect it.

Ann Cooke

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Plastics recycling event

We held a successful recycling event at the end of November, discussing the many ways in which plastics can be re-used and recycled (or better still avoided). Many people don't realise that a wide range of soft plastic packaging (crisp packets, biscuit wrappers, food bags, etc – items that cannot be recycled in the kerbside collection) can now be recycled at supermarkets. The Coop store in Church Stretton has recycling bins behind the tills for soft plastics and displays a list of items that can be recycled.



The SCC Team at the recycling event

We'd like to say a big thank you to the Coop for hosting the event.

If you're not sure where to recycle something, then Church Stretton Town Council publishes a very useful list of local recycling facilities on its website (www.churchstretton-tc.gov.uk/community-pages/recycling-services/). You can also contact us for advice at one of our monthly Repair Cafés, Thursday morning Advice Centres or at info@strettonclimatecare.org.uk

Listening to the views of young people

At our AGM in November, we were delighted to welcome young people from Church Stretton School, from the Marches Energy Agency, and from the West Midlands Environmental Leadership Programme to discuss their views on how we can tackle the climate and biodiversity crises.

Xander, Jess, Amber, Lucy and Jack all spoke with passion about their concerns for the environment and the future, providing useful insights and solutions to the challenges we face.

They started by describing how they'd first become aware of environmental issues at school or university, before outlining their perspectives on the value of protest and whether the actions of groups such as Just Stop Oil are helpful or counterproductive. They felt that actions towards achieving Net Zero (a balance where no more carbon is added to the atmosphere than removed) should be accelerated by the UK government and that the UK should take a lead on reducing carbon emissions internationally. It was suggested that the government might also have to take tough action on the number of flights people can take, and that alternatives to short-haul air travel (e.g. rail) should be actively encouraged as has happened in France. Public transport is particularly important to young people, and it was felt that this needs more attention and investment. It was noted that there needs to be more honesty from governments too – areas such as global shipping and air travel are excluded from national carbon targets today, and this needs to be addressed.

It was agreed that individuals have an important role to play, and a lot of influence. Most people can decide what to purchase or not, and how much they consume. Adults can use their votes. It's better for the environment to cycle or walk than travel by car and many have that choice. Transport is such an important consideration and often seems overlooked.

However, the panellists acknowledged that not everything can be resolved at an individual level, and action on the climate crisis shouldn't be a burden for individuals alone. Systemic change is required, and this needs support from corporations and governments. For example, our government can build the infrastructure needed to support electrification and the further deployment of renewable energy. The government could also cut subsidies to fossil fuel projects immediately and mandate that all new housing developments are built with solar panels. It could invest in and accelerate the insulation of existing housing too. Such decisions all require long term thinking, and it was suggested that we need to overcome the short-term nature of politics in the UK. We need everyone working together with the common goal of achieving net-zero whatever their political views.

In response to a question from the audience lamenting the lack of progress and failure to achieve progress on the climate crisis over the last decade, the panel encouraged audience members not to give up! Many successful initiatives are built upon the lessons learnt from previous failures, and it may be necessary to attempt an activity

A Quaker Voice



Be Prepared

Given the time needed for the brilliant team of editors to **prepare** the material for another edition of *Focus*, this *Quaker Voice* is of course being submitted a month ahead of publication time. The December issue is currently – that is, as I write – in the shops, with all its references to Christmas activities and events for which so many people are currently **preparing**.

To **prepare** something is to get it 'ready beforehand'. That is easy to understand when one thinks, for instance, of actors, choirs, or other musicians rehearsing before a performance, or the buying and cooking of food before a meal, or getting a room ready for a visitor to stay.

The motto 'Be Prepared' might remind many people of the Scouting and Guiding movement. I should perhaps be somewhat ashamed of myself for never actually figuring out, during my short time as first a brownie and then a guide, just what I was meant to be prepared for. And was it an order? Or was it I who was 'being prepared' by my seniors?

In the section of *Quaker Faith & Practice* entitled 'Advices and Queries' Quakers are encouraged to "Come to meeting for worship with hearts and minds prepared". And here am I, many years after being a brownie or guide, still questioning this idea of preparedness, but in a new context. Are Quakers being urged to get hearts and minds 'ready beforehand'? Ready for what? In what way? How? And 'hearts'??

It can be so easy (and sometimes cosily comforting) to repeat well-known phrases to ourselves. But good too to question, to ponder, to challenge given wisdom. Perhaps some day we might even come up with an answer...

Sally Gillions

multiple times to achieve success. In response to a further question, it was suggested that we have to tackle those making the decision to invest in fossil fuels, and the behaviours of VIPs who take large numbers of unnecessary short flights. The panel observed that in a democracy you have to address social issues as well as those associated with climate. A lot of people can't afford to drive an electric vehicle or to insulate their homes. So, the government needs to help by incentivising people to make the right choices for the environment, providing subsidies where necessary.

In response to a further question, the panel discussed eco-anxiety and mental health. Panellists pointed out the importance of retaining hope, and that this hope could provide a catalyst for bringing people together across the world. The same challenges are faced whether you live in Canada, China or the UK. The panel felt that many young people are disconnected from nature, spending their time on trivia on social media, and so lack awareness of the climate situation. It would be helpful if more people woke up to the climate crisis. One of the panellists is currently considering whether she should have children or not. Another had been inspired by a letter written by her 7-year-old cousin to the King, to which he had replied. She felt that this illustrated the importance of taking action, however small. Acting helps address your concerns about the environment and is uplifting. Another panellist commented that it's important too to make time for yourself so that you don't burn out.



The panel were asked what they'd say to people who think they're too old, and it's too late to take action on the climate crisis. The panellists responded by suggesting that people should always act whatever their age. No-one knows whether an action will prove to be too late, and how would a person feel if they'd done nothing when they could have made a difference? What would be their legacy? People should consider the current and future generations. It's never too late to take action!

If you were not able to attend this inspirational discussion, you can find a video of the event on our website strettonclimatecare.org.uk.

Jon Cooke

Social Meeting:
'Beat the January Blues!'
with magician Gareth
Jenkins

u3a
Church Stretton

Gareth, a conjuring former dentist, is a member of various magical rings and circles – conjuring with a sense of humour!

Thursday 11th January, 2pm, URC Hall, High Street, Church Stretton.

Refreshments, including cake, will be provided.

Church Stretton u3a members free. Visitors welcome £2.

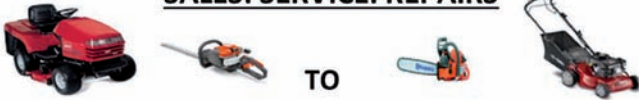
Trivia Answers

1. Anthony Gormley
2. Wind
3. Brown
4. Pisces
5. Philatelist



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Church Stretton R/C Model Club

The Church Stretton model aircraft flying club is on the lookout for a new flying site.

They would love to talk to anyone who could rent them a small section of a field in which to fly their model aircraft. The Club was formed in the 70s and is a small friendly group of people who all share a passion for the building and flying of model aircraft. Until recently they flew at a field at Alcaston. However, due to a change in the landowner's circumstances they can no longer use the field and need to find a new flying site, hopefully within a 15-mile radius of Church Stretton.

The club is affiliated to the British Model Flying Association (BMFA) which is the governing body for the sport and ensures that all pilots are trained properly and follow strict procedures to cover competent flying, safety procedures and environmental issues, along with benefiting from insurance.

The construction of model aircraft was traditionally from balsa wood, however, the development of

composite materials and advances in foam mouldings have greatly reduced and simplified construction times. In fact



many model aircraft are available ready to fly out of the box, making it ideal for those wanting to take up the hobby.

Model flying has a long history of encouraging STEM type skills to youngsters (of any age!), it is an excellent way of learning to work with many different materials and ending up with a fully working aircraft. Members of the club are willing to help anyone get started in the hobby, right from choosing a model to learning to fly it.

Social events that are organised by the club such as BBQ's and meals out mean the whole family can get involved and have proved to be very popular and were well attended last year.

So if you, or someone you know, might be able to help out with a new home for the club we would love to talk to you.

The club can be contacted via the secretary, Malcolm Macintyre, on 07879 290309 or by email: csrccmc@gmail.com.

CSRCMC



Strettondale Patient Participation Group

At the committee meeting held on 2nd November 2023, we had received three comments in the practice box since our last meeting:

1. Praise for the practice and staff – always nice to receive.
2. A suggestion that the practice should have a 'walk in service' since the nearest such centre is 14 miles away.
3. A complaint that the offered time slot of 9.30 to 10am for the flu vaccination clinic was too narrow for over 65-year-olds. It was also felt that the letters received regarding the flu and Covid vaccination clinics were not clear.

I am pleased to report that our dedicated email address for comments to us about general matters is now up and running. It is strettondaleppg@gmail.com.

One of our committee members had the opportunity to visit the new air ambulance centre at Cosford. Most air ambulances get some funding from their local Integrated

Care Board but the West Midlands service receives nothing. Of course Church Stretton is about 15 miles from the nearest A&E centre, which can seriously impact on the outcome for many urgent cases. Many procedures cannot be done at Shrewsbury and Telford, so some cases would have to go to Stoke or Birmingham for example. The air ambulance paramedics are given enhanced training and can administer anaesthetics and do other procedures that those in the land ambulances can't.

The West Midlands Air Ambulance service does not currently run a 24-hour service but are hoping to do so in the New Year. This would be especially useful in the case of strokes for example, which commonly occur in the early hours of the morning.

Increasing funding for the services available in rural communities with an aging population would make such a difference.

Alison Phillips (chair)

Strettons Allotment Gardens Association

Allotment Holders getting ready to welcome Christmas

Under the guidance of the Chair of Greenhills Allotments, Jane Williams, several allotment holders, together with friends and family, created a festive door wreath on the first Saturday of December.

This was the first time the Allotments Association has held such an event, and the Masonic Hall was a great venue. Everybody had so much fun. The plan is to repeat the event next year.

The wreaths were very natural and in keeping with the Allotment Association's ethos and a sense of community.

Jane Williams



Wreathmaking Workshop at St Michael and All Angels



The workshop held in the church is always a lovely, happy occasion. This year we will be able to send £300 to WaterAid as a result of the event. We had three generations of one family attend this year.

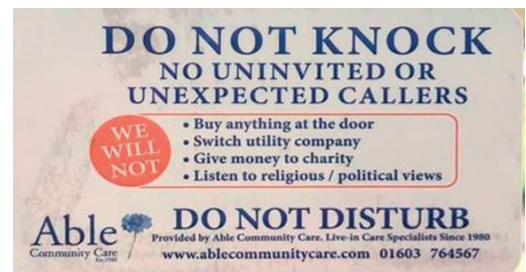
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Angela Gifford



Saturday Morning 'Winter Warmer'

During the winter months (January-March) you'll find a warm welcome, hot drink, and a bacon butty at St Laurence Parish Centre. The Saturday Morning 'Winter Warmer' is open 10am until 12 noon every Saturday, starting Saturday 13th January.

You are welcome to drop by for ten minutes or come for the whole morning. Whatever age you are, whether you are on your own or want to bring the whole family, this warm and welcoming community space is run by volunteers and is open to you. There will also be games, jigsaws, and the daily papers to help yourself to.

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Cathy Watson

on behalf of Stretton Parish Bethel Programme



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Churches in the Strettons



ANGLICAN CHURCH, STRETTON PARISH: St Laurence, Church Stretton, St Michael & All Angels, All Stretton, and All Saints, Little Stretton. Rector: Rev'd Steve Johnson (Tel: 722585)
Website: www.strettonparish.org.uk

Sunday Services

St Laurence's

Weekly	8.30am	Holy Communion
1st & 3rd Sundays	10.30am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Deeper
2nd Sunday	10.30am	Morning Worship
4th Sunday	10.30am	Altogether

On the 1st-3rd Sundays in the month the children's activities are in the Parish Centre. Children join the service at 10.30am and then are taken over to the Parish Centre by the leaders.

St Michael's

1st & 3rd Sundays	10.30am	Morning Worship
2nd & 4th Sundays	10.30am	Holy Communion (URC on 2nd Sunday)

All Saints

1st Sunday	11.00am	Holy Communion (Order 2)
2nd Sunday	11.00am	Morning Prayer
3rd Sunday	11.00am	Holy Communion (Order 1)
4th Sunday	4.00pm	Evensong

Where there is a 5th Sunday in the month, all three churches join together for a United Parish Service at 10.30am in St Laurence Church.

Midweek Service

Holy Communion will be held weekly in St Laurence at 10.30am every Thursday

Online Service

As well as the services above, you can join us from home for our pre-recorded online service available from 10am each Sunday. Please visit www.strettonparish.org.uk and click on the "Online Services" blue button.

The Parish Office is in the Parish Centre, Church Street. (Tel: 724224).
Open 9am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday. Email: office@strettonparish.org.uk



METHODIST CHURCH Minister: Rev'd George Heinz (Tel: 07538 480626)

Website: www.churchstretton-methodistchurch.org.uk

Hall bookings: Carole Coles (Tel: 724958)

Sunday Services

10.30am Morning Service

Wednesday Activities

Babies and Toddlers (School term time only) 10am-12noon

Cuppa and Chat 2.30-4pm. All welcome



RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) Co-clerks: Lesley Richards and Charles West (Tel: 722068)

Email: csqm@gorswen.co.uk

Sundays

10.30am Meetings for Worship in the Silvester Horne Committee Room; Children on 4th Sunday in month

For details of home discussion groups please telephone the Clerks.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH Priest: Canon Jonathan Mitchell (Tel: 01694 658091)

St Milburga's, Church Stretton

Email: stmilburga@gmail.com

Sunday	9.30am	Mass
Tuesday-Saturday	9.30am	Daily Mass
Saturday	5.30pm	Evening Mass

St Walburga's, Plowden

11.15am Sunday Mass



UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Minister: (vacant)

Website: churchstrettonurc.org.uk

Sunday Services

10.30am Morning worship, followed by refreshments in the church hall
Communion is celebrated on Sundays notified in URC Church Newsletter

Weekday Activities

Mondays/Wednesdays: Monday Group and Ladies Link are currently suspended

Wednesdays: Discussion and prayers – currently suspended

Fridays (non-denominational): Meditation – in the Vestry at 2.00pm

Church Contact: 722123; Email: urcchurchstretton@gmail.com

Church and Hall bookings: 722390

Clubs and Societies in Church Stretton with names of Secretary and contact details

Allotment Gardens Association	Ben Warren	07779 437871	greenhillsallotments@gmail.com
All Stretton Amateur Dramatics Society			allstrettondrama@outlook.com
All Stretton Village Hall	allstrettonvillagehall@gmail.com		www.allstrettonvillagehall.org.uk
All Stretton History Society	Ruth Grafton	723187	janegra@waitrose.com
All Stretton Village Society	Caroline Crump	723283	carolinecrump68@icloud.com
Alzheimers Carers' Support (Mayfair)	Jackie Pennington	722077	[Monthly, 2nd Friday, 2.00pm] www.mayfaircentre.org
Amnesty, Church Stretton Group	Barbara Parnell	720040	
Ancient Greek Study Group	David Langslow	723538	stretlang@gmail.com
Archers: Bowmen of Caradoc	Ros Healy		Roshealy1@gmail.com
Archers, Long Mynd	Sue Williamson	722767	sue@chelmickforge.co.uk
Army Cadet Force	Lt Wheelden	01743 231779	info.shropshireacf@rfca.org.uk
ArtsAlive (Church Stretton)	Michael Walker	720132	fontenay1@btinternet.com
Arts Festival, Church Stretton & South Shropshire		07763 985707	info@strettonfestival.org.uk
Badminton Club (Monday 8-10pm)	James Kirkwood	07979 474326	home@jameskirkwood.co.uk
Badminton Club (Junior and Adult, Wednesday)	Alan Fox	725588	alandavidfox@live.co.uk
Beacon (Activities and Care at Mayfair)	Joy King	722077	(Mayfair) www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Books (Mayfair/Health & Wellbeing Centre)	Sue Hird	724235	smhird@btinternet.com
Bowling Club, Church Stretton Probus	Glyn Morgan	722388	crocrus2@tiscali.co.uk
Bowling Club, Indoor	Alan Mileson	723999	amileson@lineone.net
Bowling Club, Ladies'	Lucy Taylor	720115	
Breathing Space (Singing for health and wellbeing)	Kate Buttolph	720358	kate@playonperformingarts.co.uk
Bridge Club (Thursday 1-5pm, All Stretton Vlge Hall)	Maxine Lainchbury	07971 191664	www.bridgewebs.com/churchstretton
Bridleways Association, Long Mynd and District	Lynn Townsend	722667	
Brownies, Church Stretton	Judy Russell	724056	davejudy1@googlemail.com
Busy Bees Preschool	Church Stretton School	722209	
Camera Club, Long Mynd	Amanda Page		secretary@longmyndcameraclub.co.uk
Cancer Research UK	Sue Toghill	722713	susantoghill@outlook.com
Cancer Support Group, Stretton	Lesley McIntyre	723427	
Chamber of Trade, Church Stretton	Stuart Wright	722237	
Chess Club, Church Stretton	Tom Williamson	722767	tswilliamson337@gmail.com
Choral Society, Stretton	Mark Tocknell	722969	strettonchoral@gmail.com; www.strettonchoral.org.uk
Churches Together	Canon Rosamund Seal	07925 969821	rosamund.seal@gmail.com
Citizens Advice Bureau			at the Library, by appointment only: 0808 278 7894
Civic Society, The Strettons	Janet Martin	722361	martin1947@btinternet.com
Climate Care, Stretton	David Matthews	07528 493181	
Country Market (ex WI)	Ann Lloyd	07889 143057	or (01694) 731274
Credit Union	c/o Mayfair	722077	(Mayfair) [Wednesdays] www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Cricket Club, Church Stretton	Rob Whittall	07967 571044	churchstrettoncricketclub@gmail.com
Croquet Club	Joe Manifold	01588 660534	cscroquet@gmail.com; croquet-websites.org.uk/churchstretton
Cub Scouts, Longmynd (Tuesday Pack)	Adele Parker	07742 718691	adelemstyles@gmail.com
Cub Scouts, Longmynd (Wednesday Pack)	Andrew Spurling	723429	aspurling@btinternet.com
Cycle Group, Stretton Steadies	Clive & Fiona Hunt		strettonsteadies@gmail.com
Darts, Church Stretton and District League	Mark Davies (Verd)	07588 517955	verddavies72@gmail.com
Dementia Carers' Support	Emma Wilde	01743 341800	
Dominoes, Church Stretton and District League	Martin Salisbury	723253	angiewalshaw@hotmail.com
Explorer Scouts	Angie Walshaw	723477	[Thursday mornings] www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Extend (Gentle Exercise) Mayfair	Nicola Daniels	722077	pamallsop@churchway.plus.com
Fitness Instructor	Pam Allsop	723899	pamallsop@churchway.plus.com
Fitness for the Young at Heart	Pam Allsop	723899	terri@artsalive.co.uk
Flicks in the Sticks (All Stretton)	Kate Latchford	723378	aahall2002@yahoo.co.uk
Flicks in the Sticks (Church Stretton)	Andrew Hall	07508 072206	nick@eloc.eclipse.co.uk
Football Club, Church Stretton Town	Nick Cole	724362	enquiries@csmf.co.uk
Football Club, Magpies (5-16 years old)		07816 686139	contact@redrovers.org.uk
Football Club, Stretton Red Rovers (6-15 years old)	Martin Watts	723543	tim.parker111@gmail.com
Footpath maintenance volunteers (Parish paths Partnership)	Tim Parker	07493 659514	www.strettonlibraryfriends.org.uk
Friends of Church Stretton Library	Sheila Davies	723455	actonscottgc@gmail.com
Gardening Club, Acton Scott	Terri Clegg	781572	evedapling@waitrose.com
Gardening Club, Church Stretton & District	Evelyn Dapling	723648	soph.burgoyne@gmail.com
Girlguiding, Church Stretton District (general)	Sophie Burgoyne	07527 033510	office@midlandgliding.club
Gliding, Midlands Gliding Club Ltd	Office	01588 650206	secretary@churchstrettongolfclub.co.uk
Golf Club	James Townsend	722281	churchstrettongoodneighbours.org.uk
Good Neighbours Care Group	Office	724242	janehurst77@hotmail.co.uk
Guides, Church Stretton	Jane Hurst	771622	kate@playonperformingarts.co.uk
Harmony In The Hills	Kate Buttolph	07974 382989	mlwatts@yahoo.co.uk
Hockey Club, Stretton Juniors (5-15 years old)	Martin Watts	723543	
Hope Bowdler Hand Bell Ringers	Ruth Jenkins	724919	
Hope Bowdler Village Hall	Evelyn Dapling	723648	
Horse Show, Church Stretton	Sarah Davies	771370	daviesblackhurst@aol.com
Interfaith Forum, South Shropshire	Canon Noel Beattie	725530	
Judo, Junior	Roger Houston	01743 358415	RogerHoustonJudo@aol.com
Karate Club	Dave Shephard	724212	daveshepard1379@gmail.com
Keep Fit, Stretton	Lisa Ryan	751369	
Languages Group	David Langslow	723538	stretlang@gmail.com
Leebotwood Village Hall	Colin Bore	07970 523591	cbore@btinternet.com
Leisure Centre, Church Stretton	Sue Wells	720051	info@teme-leisure.co.uk
Lesbian & Bisexual Women, Border Women Social Group			borderwomen.net
Line Dancing	Dave Bishop	07527 264846	southerncrossldc@gmail.com
Lions Club, Middle Marches	Brian Dawson	01584 831508	thefirs38@btinternet.com
Little Stretton Village Society	Linda Moores	720130	lindatyke@hotmail.com
Local History Group	Madeline Haigh	723627	csalhg@outlook.com
Long Mynd Adventure Camp	Peter Jenkins	724919	
Martial Arts, Freestyle	Phil Hatton	07852 961675	freestylmartiaarts.com/stretton
Masonic Lodge (Caer Caradoc)	Charlie Pearson	07966 138010	secretary@caercaradocclodge.org.uk
Masonic Lodge (Longmynd)	Charles Hennell	01584 856716	charles@hennell.net; www.longmyndlodge.org.uk
Mayfair Health Walks	John Goyne	723914	johngoyne@btinternet.com
MAYSI Project (Mayfair Supporting Independence)	Janet Williams/Shaz Malins	722077	maysi@mayfaircentre.org.uk
More Singers, The	Alistair Auld	07981 399482	
Mothers' Union, Church Stretton	Diana Coles	723548	
Music: Strettons Classical Music Group	Barbara Hall	724578	
Netball Club, Flames			hello@flamesnetball.co.uk; www.flamesnetball.co.uk
Netball Club, Stretton Scarlett's	Amy	07837 596297	
Ornithological Society, Stretton Branch	David John	724772	poolbrook12@gmail.com
Parkinson's UK	Hilary Bowman	07823 523696	hjb Bowman@live.com
Photography, Marches Independent	Geoff Taylor	723301	gtaylor.photo@btinternet.com
Pickleball Club	Carol	07803 329106	
Pilates (exercise)	Sandra Liebrecht	781660	selenaorme@yahoo.co.uk

Play On Performing Arts	Kate Buttolph	07974 382989	kate@playonperformingarts.co.uk
Pride of Place, Church Stretton	Trevor Halsey		trevorhalsey@btinternet.com
Probus, Strettondale	Graham Heath	07539 329832	heath@knollcrest.co.uk
Rail User's Association, Church Stretton	Alison Bradley	722138	strettonrailusers.org.uk
Radio Control Model Club, Church Stretton	Tim Goodwin	720392	tmgdwn@gmail.com
RAF Roundel Club	John L Davies	724703	
Rainbows, Church Stretton	Judy Russell	724056	davejudy1@googlemail.com
Ramblers, The South Shropshire Group	Darren	07837 021138	
Rangers (Girl Guides), Church Stretton	Amy Burgoyne	07508 863775	amyburgoyne2001@gmail.com
Readers Group at the Library	Felicity	722535	churchstretton.library@shropshire.gov.uk
RNLI	Brian Bradley	722138	b.glenmoar@gmail.com
Rotary Club of Church Stretton	Marcus Cash	07957 133316	marcuscash205@msn.com
Royal British Legion	Les Mackey	724992	sulesmackey@btinternet.com
Rugby Club, Church Stretton Samurai	Martyn Longhurst		martynlonghurst@hotmail.com
Rushbury and Cardington WI	Kaye Smith	771554	
Save the Children	Ann Hurst	771622	ann.hurst46@gmail.com
Scottish Dancers, Stretton	David Thomas	722107	
Scouts, 2nd Longmynd Group	Terry Davies	723477	mrterrydavies@hotmail.com
Scrappies - Shropshire Children's Scrapstore		328508	info@scrappies.org
Singers, The More Singers	Alistair Auld	07981 399482	alistairauld@gmail.com
Soaring Association, Long Mynd (model gliders)	Tim Goodwin	720392	info@lmsa.org.uk www.lmsa.org.uk
Soaring Club, Long Mynd (Hangliding & paragliding)	Tim Dunn	01588 672919	coaching@longmynd.org
Stepping Stones Nursery	Anne Arkwright	722341	
Stretton Players	Simon Cleaton	07510 390981	strettonplayers@gmail.com
Stretton Pool Action	David Betton	07977 221171	dmbetton@googlemail.com
Stretton Stitchers	Katy Webster	720200	or Frances Williams 722656
Stretton Strummers	Dave Wilkinson	07554 624662	
Stroke Group, Church Stretton and District	Hilary Parker	723419	
Swing Band, Stretton	Jamie Wrench	723923	jamie.wrench@lineone.net
Table Tennis, Church Stretton			churchstrettontabletennisclub@gmail.com
Table Tennis, Leebotwood	Will Priestley	724223	
Table Tennis, Rushbury	Ian Pennington	771410	ianpennington133@btinternet.com
T'ai Chi	Marc Lacey	722077	(Mayfair) www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Taiko Drumming	James Barrow	720169	James@taikowest.com
Taoist Tai Chi, Longmynd	Jo London	01743 369787	jolondon@hotmail.co.uk
Tennis Club	Claire Hatfield	720123	mail@strataassociates.co.uk
Theatre & Concert Group, Stretton	Jenny or Graham Heath	722216	heath@knollcrest.co.uk; strettontheatreandconcert.net
Thursday Lunch Club (Ley Gardens)	Margaret Hamer	722407	or Dawn Longmore 722328
Tree Group, Church Stretton	Hilary Hymas	723208	hilaryhymas7@gmail.com
United Nations Association, Shropshire Branch	Ruth Davies	724304	daviescs@btinternet.com
University of the Third Age (U3A)	Lesley Brown	724330	u3asites.org.uk/churchstretton/contact
Upright and Active (falls prevention strength & balance)	c/o Mayfair	722077	(Mayfair) www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Walking Football	Ken Willis	328514	gordonwillis@go-plus.net
Wildlife Group, SACWG, Community	Julie Cowley	722310	sacwg@shropscwgs.org.uk
Wildlife Trust, Strettons Branch	Wally Blake	724040	
Women's Institute, CS Marmaladies WI	Carol Greswell	07803 581580	marmaladieswi@gmail.com
Women's Inst., Rushbury and Cardington	Kaye Smith	771554	kayerubetta.smith@btinternet.com
Women's Institute, All Stretton	Jean Huff	723706	allstrettonwi@gmail.com
Yoga (Mayfair)	c/o Mayfair	722077	(Mayfair) www.mayfaircentre.org.uk
Youth @ St Laurence's	David Andrews	724224	david.andrews@strettonparish.org.uk

Additions and corrections to this list should be addressed to: The Editor, Stretton Focus, by email: editor@strettonfocus.co.uk

Church Stretton Town Councillors

Town Clerk: Nicky Hook; **RFO:** Gillian Bailey; **Office Hours:** Monday to Friday 10.00am - 1.00pm and 2.00 - 4.00pm
Council Office: 60 High Street, Church Stretton SY6 6BY. Tel: 722113, Fax: 723608. email: reception@churchstretton-tc.gov.uk

South Ward		North Ward		Little Stretton Ward	
John Burns	07767 477334	Nicola Carter	07581 300498	Colin Carson	722784
Ryan Foulkes	07528 372471	John Luck	725596	Julie Lawton	723750
Charlie Jones	07971 523125	Bob Welch	722998	All Stretton Ward	
Mark Morris	722741	(Vacancy)		Andy Munro (Mayor)	725554
Andrew Williams	07577 516453			Helen Stowell	07879 848168

Shropshire (Unitary) Councillors for the Area

David Evans 01588 672179 email: david.evans@shropshire.gov.uk
Hilary Luff 07890 056084 email: hilary.luff@shropshire.gov.uk

MP for Ludlow Constituency: Philip Dunne, 54 Broad St, Ludlow, SY8 1GP, 01584 872187.

StrettonDale Local Joint Committee (Details pending)

Responsibilities for Public Services

Domestic rubbish: Shropshire Council	0345 678 9007	Street cleaning: Shropshire Council	0345 678 9006
Electricity power failure:	105	Gas emergencies	0800 111999
Last collection at Family Shopper letter box Weekdays 6.00pm, Saturdays 12.00 noon, No collection Sundays and Bank Holidays			

Some useful numbers

Medical Centre		Church Stretton School	722209
appointments and general enquiries	722127	St Lawrence C of E Primary School	722682
out of hours	111	Sports and Leisure Centre (Teme Leisure)	720051
NHS Choices	111	Church Stretton Library	722535
Ring and Ride	720025	South Shropshire Furniture Scheme	01584 877751
Shropshire Council (Shrewsbury)	0345 678 9000		

Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 783 1359 - 24hr support
Visitor Information Centre and Shropshire Customer First Point: 723133
South Shropshire Housing Association: 0300 3031190 (Housing and Support)

Police - Non emergency only 101, Emergency 999

Church Stretton Safer Neighbourhood Team: Sergeant Jenni Price; Constable Elliot Maslen: 07814 944270

Team contact: 101 ext 7704505 or cscs.snt@westmercia.police.uk

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs):

Daz Barnett: 07866 215007; David Baron: 07870 163156

Neighbourhood Watch Crime stoppers: 0800 555 111. Twitter: @SouthShropCops

Police Station closed, but there is a 24 hour telephone service there connected to another centre.

Support at Mayfair Community Centre - run by the Community for the Community 722077

For activities and support groups at Mayfair, please refer to the entries under 'Clubs and Societies' and to their advertisement.

Accommodation see Hotels, B&B, Self Catering	Clock & Watch Repair Adrian Donnelly Clock Repairs... 2	Garden Design, Services, Supplies Ben Carter Landscaping..... 41 Homden Excavations..... 37 Integral Gardens..... 41 John Stephens Services..... 41 Keith Warrington..... 37 Mike Russell Designs 37 Paul Forrester..... 15 Paul Tinsley 16 Peter Tipton 41 Shropshire Lawn Co..... 37 Tidy Garden..... 37 Unique Landscapes..... 41	Outdoor Clothing and Equipment The Outdoor Depot..... 49
Accountants and Bookkeeping James, Holyoak & Parker..... 50 RLW Accountants 50	Clothes Entertaining Elephants 49	Garden Machinery Newington Garage..... 46	Painters & Decorators Andrew Webster..... 37 D R Tipton Painter & Decorator 43 DWS Property Services..... 37 E B Jones 37 G H Jones & Son..... 37 Paul Forrester..... 15
Architects, Town Planning Batch Valley Design..... 21 Christopher Roscoe Assocs 21	Coaches Caradoc Coaches..... 46	Hairdressers, Health, Beauty Anthony's Hair Studio 43 Health & Beauty Clinic..... 29 Katerina White..... 43 Nails by Nancy..... 43 Shampers 43	Pest Control Chris Sansom Pest Control 60 Keith Warrington..... 37
Bathrooms see Kitchens, Bathrooms	Community Centre Mayfair..... 10	Health, Therapies see also Chiroprodists & Physiotherapists Birch Tree Reflexology 25 Bodylogic Mobile Massage..... 29 Cate Gowlett..... 25 Mayfair..... 10 Shropshire Acupuncture 25	Pet Food and Pet Care John R Thomas 6
Beauty, Slimming see Hairdressers, Health, Beauty	Computing, Graphic and Web Design Jason Gough 2 Nic Sansom 2 Stretton Internet..... 2 Webbex Technical Services..... 2	Hobbies Books by Moonlight 6 Burway Books..... 6 Harold's Toy Store 6 Long Mynd Music Academy..... 6 Peter Youngs Photography..... 10 Philip Hooper 6 The Prolific Crafter..... 6	Pharmacy Hillside Pharmacy..... 43
Bed & Breakfast, Self Catering see Hotels, B&B, Self Catering	Decorators see Painters, Decorators	Home & Garden Harold's Toy Store 6 The Prolific Crafter..... 6	Physiotherapists Chris Turner..... 43 Marion Murdoch..... 43 Physio Pilates..... 43
Bookshop Books by Moonlight 6 Burway Books..... 6	DIY & Hardware Cyril Bason Hardware..... 41 Mynd DIY..... 41	Home Furnishings Abbey Carpets..... 6 Louise Watney..... 6	Piano Tuner and Repairs Philip Hooper 6
Builders, Plant & Equipment A J Lewis-Price 16 A Morgan 15 A.2.Z Construction..... 16 E J & G J Groom 15 Homden Excavations..... 37 Joe Drury 16 K J Morris 15 Keith George 16 Mark Terry..... 15 Morris Maintenance 41 Paul Tinsley 16 Richard Sherratt Builders 15 Telford Building Contractors 16	Domestic Appliances & Repairs Continental Fireplaces..... 2 Norman Jones 2	House and Garden Clearance Peter Tipton 41	Plumbers, Heating Gary Paris..... 25 Gasco 25 Homefix 29 J Morris 25 Lee Brown 29 Morris Maintenance 41 Pete Carroll..... 25 Peter Floyd 29 Whitfield Plumbing..... 29 Whiting Heating 25
Cafés see Restaurants, Cafés, Pubs	Electrical Services, Lighting AMP Electrical 46 Boxall's Electrician..... 46 Charles Ephraim..... 46 M C Electrical 46 Stephen Morgan 46	Insurance see Financial Services, Insurance	Printing, Copying, Photo Products Craven Design & Print..... 49 Stretton Print & Supplies 49
Cards and Gifts Entertaining Elephants 49 Stretton Print & Supplies 49	Estate Agents Bluestone..... 32 Miller Evans 32 Samuel Wood 32 Wrights Estate Agents 32	Keep Fit see Health, Therapies, Keep Fit	Restaurants, Cafés, Pubs Berry's 49 Royal Oak, Cardington 49
Care - Homes and At Home Bluebird Care..... 10	Event Venues Eaton Manor..... 50	Kitchens, Bathrooms A J Lewis-Price 16 A.2.Z Construction..... 16 Homefix 29 Lee Brown 29 Mark Terry..... 15 Paul Forrester..... 15	Skip Hire John Stephens Services..... 41 Peter Tipton 41
Carpenters & Joiners E J & G J Groom 15 Keith George 16 Mark Terry..... 15 Mike Webster..... 15 Paul Forrester..... 15	Employment Bluebird Care..... 21	Mobility Stretton Mobility Store 10	Solicitors FBC Manby Bowdler..... 21 PCB Solicitors..... 21
Carpets Abbey Carpets..... 6	Financial Services & Insurance Caleb Roberts..... 50 Philippa Gee Wealth Mngment. 50 Wrights Yorkshire Building Soc. 50		Storage Churton Self-Storage..... 60
Catteries and Kennels see Pet Food, Pet Care	Florist John R Thomas 6 Shropshire Flower Company 6		Sweep Shropshire Sweep 60 Stanton Sweeps 60
Chemist Hillside Pharmacy..... 43	Food, Delicatessen Entertaining Elephants 49 Saxtons Deli 49		Taxi Church Stretton Taxi 46
Chiroprodists Caroline Crump 43	Funeral Arrangements A S Morris and Son..... 10 South Shropshire Remembrance Park 10		Watches, Batteries, Straps The Outdoor Depot..... 49
Cleaning and House Care Chris Sansom Pest Control 60 Cleanrite Services 60 Gordon Ribbons 60 In Depth Cleaning..... 60 Shaw Clean 60 Shropshire Sweep 60 Stanton Sweeps 60	Garage Services Burway Garage..... 46 Central Garage..... 46 MOT Clinic..... 46		Windows A Morgan 15
			Window Cleaning Handyman Services 60

What's On in the Strettons in January

If you wish to make contact with societies and groups, please see the list in the yellow pages

The 'What's On' diary may also be viewed for free on our website: www.strettonfocus.co.uk.

Any amendments and entries too late for the print edition may be added to the website WO by emailing us at editor@strettonfocus.co.uk

WEEKLY EVENTS/MEETINGS:

Babies and Toddlers Group

A friendly, informal group for babies and children until they start school. Children to be accompanied by a responsible adult. Parents-to-be are also welcome. Every **Wednesday** in term time 10am-12noon Methodist Church Hall

Badminton Club

Including Junior, Adult and Disability Badminton. All abilities welcome from age 7 to adult. Sports wheelchairs and rackets available free of charge. Info from Alan Fox 07977 060303 Every **Wednesday** in term time 6.30-8pm CS Leisure Centre

Balance/Strength: Be Strong Be Steady

Improve your balance and strength with Wendy Southorn. £7 per session (cheaper block booking price available). Every **Tuesday**. Book at Mayfair. 12.15-1.15pm Mayfair

Board Game Afternoon

A free, relaxed afternoon with a wide selection of board games to choose from. Every **Monday** from 8th Jan 2-4pm Mayfair Lunch Hub

Bridge Club, The Strettons

Duplicate Bridge in a relaxing atmosphere for players of all standards. Teaching for those new to the game. Visitors are welcome. Contact: Maxine Lainchbury 07971 191664 www.bridgewebs.com/churchstretton Every **Thursday** 1-5pm All Stretton VH

Chess Club, CS

All ages and abilities welcome. Contact: Tom Williamson 722767 Please note change to day/venue. Every **Monday** 7.30pm Bucks Head, CS

Christian Meditation (online via Zoom)

We are a non-denominational group welcoming everyone. Christian Meditation is a modern name for a form of contemplative prayer found in early Christian monastic communities and in other major faith traditions. More information from John Dennison: 1johndennison@gmail.com Every **Tuesday** and **Thursday** 8pm via Zoom

Christian Meditation (meeting in person)

Details as above. More information from Janice Hicking: 07889 850265 or email janice@hicking.co.uk Every **Friday** 2pm URC Vestry

Craft Café at Mayfair

A free group for anyone to drop in, try different crafts, and meet new people. No need to book. Call Mayfair for more info. Every **Wednesday** 10am-12.30pm Mayfair Art Room

Cuppa and Chat at the Methodist Church

Members of the public are invited to drop in for tea, cake and conversation. A good way to meet friends and make new friends. Every **Wednesday** 2.30-4pm Methodist Church Hall

Dancing: Learn 2 Jive

Great fun, improves fitness, no partner needed, join anytime, easy to learn and no experience needed. £6 per class. Contact Matt or Sarah: 01989 750354, info@coolmovesdance.co.uk, www.coolmovesdance.co.uk Every **Monday** 7.30pm beginners 8.30pm intermediates SHI

Dancing: Scottish

Former and new dancers welcome to this lively social evening, where tuition and support is available. No previous knowledge needed, so why not come and give it a go? Contact 722107 Every **Monday** 7.30-9.30pm All Stretton VH

Energy Advice from Stretton Climate Care

Our knowledgeable volunteers will be on hand to offer advice on a wide range of issues to do with energy saving, renewable technology and the growing climate emergency. Info from Jon Cooke: 720353 Drop-in session, every **Thursday** 10am-12noon HWBC

Family History Research

Our history volunteers will guide you in your local and family history research. Free internet access to Ancestry. These sessions are open to everyone. Every **Thursday** 1-4pm CS Library

Football: CS Football Club

The team plays in the Salop Leisure Football League. Home games are played at Russell's Meadow and kick-off is 2pm. Home fixtures in Jan: 20th Jan Drayton Town AFC 2pm Russell's Meadow

Football: Three Touch Passing

All over 50s welcome. Contact Ken: 328514 Every **Wednesday** 5-6pm CS Leisure Centre

Handbell Ringers, Hope Bowdler

New members are most welcome; you do not need to be able to read music. Contact: Ruth Jenkins: 724919 Every **Thursday** 2pm Hope Bowdler Village Hall

Knit & Natter Group at Ley Gardens

Would-be knitters welcomed. Details from: 722328 Every **Monday** 2.30pm Ley Gardens, SY6 6GA

LEGO Club at CS Library

Suitable for all ages (under 8s must be accompanied by an adult). No booking required. We also have DUPLO and Mega Bloks for little ones. Every **Saturday** 2-3.30pm CS Library

Music: Stretton Strummers Ukulele Group

All abilities welcome to our ukulele group to enjoy playing and singing. Every **Thursday** 10am-12noon at The Scout Hut

Junior Netball Club, Flames

We have spaces for players in school years 4-6. See main article for details, p38. Training is on **Fridays** 5.30-6.30pm (term time only, September-April) at CS Leisure Centre. We also cater for school years 7-13 and we are always looking for potential new players. Training sessions run between 6.30-7.30pm and 7.30-9pm, depending on age group. **Fridays** in term time, at CS Leisure Centre.

Continued overleaf...

What's On continued

Netball Club, Stretton Scarletts

A fun, sociable club with the focus on enjoyment and taking part, for players of all standards, ages (18 years plus) and experience. £3 pp
Contact Amy: 07837 596297
Every **Tuesday**
7.30-8.30pm CS Leisure Centre

Pickleball Club, CS

Pickleball is a fun sport that combines many elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis. £4 per hour.
Contact Carol: 07803 329106
Every **Monday**
7-8pm (or 9pm) CS Leisure Centre

Rhyme Time

Fun, songs, stories and rhymes for children under 5 years of age.
Booking may be required.
Every **Tuesday**
10.30-11am CS Library

Singing: Breathing Space Singing Groups

Singing for health and wellbeing.
1. Dementia-friendly group – open to people with care needs plus their carer (carer comes free). 1.30-2.30pm
2. Wellbeing group – supporting stress relief and chronic conditions. 3-4.15pm
Fees per session: £5 trial session, £10 thereafter or £7.50 (block booking rate)
Contact Kate: 720358 or 07974 382989 or kate@playonperformingarts.co.uk
Every **Wednesday** at Mayfair

Singing: Harmony In The Hills

Stretton's Natural Voice community choir, welcoming all who would love to sing. People who have lost confidence or have been told they can't sing are especially valued.
Contact Kate: 07974 382989 or kate@playonperformingarts.co.uk
Every **Thursday**
7.30-9pm Mayfair Activity Room

Singing: Stretton Choral Society Rehearsals

New members welcomed. No need to book in or audition – just arrive at about 7.20pm and introduce yourself to a committee member. Although having basic music-reading experience helps, you do not need to be able to sight-sing or to read music fluently.
Every **Thursday**, from 11th Jan.
7.30-9.30pm URC

Strength Balance and Flex with Nina

Gentle approach to exercise: no jumping or floor work. Ideal for 55years plus. Standard class includes more seated exercises. £7 per session (cheaper block booking price available).
Book with Mayfair. Every **Thursday**
12.15-1.15pm Mayfair

Strength Balance and Flex PLUS with Nina

Details as above. Plus class is mainly standing exercises, but still no floor work.
Every **Thursday**
1.30-2.30pm Mayfair

Tai Chi with Marc

Low impact, gentle exercise that helps build strength, coordination and balance, and relax both mind and body.
Every **Friday**
9.30-10.45am Mayfair

Thursday Lunch Club (Good Neighbours)

Join us for a two-course lunch with tea and coffee for £8. Everyone welcome.
Contact Lin Brown 781634 or Good Neighbours 724242
Every **Thursday**
12noon Ley Gardens, Lawley Close, SY6 6GA

Whist Drives at Westhope

Come and join our friendly band of whist players for a light-hearted, sociable evening. £3 entry.
All abilities welcome.
Every **Monday**
7.15pm Westhope VH, SY7 9JL

Yoga at Mayfair

With Liz Curtis. £7.50 per session (cheaper block booking price available). Small class for all levels of experience. Beginners welcome. Includes floor work. Contact Mayfair: 722077
Every **Monday**
5.15-6.45pm Mayfair

Chair Yoga at Mayfair with Mary

For anyone who is unable to practise yoga on a floor mat. Gentle exercise and relaxation in a seated position or standing with a chair for support.
Every **Wednesday**
10.30-11.45am Mayfair

Yoga at Westhope with Sue Pugh

Experienced tutor. Numbers are limited.
Enquiries: 07860 447397
Every **Wednesday**
4.15-5.15pm Westhope VH, SY7 9JL

Yoga for Sustainable Happiness

Deeply relaxing classes. Beginners welcome.
Contact Grace: 07903 054577 or gongs@gracessandels.com
£8 per class for block bookings
Tuesdays: 7-8.30pm Rushbury VH, Wall under Heywood. (4 Jan-22 Feb)
Thursdays: 10-11.30am URC (9 Jan-27 Feb)

Yoga: Vita Bona Yoga at CS Library

Booking: Sue 07432 349933
Every **Monday**
9.30-10.30am Improvers
11-11.45am Chair Yoga

Yoga with Becca

£7 per class or £36 block of 6 classes.
Contact Becca on 07905 236805 or yogawithbecca@hotmail.com
Tues: 6.30-7.30pm Mayfair
Wed: 9.30-10.30am Scout Hut
Wed: 6.30-7.30pm SHI
Thurs: 7-8am Scout Hut
Thurs: 9.30-10.30am Leebotwood VH

Youth Club For School Years 6 to 7

A club for ages 10-12.
Sessions are staffed by trained and DBS-checked youth workers. Contact: Richard 01743 430005 or email at info@sya.org.uk
Every **Tuesday** in term time
4-5.30pm Pavilion, Russell's Meadow

Youth Club For School Years 8 to 11

A relaxed and inviting space for ages 12-16 to meet up outside of school hours to participate in a range of activities or just chat. Sessions are staffed by trained and DBS-checked youth workers. Contact: Richard 01743 430005 or email at info@sya.org.uk
Every **Tuesday** in term time
6-7.30pm Pavilion, Russell's Meadow

Saturday Morning 'Winter Warmer'

You'll find a warm welcome, hot drink, and a bacon butty. Drop by for ten minutes or stay for the whole morning. There will also be games, jigsaws, and the daily papers to read. All welcome.
Available from 13th Jan until March
10am-12noon St Laurence's Parish Centre

What's On continued

GENERAL DIARY:

Note: Eagle-eyed readers will notice that we have the same film, *The Great Escaper* showing at Acton Scott, Church Stretton and Hope Bowdler this month.

2 TUESDAY

Library Reopens

CS library reopens at 9.30am today, after the Christmas/New Year break.

3 WEDNESDAY

CS Amnesty Group

Meet first Wednesday of the month. All are welcome; we are a friendly inclusive group. Contact csamnesty@outlook.com 7.30pm SHI

4 THURSDAY

Citizens Advice at CS Library

Trained advisors on hand to give advice. Sessions by appointment, 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month. Book via freephone number 0800 278 7894 (Mon-Fri 10am-4pm) or textphone 18001 0800 144 8884 10am-12noon CS Library

Family Film at Mayfair: *The Bad Guys*

Action comedy from DreamWorks Animation. Adults £3, children £2. Booking is essential: www.mayfaircentre.org.uk/familyfilm 1.30pm Mayfair

5 FRIDAY

Hearing Loss Support Hub

Monthly service, offering hearing aid tube changing, battery collection and advice on hearing aid care. Staffed by NHS audiology trained volunteers. Appointments must be pre-booked: 01743 342168. 10am-12noon Mayfair

u3a Reading Group 1

1st Friday of the month. 2-3pm CS Library

6 SATURDAY

Knit, Crochet and Craft Group

First Saturday of the month. Bring a project to work on in a welcoming, relaxed, supportive environment. No need to book; this will be a drop-in group. All skill levels welcome. 11am-1pm CS Library

8 MONDAY

Coffee Hour Drop-In with CS u3a

Opportunity to chat with a u3a member and find out about our groups. We meet 2nd Monday of the month. 10-11am HWBC

Stretton Stitchers

An informal, friendly sewing group. Info: Katy 720200 or Frances 722656 10am-1pm URC Hall

Stretton Cancer Support Group

We meet every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month for an informal chat with tea/biscuits for anyone to pop in for a chat and who might need some help and support. For more info, contact Jane Potts: 771264 2.30pm HWBC

Royal British Legion 'Drink & Chat' Hour

If you are ex Service or have a connection to the Services and would like to join us, do come along and say hello. Non-RBL members welcome. 5.30-6.30pm King's Arms, SY6 6BY

9 TUESDAY

u3a Writers Group 2

With Jenny O'Shea 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month 2-4pm CS Library

Engaging Issues Talk

With Nicola Jennings, political cartoonist: 'Caricatures – the serious business of satire' To find out more or see full details of this season of talks, visit our website: www.engagingissues.org.uk We ask for a £3 donation per talk. 7.30pm URC

RSPB South Shropshire Local Group Talk

Harriet Carty: 'Caring for God's Acre' Harriet is a well know conservationist and will talk about the value of churchyards in preserving our flora and fauna. Members £2, Visitors £5 Enquiries to Carol Wood 07807 068304 7.30pm Diddlebury VH SY7 9DH

10 WEDNESDAY

CS Dementia Friends Memory Café

Free event for all those living with dementia and their carers/loved ones. Each month has a different theme, so join us for chat, some fun, some reminiscing and of course tea and cake! No need to book. 1-3pm at CS Library

C.A.M.E.O. Meeting

Come and share an Answered Prayer or Happy Memory 2.30pm Parish Centre

Flicks in the Sticks: Hope Bowdler

The Great Escaper (2023)
Cert: 12a RT: 1 hr, 36 mins
Admission: adults £5, children £2.50
Pay on the door. Tea/coffee, home-made cakes and ice creams available in the interval. Enquiries: 721376 7.30pm Hope Bowdler VH

11 THURSDAY – 6 FEBRUARY

Exhibition: The Story Room

Interactive exhibition by Louise Jackson and Katie Waller
Suitable for pre-school groups, schools, children and families. Learn about the work of authors and illustrators. Find out about the process of writing a book and fuel your imagination for telling stories! CS Library

11 THURSDAY

Monthly Drop-In Council Surgery

With Councillor Hilary Luff. This regular surgery will now be held on the 2nd Thursday of the month. 9.30-11am CS Library

CS Stroke Support Group

Support for stroke survivors, friends and family. The role of the group is to provide a friendly secure environment where people can chat and feel supported. Meetings take place on the 2nd Thursday of each month. 2-4pm Jubilee Room, Mayfair

u3a Social Meeting

Beat the January Blues! With magician Gareth Jenkins Refreshments will be provided. Church Stretton u3a members free. Visitors welcome £2. 2pm URC Hall

Marmaladies CS WI

Qigong, with Darren Clarke. Have a go at this ancient Chinese art of energy, involving breathing, movement and mindfulness. We welcome new members to join us for creative, informative and discussion sessions. marmaladieswi@gmail.com 7.30pm Mayfair

12 FRIDAY

u3a Writers Group 1

With Lesley Dench 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month 10am-12noon CS Library

Continued overleaf...

What's On continued

13 SATURDAY

Stretton Climate Care Repair Café

Please contact us to book in your item, giving details and a photo if possible: info@strettonclimatecare.org.uk
Walk-ins accepted after 11am.
10am-12noon Scout Hut

CS Ballroom & Sequence Dance Club

Come and enjoy an informal evening of socialising and dance (Ballroom, Latin and Modern Sequence with the odd line dance thrown in!) £7 per person.
All abilities welcome, with or without a partner. Bring your own refreshments.
Info from Christine: 723386
8-10.30pm SHI

15 MONDAY

CS Area Local History Group (CSALHG)

'Shropshire's archaeological and landscape history through the centuries presented by Dr Kate Miller. Non-members £4, pay on the door.
Talks are popular so please arrive in plenty of time for the 2pm start.
Enquiries to 723627
2pm URC Hall

16 TUESDAY

All Stretton Women's Institute

Evening of games.
Email: allstrettonwi@gmail.com
7.30pm All Stretton VH

Flicks in the Sticks Acton Scott

The Great Escaper (2023)
Cert: 12a RT: 1 hr, 36 mins
Tickets: £5 adult, £3 child.
Ample parking and level access
Enquiries: 781260
7.30pm Acton Scott VH

17 WEDNESDAY

Dementia Awareness Introduction

Short, thought-provoking sessions, intended to introduce the wider public to dementia, explain how it can affect an individual and what you can do to help people living with dementia in our community. Sessions are free.
Email csdementiafriends@gmail.com to reserve a place or leave a message at Mayfair, CS Library or Town Council offices.
10.30am CS Library

FoCSL Talk at CS Library

Sandra Whitlock presents an illustrated talk on the activities that have taken place at High Leasowes during 2023 and the management plans for the future. Entrance fee £5, payable on the door. All proceeds will go to Friends of Church Stretton Library.
2.30pm CS Library

18 THURSDAY

Citizens Advice at CS Library

10am (see Thurs 4th for details)

Flicks in the Sticks Church Stretton

The Great Escaper (2023)
Cert: 12a RT: 1 hr, 36 mins
Tickets £5 adults, £2 under 18s, to include a cup of tea/coffee in the interval. Please pay on the door.
Enquiries: 07508 072206
7.30pm SHI

19 FRIDAY

Stretton Players: *Too Long an Autumn*

See p11 for more details.
Tickets are available from John Vine & Co. and online: www.ticketsource.co.uk.
7.30pm SHI

20 SATURDAY

CS Ballroom & Sequence Dance Club

8pm (please see Sat 13th for details)

22 MONDAY

u3a Family & Social History Group

Members of the public are welcome but will need to join the u3a.
We meet 4th Monday of the month.
2-4pm CS Library

Parkinson's Support Group, CS

We meet on the 4th Monday of the month.
Members, guests and visitors are all welcome.
2.30-4.30pm Jubilee Room, Mayfair

Stretton Cancer Support Group

2.30pm (see Mon 8th for details)

Shropshire Ornithological Society, CS

Nick Martin presents 'Wild Wales'
Preceded by AGM
Refreshments provided. Members free, non-members £3. All welcome.
7.30pm Methodist Hall

23 TUESDAY

Stretton Stitchers

10am (please see Tues 8th for details)

u3a Writers Group 2

With Jenny O'Shea
2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month
2-4pm CS Library

Engaging Issues Talk

With Professor Stephen Hutchings: 'Russia, our evil twin'
To find out more or see full details of this season of talks, visit our website: www.engagingissues.org.uk
We ask for a £3 donation per talk.
7.30pm URC

24 WEDNESDAY

Strettons Classical Music Group Talk

With Richard Walker, whose talk today is on Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninov. See p27 for more details.
Entry to the talk is £3.
Contact: Barbara Hall 724578.
10am-12noon URC (Church not hall)

Churches Together Open Forum

Please do your best to come along and support. Your ideas and suggestions are important.
Please see main article (p39) for service times for the 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' 18th-25th January
7.30pm Parish Centre

26 FRIDAY

u3a Writers Group 1

With Lesley Dench
2nd and 4th Fridays of the month
10am-12noon CS Library

27 SATURDAY

CS Ballroom & Sequence Dance Club

8pm (please see Sat 13th for details)

28 SUNDAY

RSPB South Shropshire Local Group Walk

Secret Hills Discovery Centre, School Road, Craven Arms, SY7 9RS
Meet inside the centre at 10.15am ready to start at 10.30am.

29 MONDAY

Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Strettons Branch


Talk by Sarah Gibson: 'Swifts and us, the life of a bird that sleeps in the sky'
Admission £3 for members, £4 for non-members. No need to book.
Contact: Janet Martin on 722361
7.30pm Mayfair

30 TUESDAY

CS Gardening Club Indoor Meeting

AGM, followed by an introduction to Wisteria Tours (Garden Visit Holidays)
Non-members are welcome £2.50.
2pm SHI

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Ear Syringing Home Visits

In and around Church Stretton - £25

Do your ears feel blocked?

Gentle irrigation using warm water may help
Please call / WhatsApp Sophie Corbett (RGN) on
07361 283231

Please note: you will need to apply olive oil drops for 7 days before this procedure

WHAT'S ON IN EARLY FEBRUARY

2 FRIDAY

National Theatre Live – *Dear England*

A new play by James Graham, directed by Rupert Goold. Gareth Southgate has brought hope back to the England squad but with the nation's expectations upon his shoulders, what happens when football doesn't come home?

Adults £15, U18s £10, refreshments available (donations only)
7pm Mayfair

KEY TO WHAT'S ON ABBREVIATIONS/ADDRESSES:

CS – Church Stretton
CS Leisure Centre – Shrewsbury Rd, SY6 6ER. Tel: 720051
CS Library – Church Street, SY6 6DQ Tel: 722535
CS Medical Practice – Easthope Rd, SY6 6BL. Tel: 722127
St Laurence's Church/CS Parish Centre – Church St, SY6 6DQ
Mayfair – Mayfair Community Centre, Easthope Rd, SY6 6BL. Tel: 722077
HWBC – Health and Wellbeing Centre, next to Mayfair, SY6 6BL
Methodist Church – Watling St South, SY6 7BG

SAPA – Shropshire Academy of Performing Arts, Lutwyche Close, Lutwyche Rd, SY6 6AT
Scout Hut – Church Street, SY6 6DQ
SHI – Silvester Horne Institute, High St, SY6 6BY. Tel: 720132
St Milburga's Catholic Church – Watling St North, SY6 7AR
URC – United Reformed Church, High St, SY6 6BY
VH – Village Hall
VIC – Visitor Information Centre, in library, see above.
Contact Numbers – only numbers OUTSIDE the CS dialling code area (01694) will include the full number.

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