

# STONELEIGH & ASHOW

## *News*



**SEPTEMBER 2023**



## **"The Heart of Stoneleigh"** **Defibrillator**

In the phone box on The Green  
and at Stoneleigh Village hall

**Coordinator**  
David Ellwood  
07785 284482  
Text if no reply

### **Trained Volunteers**

John Churchley	07885 496795
Laura Elliot	07738 222969
David Ellwood	07785 284482
Richard Hancox	07596 276829
Ian Huston	07974 237331
Sharron McEldowney	07760 101775
Claire Neale	07557 675842
Lisa Reay	07716 416320
Martin Smith	07958 955629
Mary Taylor	07890 535506

**Remember: Always ring 999 first!**

**There is also a defibrillator at  
Stoneleigh Village Hall.**



**Cover Image: Flowerpot men tending the Almshouses**

## **HS2 UPDATE**

*This report has been coordinated by Margaret Wallis  
on behalf of the Stoneleigh Action Group (against HS2)*

Road disruptions continue. Work on the Ashow Road leading to Crewe Lane closure, which should have been finished by the 18<sup>th</sup> August is ongoing. There is a forthcoming short-term closure of Stoneleigh Road at the Stareton junction; and also an unspecified but fairly lengthy closure of Dalehouse Lane. These and other measures are causing or will cause inconvenience to residents and traffic.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July, 60 residents responded to HS2 Ltd's invitation to attend a consultation event at Stoneleigh Village Hall. This concentrated on proposals for the A46 compound extension. [These proposals](#) are subject to approval by Warwickshire Council and include a T-junction to access the site, a short distance away from the proposed entrance to the Rugby Farmers Market site, just before the Ashow Road. It is also proposed that the three soil stockpiles be seeded with wildflowers, and the amount of hedgerow removal is to be reduced (but will be replaced when the site is no longer required).

The Stoneleigh [compound extension for HS2](#) (Warwick DC application ref. W23/0880) is a large application and is being unpicked by Anthony Bianco, Martin Smith and various other villagers, but it takes time.

The proposed new T-junction is to allow direct access to the compound area provided that traffic is taken off the B4115 and the crossroads can be reinstated. We have offered professional and constructive comments on the 29 hectare application site.

We hope that the Parish Council will submit comments following the September meeting.

Whilst this sort of thing is going on along the southern part of the route, the Government's Infrastructure and Projects Authority recently concluded that this rail project was "unachievable" in its current form. "There are major issues with project definition, schedule, budget, quality and/or benefits delivery, which at this stage do not appear to be manageable or resolvable".

In similar vein, the recent [New Civil Engineer](#) commented that 'Euston with now only 7 platforms (rather than the planned 11 for HS2 ) is no longer fit for purpose. Yet HS2 Ltd. seems to carry on regardless!!

On a related note, there are further calls for sites to be developed around Stoneleigh as part of the [South Warwickshire Local Plan](#). Please get involved at the next meeting if you have any opinions regarding this (below).

## **Parish Council Notes**

*Becky Maoudis, Parish Clerk*

### **Meetings**

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at Stoneleigh Village Hall at 7pm.

To view the full details of this, and other meetings, including upcoming planning applications, recent crime reports, and Neighbourhood Plan development details, please visit the Parish Council website at: [www.stoneleighshowparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.stoneleighshowparishcouncil.co.uk).

Our July meeting was well attended and lots of issues were raised and discussed including: the drainage in Stoneleigh Village; HGVs still travelling through Stoneleigh and noise from events held at Chesford Field.

It was also reported that residents have contacted Stoneleigh Park Events regarding the noise of some recent events held there. As a result, Stoneleigh Park Events have agreed to liaise with an independent sound consultant to look at how they monitor sound at future events. The Parish Council are happy to support this.

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

The next update meeting for the Neighbourhood Plan will be held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at Ashow Village Club at 7pm.

Our next Environmental Theme group meeting will be held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at Ashow Village Club at 7pm.

### **REQUEST FOR HELP**

The Parish Council have recently taken delivery of a new noticeboard for Stoneleigh Village. We are still looking for someone that will be able to help us with the installation of the notice board. If that's you, or you know someone that can help, please contact the clerk - Thank you!

## **Stoneleigh Male Voice Choir**

*Rod Owen*

The dulcet tones of SMVC are resting following the closing performance of our season, the Annual 'Summer Serenade', held at the Residents' Walled Garden, Stoneleigh Abbey on Sunday 2 July 2023. Some 150 plus souls gathered in a delightful, sunny (if a little windy) setting listening to the Choir perform a range of popular songs from the last couple of centuries under the control (she believes) of Conductor Judy Hadfield and Musical Director Alan Biddle (who is also adept at chasing sheets of wind blown music!). Between the Choir's sets of music, the wonderful mezzo-soprano voice of Guest Artiste Maggie Bartmanus took us delightfully through some standards of the songbook such as 'Night & Day', 'Blue Moon' and a moving performance of 'I Dreamed a Dream'.

The climax of the afternoon was the presentation of two cheques each for £1000 to the chosen local charities, Medics to Medics (provides urgent medical supplies to frontline medics in the Ukraine), and Warwickshire Search & Rescue whose highly trained volunteers assist other emergency services, the money having been raised by the generosity of our audience from both ticket and raffle donations.

SMVC are grateful once again to the Residents and Stoneleigh Abbey for the use of the facilities, a first class venue and John Milne our outstanding Soundman.

We have been invited to sing at a concert put on by the Abbey Hill United Reform Church, Abbey Hill, Kenilworth to support locals charities, at 7.00pm Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023. Tickets are £15 and include some light refreshment (available from Phil Jones, details below). There is also our Annual Carol Concert at Stoneleigh Abbey, at 7.00pm Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

So until we report to you again please take care of yourselves and each other and don't forget singing is a wonderful way to help you enjoy life and keep away those 'blues'! Now where could you possibly do that?

We meet 7.30pm Wednesday evenings in the Village Hall, Stoneleigh, all male voices welcome - there is a Stoneleigh Ladies Choir too, so no excuses!

To get in touch with the Choir please contact Phil Jones on 01926 853511 or email [kathryngjones@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kathryngjones@hotmail.co.uk)

## **Stoneleigh Community Orchard CIC Update**

*Pete Freeman*



The business that surrounds Stoneleigh Community Orchard has not remained static over the summer period. A second batch of some 200 litres of cider was transferred to the Pershore bottling plant on the back of the success and favourable feedback received following our initial 300 litres that went for bottling earlier in the year. This cider is taken from late apple varieties such as Dabinett and Stoke Red and contrasts both in colour and taste from our earlier cider, at 7.1% abv it is also a little stronger. Because of the differences between the two products the board decided to distinguish them on the basis of medium (cider from early apple varieties) and medium dry (cider from our later varieties) which has a higher alcohol content and is therefore a lot drier to drink.

The cyclical nature of production is emphasized by the fact that by the time this article is being read we will have most probably already started to harvest this year's crop and looking at our potential harvest indicates that a number of our apple varieties such as Morgan Sweet and Stoke Red are this year taking a "year out" from producing apples as is normal with biannual varieties of apple. We also seem to be a little short of Perry Pears.

Needless to say the harvest will still represent a major task to complete for the Autumn! So if you feel like a peaceful and therapeutic activity for a late summer or early autumn day then you are most welcome to come down and help bring in the harvest. Simply turn up if you see activity in the Orchard or contact me at the email address below to find out further details, or alternatively check the posts of Amanda Freeman on the [Stoneleigh village Facebook page](#) for dates and times.

Other possibilities that are up and coming are that we intend to send 300 litres of cider off to be processed for Brandy production at East Chase Distillery in Kenilworth. This project is still in its infancy, the final details of which are to be agreed and settled upon. The creation of Apple Brandy occurs through the distillation of cider using equipment called a still. This is a specialist task which is subject to multiple rules and regulations that East Chase farm, already being producers of gin, are geared up to meet.

As this article is being written we hope that Stoneleigh Village duck race will finally get its opportunity to run having been impacted by poor weather at the start of August. It provides the perfect opportunity to meet our client and support base as well as introduce them to our latest range of products.

Orchard Friends' subscriptions and yearly renewals for 2023 remain at £10 and can be made to Pete Freeman as Chairman or to Richard Hancox as Treasurer. Cheques should be made payable to Stoneleigh Village Community Orchard, however why not become a long term friend and set up a direct debit?

Pete Freeman (Chairman),  
5 Church Lane, Stoneleigh.  
[petefreeman773@gmail.com](mailto:petefreeman773@gmail.com)

Richard Hancox (Treasurer)  
[Richard.Hancox@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:Richard.Hancox@highwaysengland.co.uk)

## **The Path - Reflections following a journey along the "Coast to Coast" path.**

*Pete Freeman*

As a younger man at the age of 24, I had walked the Pennine Way which runs some 268 miles from Edale in the Peak district to Kirk Yetholm on the Scottish Borders shouldering a full pack and tent. I had used Wainwright's book called the "Pennine Way Companion" as my guide. Now retired and several decades older I was keen to revisit this pursuit, and Wainwright's advice suggested that the "Coast to Coast" walk would put the Pennine Way to shame in terms of scenic beauty and variety...

To continue reading, head over to the online version of the newsletter at:  
[www.stoneleighvillage.org.uk/clubs-and-organisations/stoneleigh-ashow-news/](http://www.stoneleighvillage.org.uk/clubs-and-organisations/stoneleigh-ashow-news/)

Or Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/1328497264255033](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1328497264255033)

# It's time for a Macmillan Coffee Morning and you're invited

Let's do whatever it takes  
to support people living with cancer.

**Place:** Stoneleigh Village Hall

**Date:** Friday 29th September 2023

**Time:** 10am - 2pm

**Contact:** Amanda Freeman



Simply scan this QR code with your phone  
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## **Stoneleigh History Society**

*Sheila Woolf*

The logo is a horizontal, slightly curved rectangular frame with a light beige background and a thin brown border. Inside the frame, the words "Stoneleigh History Society" are written in a dark red, serif font. The text is centered and occupies most of the frame's width.

### Stoneleigh History Society

In June our speaker was Niamh Carton, the Community Engagement Officer at the newly refurbished St Mary's Guildhall in Coventry. She was full of infectious enthusiasm for her subject, so much so that we immediately arranged a trip to see the building for ourselves. Our guided tour was fascinating, and the cream tea afterwards was enjoyed by everyone - if you haven't yet been, it's thoroughly recommended!

I should like to thank all those who came to the launch of my latest book at Ashow Church on a beautiful summer's evening in June, and those who have since purchased a copy. There is always something new to find out about Stoneleigh's history.

Our programme for 2024 has now been established and we have an enticing assortment of talks, visits and events... details to follow.

Our meeting in September anticipates the Christmas season, as it is all about pantomime. (*"Oh no it's not!"* - Ed.) Sarah Boden of Imagine Theatre, based in Coventry, produces pantomimes throughout the UK, and will tell us about the challenges and excitement of the business. We meet on Tuesday September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm in the village hall - visitors, as ever, are very welcome.

## **Film Night**

*Jane Taylor*

For our next film night, we will be showing:



From the best-selling novel by Delia Owens, comes a captivating mystery. *Where the Crawdads Sing* tells the story of Kya, an abandoned girl who raised herself to adulthood in the dangerous marshlands of North Carolina. For years, rumours of the "Marsh Girl" haunted Barkley Cove, isolating the sharp and resilient Kya from her community. Drawn to two young men from town, Kya opens herself to a new and startling world; but when one of them is found dead, she is immediately cast by the community as the main suspect. As the case unfolds, the verdict as to what actually happened becomes increasingly unclear, threatening to reveal the many secrets that lay within the marsh.

Friday September 8<sup>th</sup> 2023 in Stoneleigh Village Hall

Meet 6.45pm for a 7pm showing

Please can you bring a cup and plate:

Coffee, tea and pastries will still be served in the interval.

Entry price £4.00, to cover refreshments and room hire.

To reserve a place and a pastry call Jane on 01926 858315  
by Wednesday September 6<sup>th</sup>.



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CALL: 02476 639 912

## Stoneleigh Ladies Choir

*Pat Wightman*

We said farewell to Musical Director, Karen Whyte with a lovely party where she was presented with flowers and a gift to mark 10 glorious years with Stoneleigh Ladies Choir.



Although we were very sad to say goodbye to Karen, we are excited to welcome Seb Farrall as our new Musical Director. Having graduated from Coventry University in 2014 with a first-class degree in Music Composition and the Robert Ramskill Composition Award, he began his career as a student conductor and has gone on to work as a conductor, arranger, vocal coach and with orchestral ensembles. He has established a number of choirs in Coventry and Warwickshire and more recently the Coventry City of Culture Orchestra and Festival Chorus. He is also a professional percussionist having performed at the O2 Arena and the Royal Albert Hall.

Both Seb and the choir are starting the year with their first public appearance as part of the "Festival of Joy" on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Plans are also being formulated and music chosen for the choir to sing at Cannon Park Shopping Centre on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

The sell-out concert held in July in aid of CRISIS was a great success with everyone enjoying songs from the shows. We are pleased to say that £640 was raised for this charity. Thank you for your support.

Forthcoming events include another fun Quiz Night with a fish and chips supper and a trip to the Talisman Theatre for an evening with "Sweet Charity" in October.

***The choir starts a new term and a new era when it returns on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> Sept.***

You would be guaranteed a warm welcome if you are thinking of joining us. This would be a really good time to start as we begin our new term with new music and a new Musical Director. If you would like more information, please contact our Secretary, Sharron on [sharronmced@gmail.com](mailto:sharronmced@gmail.com)

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## **Stoneleigh W.I.**

*Liz Sykes*



The speaker at our last meeting was excellent. The title of the talk was “Barber/Surgeon during the Wars of the Roses”. It was informative, interesting and funny.

We have been for lunch on two occasions - The Malt Shovel in Bubbenhall in July and The Anchor at Leek Wootten in August. Both were pleasant and sociable with good food.

We look forward to reconvening in September. Our speakers on September 4<sup>th</sup> are Carol and John Matthews - the subject is their ‘Vintage Garden Store’. This will be at 2pm at the hall.

Also in September we look forward to a Jane Austen tour at Stoneleigh Abbey with Sheila Woolf, followed by afternoon tea.

The craft group will also start again September 4<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am. This project will be “English Paper Piecing”.

We look forward to seeing you at any (or all) of these events!



### **Becky's Cuts**

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Highlights/Foils/cap – 30.00**

*Stoneleigh Village Club*  
*Est. 1856*



## **Stoneleigh Village Club**

### **Duck Race**

"Thank you" to everyone who helped with the planning and organisation of the August 2023 'Stoneleigh Duck Race'. The Committee had to make the difficult decision to postpone at the last minute due to the weather, but we still had a reasonable turnout the following week. As can be seen from the number of ducks feet heading for the meadow, lots of ducks joined in the race this year. They all had a 'quacking time' and are now back in the shed, resting until next year!



The lucky winners were;

1st Prize - Paul Gurney (Duck 743)  
2nd Prize - Tim Sawdon (Duck 154)  
3rd Prize - Mike Baker (Duck 594)

Celebrity Duck - 'The Red Baron.'

We want to make next year's Duck Race even bigger and better! Anyone who would like to arrange a specific event for next year, please let one of the committee know. It will be here before we know it!

Traditionally Duck Race has included other events such as the 'stocks' a dog show with classes such as, 'the waggiest tail' and a 'tug of war' across the river. If you would like to lead one of these or have other ideas, please let us know.

## **New opening hours**

The Club will revert back to pre-Covid opening hours on the 1<sup>st</sup> September.

<b>Monday - Thursday:</b>	<b>7.00 - 11.00 pm</b>
<b>Friday:</b>	<b>4.00 - 11.00 pm</b>
<b>Saturday:</b>	<b>12.00 - 11.00 pm</b>
<b>Sunday:</b>	<b>12.00 - 10.30 pm</b>

with the usual additional 20 minutes drinking up time.

## **Dates for your diary**

Please keep an eye on the information board outside the club for further details. We are currently planning the following:

25/08/2023 - Fish and Chip night in the club

02/09/2023 - Wine and Cheese evening

09/09/2023 - England V Argentina Rugby

(There may be BBQs for sporting events, dependent upon the weather)

13/09/2023 - Ladies Night

15/09/2023 - Marrow Competition judging

17/09/2023 - England v Japan Rugby

23/ 09/2023 - Indian takeaway night

30/09/ 2023 - Adult and Children's bingo

Autumn is fast approaching, and the darker nights are already drawing in. Why not meet your friends or neighbours one night at Stoneleigh Village Club?

Please follow the Club's Facebook page for more news.

[www.facebook.com/stoneleighvillageclub](https://www.facebook.com/stoneleighvillageclub)  
[Stoneleigh.villageclub@gmail.com](mailto:Stoneleigh.villageclub@gmail.com)

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# Stoneleigh Village Club



## COFFEE MORNING

**Thursday  
September 14th**

**10:00am - 11:30am**

*Come along, enjoy a hot drink  
and catch up with friends.  
Everyone is welcome!*

*£1 donation*



## **The Stoneleigh Village Community**

*David Ellwood*

When I moved to Stoneleigh 40 years ago, in 1983, I quickly experienced what village life meant. One Saturday afternoon, we returned home to find a bowl of strawberries in the porch by the back door. When I returned the bowl to the neighbour we guessed was responsible for this kindness a short while later, I offered some payment. "We don't take money from our neighbours, I just thought the strawberries would be nice for the children" was the reply.

On Saturday mornings, it was as though everyone in the village visited the village shop and chatted to each other, while the children watched the Farrier at work opposite and the horses coming and going gave a traditional village feel.

In those days, as well as the Shop, we still had the village Post Office, Compton's Garage on Coventry Road, the Club and the Meadows Hut at the bottom of Church Lane, which over the years hosted the Darby and Joan Club, the Wednesday Club, Crafts Groups and the PCC.

At about that time, Stoneleigh Meadows Society Limited came into being, its principal purpose to preserve the Meadows permanently for the benefit of the local and broader community. It also became a charity. The village included many listed buildings and other historic buildings, which gave it its character, most especially in the conservation area.

The land the Meadows Society acquired included the Meadows Hut and we rested content and reassured that that character was assured for the future.

By 2010, the Village Hall had taken over the Hut's Meetings. I understand that the idea of a community orchard had been floated with the Meadows Society by a resident several years earlier but it was not until 2011 that the area next to the Hut was allocated for it and planting began.

In 2018, the group of volunteers doing that work and their supporters formalised their legal status by becoming a Community Interest Company. The fruits of the hard work of the last few years are now being seen and the numbers attending the open day at the end of May 2023, as well as the sales of cider, reflect the place the orchard has earned in the village.

However, the Meadows Society sold the Meadows Hut in 2010 or 2011 and it seems that it has recently sold some extra land to the property company which now owns the Hut and is seeking to develop it as a residential unit. Meanwhile, the orchard lacks somewhere to store and process the ever-expanding volume of apples and pears it produces. The Hut, literally the other side of the fence from the orchard and originally used by Stoneleigh Estate workmen, is the obvious place to be that "somewhere" and to return to its place in the community once more.

Although some of the former physical amenities no longer remain, the community does, as the organisation contact details in June's S & A News show. In addition to events like the Duck Race and those in the club, and to give but a few examples, volunteers still open the Church to visitors and the maintenance team ensure that the Churchyard is well-presented, bell-ringers still ring the bells, the Male Voice Choir and the Ladies' Choir still do the hard work which enables them to put on quality concerts, the History Society continues to flourish, we have two defibrillators. The list goes on. Apologies to all those I have missed.

The Orchard's need not only continues but is growing.







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This month's edition of ***Stoneleigh and Ashow News*** was compiled by  
Mike and Bernice Evans, who would like to thank all contributors.

All details correct at time of printing, but please check locally  
prior to attending events.

This issue can be viewed online at [www.stoneleighvillage.org.uk](http://www.stoneleighvillage.org.uk)

The October 2023 edition will be compiled by  
**Sarah Ballinger**

66 Stoneleigh Avenue, Earlsdon, CV5 6BZ

*All copy should be sent to the editor's email address:*

[sarahjballinger@gmail.com](mailto:sarahjballinger@gmail.com)

**Copy deadline: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023**



## **Stoneleigh Church Grounds Working Party**

*Clive Watson*

After another successful year of regular mowing by our team of volunteers, and eradication of damage caused by the moles, the church yard is looking well maintained. Help is now needed please from all residents of Stoneleigh and beyond on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023, starting at 9.30 am until circa 12.30pm.

At the end of the growing season, we try to edge the paths, cut back overgrowth of ivy, trees and bushes, weed and trim planted areas, and clear all cuttings and fallen timber to the green bins, or bonfire site. Many people have married, had children christened, and family buried at our lovely church yard; whilst other just enjoy the peace and tranquillity whilst passing through.

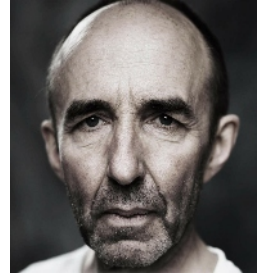
Refreshments will be available, so if you can come, a phone call to 07855 400 633 before 17<sup>th</sup> October would help with the catering, and deal with any queries you may have.

If you have your own gardening tools or machinery (strimmer, chainsaw), please bring them with you for your own use.



## The Gospel According to Others

...the supporting characters' point of view



- King Herod has his own way to deal with a new born King.
- Joseph and his family are to become refugees.
- Nicodemus. A priest realises he knows nothing about God.
- Lazarus. Does he now believe in resurrection?
- Peter. What was it like to walk on water?
- Joseph of Arimathea. Did he take the boy Jesus on a foreign sea voyage?  
If he did, what did that friendship look like?

This is actor Andrew Cullum's personal view of some of the peripheral characters in a familiar story. It is not the Gospel according to any of the better known writers, but **the Gospel... According to Others.**

Coventry Cathedral. Thursday 19th October 7.30pm  
**Stoneleigh Village Hall. Friday 20th October. 7:30pm**  
Allesley Village Hall. Saturday 21st October 7.30pm

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## JOY FEST

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September from 2pm

To be held at Stoneleigh Church - See opposite page.

At the 'Joy Fest' event there will be a produce stall. All donations of fresh fruit and vegetables plus jams, preserves etc. would be greatly received.

If you are entering a marrow in the club competition on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September, why not donate it, or if you have fruit trees in your garden with surplus fruit.

All proceeds to the food bank.



**STONELEIGH CHURCH**

# JOY FEST

**Saturday 16th September**  
**from 2:00 pm**

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**THE UNITED BENEFICE OF  
THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY,  
ASHOW  
and  
ST MARY THE VIRGIN, STONELEIGH**



## ***SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER 2023***

Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.00 am United Holy Communion Service at Ashow 6.00 pm Healing and Wholeness Service at Stoneleigh
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup>	9.30 am Holy Communion Service at Ashow 11.00 am Morning Praise Service at Stoneleigh
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup>	9.30 am Celtic Service at Ashow 11.00 am Harvest Festival Service at Stoneleigh
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup>	9.30 am Harvest Festival Service at Ashow 11.00 am Holy Communion Service at Stoneleigh

### ***From the Registers - Funerals***

Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	- Adam Bryniarski – Interment at Stoneleigh Church
Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> June	- Bhal O'Dalaigh – Interment at Stoneleigh Church
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> July	- Ernest Ball – Funeral Service at Stoneleigh Church
Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July	- Lilian May Robinson (Lil) – Interment of ashes at Ashow Church
Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> August	- Pamela Kathleen Richards - Funeral Service followed by burial at Stoneleigh Church

### **Contacts:**

***Priest in Charge:*** Reverend Petrica Bistran 07572193260

email: [revpbistran@gmail.com](mailto:revpbistran@gmail.com)

### ***Churchwardens:***

**Ashow:** Kate Jones 01926 853511 and Anne Gregory 01926 713066

Deputy Warden: Peter Shrimpton 02475 096477

**Stoneleigh:** Gordon Gatward 07776 211276 and Ashley Toogood 07771 888618

Deputy Warden: Richard Ashley 07708 097187

Or please contact the Parish Administrator,

Jackie Cubitt, 02476 415506 email: [admin@stoneleighchurch.co.uk](mailto:admin@stoneleighchurch.co.uk)

Office Hours Wednesday 9.00 am to 12.00, Thursdays 9.00 am to 1.00 pm

[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12964](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12964) for Stoneleigh

[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12954](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/12954) for Ashow

## **"The Path"**

**Reflections following a journey along the "Coast to Coast" path.**

*Pete Freeman*

As a younger man at the age of 24, I had walked the Pennine Way which runs some 268 miles from Edale in the Peak district to Kirk Yetholm on the Scottish Borders shouldering a full pack and tent. I had used Wainwright's book called the "Pennine Way Companion" as my guide. Now retired and several decades older I was keen to revisit this pursuit, and Wainwright's advice suggested that the "Coast to Coast" walk would put the Pennine Way to shame in terms of scenic beauty and variety.



In truth I was a little frustrated and angry with myself. The Covid lockdown and working many years under considerable stress had seen my own health diminish and for the first time start to be placed under a lens. I was keen to address this underlying reality. Impetuousness has occasionally accompanied decision-making in my personal life and age had not blunted this characteristic, so it was, with my old compass beckoning, that I found myself compiling from memory items that a typical 24 year old would require in order to traverse the 191 miles through the Lake District, the Dales & the North Yorkshire Moors respectively. I am of course now a lot older, a reality that would soon come sharply into focus.

Standing on the beach at St Bees and glancing up at clouds streaming overhead indicated the presence of the "Jet Steam". I instantly knew that this passage was going to face challenges not least from the weather an underlying observation that would reach its culmination on "St Swithuns" day some five days later. I bid farewell to my wife Mandy... and with some trepidation strode off along the cliffs. Mandy would catch up with me on and off throughout the first day to offer me food and encouragement before returning to the Midlands. From then on I was alone with a stretch of challenging terrain lying before me.

It soon became clear that I was carrying too much in my pack and the discomfort occasionally detracted from the beauty of the surrounding countryside. It is said that the best plans are ones that can be adapted and so a struggle lasting some 15 days ensued during which a strategy of camping had to be abandoned for the relative comfort of hotel rooms.

The Lake District section proved most challenging with tough climbs and terrain. I am told that Borrowdale is where a lot of commando training occurs and as I walked through it, groups of young people could be observed undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh Award training.

I had met up with a couple of very strong hiking ladies called Caroline and Anna, who like many had arranged to have their bags ported onwards to their overnight stop. Caroline was walking in aid of a head and neck cancer charity which put my unplanned and selfish motives to shame. I naturally struggled to keep up with my massive backpack but persisted.

I intended to camp at the end of a long and very wet day at a youth hostel but arrived to find it full and so was turned away. Thanks to the kindness of strangers a local lad who was listening in on my plight offered me a lift to the nearby Scafell Hotel at Rosthwaite. I was completely exhausted and it was only day two. I generally walked alone with nothing other than the call of an occasional Curlew circling overhead and other moorland birds to break the silence. To spend time talking in the company of fellow travelers was a blessing to be cherished if only because it raised spirits and took one's mind off any aches and pains accrued during the passage. On some occasions hikers would concertina into small chattering groups that loosely resembled that described in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. There were so many people with different stories to tell. I was astonished by the number of foreign people who travel to this country to do this walk so it must have a reputation worldwide.

Abandonment of camping occurred following a traverse of the highest mountain section ironically called "High Street" due to its origins as a Roman Road. I ended up at the village of Shap for an overnight stay. I was soaked and without a plan was told that I could pitch tent in the pub garden as the storm lashed down; the power was out so there was no possibility of a shower, food was not being served. I ultimately slept in something called a "pod" which loosely resembled a dog kennel; at least it was relatively dry so I was grateful.



St Swithun's day followed and there was no let up in the weather, that evening I pitched my tent as others abandoned their intentions of camping and packed up. I will always be grateful to Julie at "Moor View" farm in Orton, for allowing me to dry out and warm up in front of her farmhouse Aga, the night in the tent however proved damp and unpleasant. As a consequence, I will forever concentrate my thoughts on those poor souls who have to rough sleep throughout the year. They deserve our attention.



*St Swithun's day (15<sup>th</sup> July) named after a 9<sup>th</sup> Century Anglo-Saxon bishop of Winchester, legend states that 40 days of poor weather succeeds rainfall on this day.*

My passage into Kirkby Stephen elevated spirits to a degree, as I knew that Mandy would meet me at this halfway stage. This enthusiasm was tempered by the realization that my tent, now soaked, had added more weight to the pack and so had become more burdensome. Losing energy later in the day following a 20 mile stretch across rough moorland caused me to lose concentration and worryingly lose the path which coincided with a poorly marked section. Thankfully, I rationalized, reasoned and finally picked up the path again though started to make further errors through tiredness. Finally, I arrived at a main road and walked into the town at which point starting to consider the very real possibility of giving up!

Seeing Mandy nervously awaiting at the end of a long day was a welcome sight, and a night in the Black Swan Inn at Ravenstonedale, relaxing in a hot bath, sharing good food with Mandy followed by the amusing company of our northern friends Charles & James Hancock's, both hill farmers from Uldale, elevated spirits as they reminded me that they have to herd Swaledale sheep and travel 20 miles up and down fells on most days of the year.

Our laughter fanned the flames and I was gripped by a renewed steel to succeed and was ready to go again! I was also relieved of a weighty pack for at least a day by Mandy who visited a launderette with the contents and who would meet me at the end of the next section which passed a set of Cairns called "Nine Standards" before finishing at the old Norse settlement of Keld.

In truth having a lighter pack certainly helped in the second half of the journey, the terrain also became gentler following the river Swale eastwards. Confidence gradually rose culminating in a 26 mile marathon passage across the Vale of York prior to reaching the North Yorkshire moors with the only notable obstacle being the dodging of traffic on the A19, a section that definitely requires a bridge or underpass sooner rather than later.

The weather was still a constant thorn and despite taking a rest day at Osmotherly continued to frustrate and made me take a further day out at a hotel near a rocky outcrop called the Wainstones. Feeling that I had avoided the worst of the weather by delaying a day found me delivered early, alone and to my dismay into a dense swirling fog and drizzle now shrouding the North Yorkshire Moors. Fortunately, midway through the morning this lifted to reveal a spectacular and beautiful landscape of heather moorland which was lit up brightly in the sunshine. All was once again well with the world and my spirits soared. Further walking both to and along the North Sea coast was relatively easy going and I recall casting away a stone brought by Mandy from St Bees into the North Sea whilst on the beach at Robin Hood's Bay as is a tradition. I believe that there is something symbolic in this gesture? What makes a thing precious is transience, and what gives it value is knowing that we can and will lose it.

It is unlikely that I will revisit this path again though I'm sure that other paths await. Memories may fade but this journey will live long in memory. The path with its twists and turns, moments of doubt, obscurity and challenge as well as occasions of great joy.

We all travel along a path of sorts.

