

The Village Connection
Leigh on Mendip + Downhead + Stoke St Michael +

Issue 326

March 2026



Dates for your Diary

March

- 6 Coffee & Chat Stoke Church 10 - Noon
- 8 Stoke Litter Pick 10 - Noon *See p 12*
- 10 Stoke Cinema Memorial Hall 7.00pm *See p 12*
- 13 Coffee & Chat Stoke Church 10 - Noon
- 13 Leigh Lunch, Memorial Hall LoM *See p 10*
- 14 FOLC Race Night Memorial Hall LoM *See p 7*
- 14 Annual Wilf Quiz Memorial Hall SsM *See p 13*
- 20 Coffee & Chat Stoke Church 10 - Noon
- 21 Leigh Litter Pick 2 - 4pm *See p 9*
- 26 FOC Cream Tea Tower Room LoM 2.30 - 4pm *See p 7*
- 27 Coffee & Chat Stoke Church 10 - Noon

April

- 4 FOLC Easter Quiz
- 13 Leigh Rec AGM

May

- 3 Leigh on Mendip with Downhead Annual Parochial Church Meeting, after **10am** service in St Giles' Church.

From the Reverend Keith Johnson

Nunney Rectory

Lent is upon us. Traditionally a season which Christians have used to deepen their relationship with God, through inner self-examination, in preparation for Holy Week and Easter.

In Matthew chapter four, we read:

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights.

Lent has its origins in this time of personal reflection which Jesus spent in the desert. He ate no food during that remarkable retreat, spending extended periods in prayer and reflection.

The devil tempted Jesus to give in to his hunger pangs, put his heavenly father to the test by throwing himself off the highest point of the temple, and worshipping the devil instead. Jesus fought back with scripture, the devil fled, and Jesus emerged out of the desert triumphant.

He was ready to begin his journey which would lead from Nazareth to Jerusalem, as he fulfilled his mission on earth, to become the one perfect sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world.

I wonder, do you have any specific plans how you might mark Lent this year? In writing these words, I am conscious that I don't yet myself! Perhaps I will make a deliberate effort to find some quiet places to commune with our heavenly father, being sure to turn off my mobile for a while, open my bible, and listen to the wonderful sounds of nature which we enjoy in our parish.

May God bless you this Lent!

Keith

From the Registers

Funerals

Hazel Tucker	Stoke St Michael	Memorial Service	27 th January
Marion Reeves	Wanstrow	Memorial Service	29 th January
Eileen George	Cloford		27 th February

Sidesmen & Flowers



Leigh on Mendip

	Sideman	Flowers
1 March	Mary Witts & Kate Drinkwater	LENT – No flowers
8 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
15 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
22 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
29 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
6 April	Alastair & Jane Weston	Easter Flowers

Church/Brass Cleaning

March	-	Caroline Palmer & Vicky Higgins
April	-	Vanessa Barnes & Sarah Middle

Stoke St Michael

	Sideman	Flowers
1 March	Penny Anderson	LENT – No flowers
8 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
15 March	Wendy Foulds	LENT – No flowers
22 March	Janet Gilham	LENT – No flowers
29 March	No service	LENT – No flowers
6 April	Penny Anderson	Easter Flowers

Church Cleaning

March	-	Cicely Middle
April	-	Jane Evans

Letter from Bishop Michael

Draw near this Lent

The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is 'Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent'. It's a very different way of thinking about the season. Often, we identify Lent as a time for prayer and fasting when we 'give things up'. More recently many have decided to adopt an opposite approach – of 'taking something up for Lent'. 'Draw near' has a much wider remit. Each week, it invites us to explore a different aspect of Christian discipleship – worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

The 'Draw Near' approach fits well with how Lent began. During the Church's earliest days, those wishing to become Christians were known as 'catechumens', people who were learning to live as disciples of Jesus. Preparation was intensive. It took place particularly in the 40 days before new Christians were baptised on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday. Our season of Lent comes from this ancient practice.

When the Church began, it didn't have the trappings we're used to seeing around us such as buildings, hymn books, pews, or paid ministers. Church wasn't an institution. It was known as 'the Way'. Christians met in each other's homes and sought to work out how to follow Jesus in their every day lives. This wasn't so much about head knowledge, believing a particular set of doctrines. It was about the habits and practices that Christians constantly cultivated to help them draw nearer to God who is with us, in us, around us and beside us every moment of every day. 'Draw Near' comes out of this heritage. It's an invitation to make Lent a journey that brings us closer to God.

I invite you to make use of 'Draw Near' this Lent. It includes materials for adults, for families and for children, resources for schools and encouragement for churches. More information can be found at www.cofeio/DrawNear. As we approach Lent, let's draw near and join each other on the journey to God that is the Way.

+ Michael

Downhead Finances

I am pleased to report that, following last year's very successful appeal for support for All Saints church, its finances are now looking a lot healthier and we ended 2025 with more than £11,000 to cover the annual running costs and help towards the funding of some much-needed repairs.

If you are making a donation direct to the church's bank account by bank transfer or standing order please could you fill in one of the donation forms available in the church and hand it to one of the people listed below so that I can get in touch to thank you personally. If you are a UK taxpayer and are eligible to Gift Aid your donation please could you also sign the Gift Aid declaration on the form, as this will increase your donation by 25% without any additional cost to you.

Thanks again for the amazing response to last year's village appeal.

Margaret Loten (PCC Treasurer) 01373 812922 treas.lomd.pcc@gmail.com

Steve Britten (Churchwarden) The Grain Store, Green Farm - 01749 88018

Pat Lawrence (Assistant Churchwarden) 1 Manor Farm Cottage, Downhead

Anyone for Evensong?

Evensong is a definitive service of the Anglican Church. Derived from the pre reformation services of vespers and compline, it still has a role after 500 years. It can be a simple said service where a few are gathered, a 'Sung Evensong' where the congregation participate in simple sung responses and chant or 'Choral Evensong', where a choir, in effect, sings for the congregation, facilitating the message of the words and music, so that it is this message rather than the 'performers' which is heard. This is highly refined in a Cathedral setting, there is a current move by the Cathedral Music Trust for the Anglian choral tradition of Evensong to be recognized as part of the UK's UNESCO Living History Inventory.

On March 1st 6pm at Stoke we will present a Choral Evensong, so quite a lot of listening, but we hope we do not get in the way of the text and music. Often the service is said, often when we had Alan at the organ the service was sung by the congregation. We are pleased to have an organist on Sunday 1st so that all can join in congregational hymns. The choir elements are unaccompanied so quite sparse and contemplative for the second Sunday of Lent.

Evensong, usual services:

1st Sunday of the month at Stoke lead by Jane, 3rd Sunday of the month at Downhead lead by Keith.



FRIENDS OF LEIGH CHURCH
Registered charity number (England and Wales): 1174913

MARCH UPDATE

The well-loved **Race Night** returns on Saturday 14 March in the Memorial Hall. Bar open at 7pm with the first race at 7.30pm, filled rolls available. Entrance £3. To own and name a horse and jockey for £15 contact folcleigh@gmail.com

Later in the month on the Fourth Thursday 26 March we host a **Cream Tea**, from 2.30 to 4pm in the Tower Room café in the church.

April sees a repeat of last year's successful but challenging **Easter Quiz** on Saturday 4 April, with questions again set by Gus Unger-Hamilton.

All fund raising enables us to support the imminent grant application to the Lottery Heritage Fund for the next phase of repairs to our beautiful Grade 1 listed church, covering three main aspects: gully, window and parapet repairs.

The Tower Room café remains open every day as a peaceful place to rest, work or socialise. With free wi-fi, electronic access to the church records and children's toys together with self-serve refreshments it is well worth a visit.

Many thanks to all those who already support us; if you would like more information or to join us, please email: folcleigh@gmail.com

The FOLC Team



STOKE CHURCH
Coffee and Chat
Fridays 10-12

follow us on

facebook.com/StokeStMichaelChurch

LILIES IN MEMORY

ST GILES CHURCH Donations for lilies in memory or for Easter flowers can be given to either Caroline Dove or Margaret Loten at 6 The Old Sawmills by 27 March

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH Donations for lilies in memory or for Easter flowers can be given to Jane Evans at Withybrook by 27 March.



Please let us know the name(s) you would like included on the cards which will be displayed in the churches.

The cost per lily stem is expected to be £3.

Sunday Stokers

In our February session, we were exploring ideas about salt and light.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says to his followers, 'You are the salt of the earth'. We talked about the fact that salt is all around us, in the oceans and in the rocks, yet in Jesus' time, salt was more valuable than gold! Maybe Jesus was saying that ordinary, everyday acts of kindness and honesty can add seasoning to the world and make it a nicer place, just like sprinkling salt on our chips.



Jesus also said, 'You are the light of the world'. We talked about how we could spread light to the people around us. Salt without saltiness, or a lamp that's hidden under a bowl, are no use at all! Our Stokers logo reminds the children to 'Let your light shine' by doing good deeds.

The Stokers filled jars with layers of coloured salt and made some pretty candle holders to remind them that they are the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. Then what better snack to enjoy than some nice salty crisps?! Keep on shining, Stokers.



LEIGH ON MENDIP - LITTER PICK

Saturday 21 March

2 - 4pm



All villagers are welcome/needed to share this annual event.

Start from the Memorial Hall

Bring gloves and carrier bags

Litter pickers, fluorescent jackets and black sacks available

Tea, coffee and cake from 3pm in the Hall

Any queries: Caroline 07974 025608

Leigh on Mendip WI has organised a litter pick in the village for many years, during March to coincide with the Keep Britain Tidy "Great British Spring Clean". Keep Britain Tidy was originally set up by a conference of 26 organisations in 1955. The conference was initiated by the national Women's Institute after a resolution was passed at its 1954 AGM to start a national anti-litter campaign

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to life*



Tuesday 3rd March 2026

Holy Trinity Hall, Trinity Street,
Frome BA11 3DE

7pm - coffee, tea and cake
7.30 - 8.30pm - presentations and Q&A

**An evening to share stories, ideas and tips
about Open the Book assemblies.**

Open to anyone who would like to find out more,
including school heads and RE leads, local church
members and potential volunteers.

To reserve a place, use this QR code
or email office@holytrinityfrome.com



You can find more details about Open the Book at
biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/

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Friday 13 March 2026

and the second Friday of every month

Arrive from 11.30am, lunch served 12.30pm

£6 for a 2-course hot lunch, including hot drinks

Bar available

Dietary needs catered for - just let us know when you book

Everyone is welcome - all ages!

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Please book by **Tuesday 10 March** at the latest

If you would like help with transport please let us know when you book

Friends of Leigh Church, Registered Charity No. 1174913

LEIGH RECREATION FIELD

Great to the rec is still able to host children's football, even in this weather! It is well naturally drained

Bonus Club – The winners in February were Trish & Colin Gronow and Sue Vaughan with number 40. If that sounds familiar, it is! They should have their £20 by now.

A big thank you to Gary Grant, who cut our hedges last month.

Don't forget, our 2026 AGM will be on Monday evening, 13 April. Please come along.

Car Show and Village Day Put 5 July in your diary now.

David Pattison 812570

Mendip Live Wires



On Saturday 24th Jan 2026 we marked our 77th birthday in style with a fantastic Murder Mystery–themed celebration, where everyone threw themselves into *The Great British Bump Off!* The afternoon was made even more special by a superb afternoon tea, beautifully prepared by the wonderful Jo, with the lovely Tilda and Edith doing a brilliant job serving food and drinks throughout.

The actors performing the play had a wonderful time and we were all guessing to the last possible moment who was the killer.

We were also delighted to welcome several lovely ladies from Kilmersdon W.I., who told us how much they had enjoyed the afternoon. It was a real pleasure to have them join us and share in such an entertaining and memorable celebration.

All in all the afternoon was a great success.

At our February meeting, we had the pleasure of welcoming **Chris Keetley**, a renowned **Master Thatcher** whose expertise in the ancient craft of **thatching** immediately captured the room. He spoke with warmth and enthusiasm about his unexpected journey into the trade, describing the years of training, the patience required, and the deep respect he has developed for this centuries old tradition.

As he unpacked his collection of specialised **thatching tools**—some polished with age, others gleaming from regular use—we were able to appreciate the remarkable precision behind every curve of a beautifully crafted thatched roof. His stories, paired with the tactile presence of the tools themselves, offered a vivid glimpse into a world where skill, heritage, and artistry come together quite literally above our heads.



Teas, coffees, and a delicious selection of treats were available, giving everyone the chance to relax and chat together.

We are a thriving WI group with members from Leigh on Mendip and other surrounding villages, with wide-ranging ages and interests – meeting on the 2nd Monday of each month in the Memorial Hall. More room, of course, for new members. If you think this could be for you just turn up at 7.15pm or contact Caroline on 07974 025608. Our new e-mail address is mendiplivewires@gmail.com

There is more information on Leigh on Mendip Village Website.

(<https://leigh-on-mendip.org.uk/>) via either the Groups button or Events page, where you will find a link to our Facebook group.

Stoke St Michael Litter Pick

Sunday 8th March

10am - Noon

Meet at the Lychgate

Bring high-viz, gloves and grabbers if you have them



Wear stout shoes



Now the sun is coming out the litter is glinting in the verges so time for a tidy up

Sarah Stewart

Stoke St. Michael War Memorial Hall

CINEMA NIGHTS: 2nd Tues each month, 7pm

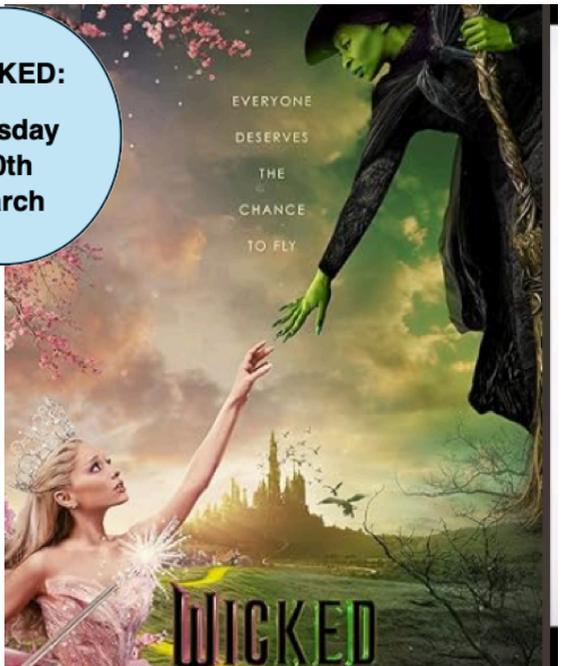
WICKED:

**Tuesday
10th
March**

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TO FLY

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Did you know, We have over 400 books and 25 puzzles in the summer house at the rear of the hall. These are regularly updated Please feel free to borrow, no charge.





The Annual Wilf Quiz:
In memory of Simon Williams

Stoke St. Michael Memorial Hall

Sat 14th March, 7pm

Includes
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Teams of 2-6
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March 2026



Sunday 22nd March - Fifth Sunday of Lent

09.30 Stoke St Michael Holy Communion

11.00 Cloford Matins *Jonathan Cheal*

Sunday 29th March - Palm Sunday

10.00 Nunney Combined Benefice Service

Thursday 2nd April - Maundy Thursday

19.00 Stoke St Michael Holy Communion

Friday 3rd April - Good Friday

10.00 Nunney Holy Communion BCP
Revd. Stephen Kivett

14.00 Downhead Last Hour of the Cross

Sunday 5th April - Easter Sunday

09.30 Wanstrow Holy Communion

09.30 Stoke St Michael Holy Communion *Revd. Graham Witts*

11.00 Nunney Easter Family Worship
Henry & Caroline Pomeroy

11.00 Leigh on Mendip Holy Communion *Revd. Graham Witts*

All services taken by Reverend Keith Johnson unless stated otherwise

INFORMATION PAGE

Vicar: The Reverend Keith Johnson
The Rectory, High Street, Nunney, BA11 4LZ Tel: 01373 792344

Parish Administrator : Claire Edwards

Phone: 07404 824355 email: postleburysecretary@gmail.com

Parish Office, The Rectory, High Street, Nunney, BA11 4LZ
Office hours - Thursday 11am- 5pm

Leigh on Mendip and Downhead Parochial Church Council

Contact email: sec.lomd.pcc@gmail.com

Churchwardens	Steve Britten 01749 880118 Paula Freeland 07722 359093	The Old Granary, Green Farm Downhead BA4 4LQ Honeysuckle Cottage Leigh on Mendip BA3 5QQ
Treasurer	Margaret Loten 01373 812922	6 The Old Sawmills Leigh on Mendip BA3 5RQ
Secretary	Mary Witts 01373 812367	11 Bellfield Leigh on Mendip BA3 5QH

Stoke St Michael Parochial Church Council

Contact email : stokestmichaelchurchwardens@gmail.com

See also : <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/10959>

<https://www.facebook.com/StokeStMichaelChurch>

Churchwarden	Jane Evans 01749 840660	Withybrook Stoke St Michael BA3 5JQ
Treasurer	07970 908671 email	Penny Anderson Grove View, East End Stoke St Michael BA3 5JD ssmchurchtreasurer@gmail.com
Secretary	Janet Gilham 01749 840671	Hillside, Withybrook Stoke St Michael BA3 5JQ

Safeguarding Officer for Leigh on Mendip, Downhead & Stoke St Michael

Post vacant please contact Parish Administrator

A new Bishop of Taunton

We have a new Suffragan Bishop, Fiona Gibson.

Family, friends, as well as colleagues old and new travelled to Southwark Cathedral, London for Bishop Fiona's Consecration. The service, led by Steven Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, is when Fiona became a bishop.

Wells Cathedral was filled with people from all corners of the diocese as we welcomed Bishop Fiona to Bath and Wells as the new Bishop of Taunton. Her installation ended with a rapturous round of applause led by Bishop Michael. We pray for our new bishop and her family as she begins her ministry with us.

Praying through Lent

A collection of simple daily ideas to help you pray through Lent has been put together by the Go Team. Each week focuses on one of the six petitions of the Lord's Prayer and from Monday to Saturday there's a daily Bible reading and prayer prompt to take with you through the day. The resource can be used by churches, schools, families and individuals as part of our Diocesan Year of Prayer.

Seven are baptised

There were celebrations at Holy Trinity Church in Frome as a group of seven people were baptised. Revd Ian Snares, Vicar, Holy Trinity Frome said, "It was a fantastic moment for everyone, as the whole group made up of people from all different walks of life, were united in wanting to continue their journey of faith. Scott Latham was one of the seven, "When I emerged from the water, I felt like a new creation."

Find out more on these and other news stories at <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/news/>



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
A service for everyone!

Friday 6 March

I will give you rest, come

Nigeria 2026

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East Mendip Gardening Club

By mid-March, we're ready to welcome the start of spring — a hopeful, happy time for us gardeners. There's lots to be done outside, now the slower winter months have passed.

Feed trees, shrubs and hedges with a slow-release fertiliser by lightly forking it into the soil surface.

Feed roses with special rose feed or balanced fertiliser as they come into growth. Prune roses now to encourage strong new growth.

Prune winter-flowering jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) after flowering, to encourage new growth for next year's blooms. Cut back the previous year's growth to 5cm from the old wood.

Feed blueberry plants with ericaceous plant fertiliser.

Mulch fruit trees with well-rotted manure or garden compost. Take care not to mound mulch up around tree trunks.

Scrub watering cans with hot soapy water to prevent fungal diseases.

Build a compost bin before the growing season gets underway. If you already have one, check to see if there is any compost ready to use on vegetable beds. Move bags of compost into the greenhouse to warm up for a week or two before using for sowing.

Plant begonia tubers in the greenhouse this month, positioning them just below the compost surface with the indented side facing upwards.

Direct sow hardy annual seeds straight into a sunny border or pots outside. Clarkia, sunflowers, stocks (*Matthiola incana*), poppies, and cornflowers (*Centaurea cyanus*) are all hardy annuals.

Start off aubergine, sweet pepper, cucumbers, gherkins and mild chilli seeds in the propagator — these plants can stay in the greenhouse over summer.

Sow salad seeds in pots and place on the windowsill for fresh, healthy leaves. Try recycling yoghurt pots to use as containers.

Sow seeds for perennial herbs such as lemon balm, rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme under cover.

Give your garden shed a spring clean before the sowing season really kicks off - you won't regret it!

Taken from <https://www.thompson-morgan.com/in-the-garden-this-month>

On Tuesday 24th March the East Mendip Gardening Club will meet in the Ashwick and Oakhill Village Hall at 7.40p.m when Amelia Williams will be talking about trees. Further details from our Chair Mark Manley, markamanley81@googlemail.com or see <https://www.ashwickparish.org/clubs-and-societies/east-mendip-gardening-club/>



Stoke St Michael Village Hall

Available for hire:

Fully equipped kitchen, modern facilities
and bar, accessible changing, large screen.

Booking enquires through
stokestmichaelhall.org

Community Activities include

Tuesday afternoons 2pm–4pm

Join us for some crafty activities or
a Coffee & a chat.

More details on

www.stokestmichaelhall.org



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email office@leighonmendip.mnsp.org.uk

Leigh on Mendip Parent, Toddler and Baby Group

New members are always welcome at
Leigh on Mendip Memorial Hall
Tuesdays 9am - 11am (term time only)
£1.50 for first child and 50p each for siblings
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If you need any more information contact

Vicky Williams on 07866 894303

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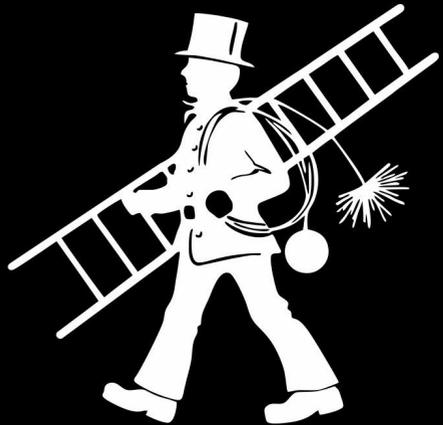
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Stoke St. Michael Baby and Toddler Group



Come and join our friendly group!

Wednesdays, during term time from 9.30am to 11.30am.
at the Memorial Hall

£1.50 per family. Your first visit free!

We provide a large range of toys for babies and toddlers, as well as fun weekly activities. Children can enjoy a healthy snack whilst parents can relax with a cup of tea, all included!

Just turn up or contact Gemma on 07837 121099 or via Facebook

Stoke St Michael Toddler Group



Bluebells Early Years Unit at Stoke St Michael Primary School

Moonshill Road, Stoke St Michael, BA3 5LG

Specialist Early Years Teacher, Forest School, Sensory Garden, Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments, Sensory Play, Engaging Provision!

Open Term Time Only: Monday-Friday 9am-3pm

Places available for Reception and Pre-School children.

We offer 15 and 30 hours funded places for eligible families.

To arrange a visit please email stoke-st-michael@educ.somerset.gov.uk or call the office on 01749 840470. For more information go to www.croscombstokefederation.co.uk or visit



@StokeStMichaelSchool.



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E-MAIL jbemery22@aol.com

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ADVERTISING RATES

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Clerk
Joe McGhee
Tel. 07518 710688

Chair
Vicki Taylor
Tel. 01373 813942

Email parish.clerk@leigh-on-mendip.org.uk

Meetings are held on the **3rd** Monday of every month in the Memorial Hall unless otherwise advised – see Parish Noticeboards for details of Agenda, Minutes etc. or visit

www.leigh-on-mendip.org.uk



All parishioners welcome to attend

LEIGH on MENDIP MEMORIAL HALL

(Registered Charity No. 304574)



Monday to Friday (until 6.00 p.m.)	£5.00 per hour
Monday to Friday (6.00pm onwards)	£7.00 per hour
Saturday and Sunday	£7.00 per hour
Business Users - At all times	£10.00 per hour

Hire of the hall includes the use of tables and chairs, crockery, cutlery, glasses and use of the kitchen. The hall has WiFi and a comprehensive audio system for playing music or using microphones. It also has a hearing loop.

Some items may also be hired for outside use. A list is available.

Booking clerk Ann Orpwood 01373 812459
r.a.orpwood@btinternet.com

Articles for the next issue to be submitted by the 20th of each month

E-mail - thevillageconnection@hotmail.com

Post - Janet Gilham, Hillside, Withybrook, Stoke St Michael, BA3 5JQ

Your Village contacts are:-

Leigh	Jan Pattison	Yew Tree Cottage, Tadhil	01373 812460
Stoke	Janet Gilham	Hillside, Withybrook	01749 840671
Downhead	Steve Britten	The Old Granary, Downhead	01749 880118

Advertising Rates

Commercial

¼ page £2 per month or £25 per year

½ page £4 per month or £45 per year

Whole page £8 per month or £85 per year

Non Commercial

¼ page 50p per month or £5 per year

½ page £1 per month or £10 per year

Whole page £2 per month or £20 per year

Payment for adverts to:-

Janet Gilham, Hillside, Withybrook, Stoke St Michael, Radstock BA3 5JQ

Cheques made payable to Stoke and Leigh Magazine

Note from the Editor

When emailing articles or adverts please use black text and grayscale for all logos and pictures A5 portrait format with 1cm margins 1.5cm bottom margin. Or A4 landscape same margins two columns with central gutter of 2cm.

Leigh on Mendip Village Website:- www.leigh-on-mendip.org.uk

Police Community Support Officers

Louise Perry for Leigh on Mendip and Will Mortimer for Stoke St Michael

Tel: 101 for non-emergencies 999 for emergencies only

Or report on line at: <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report>

CCS Village Agent Nic Edwards Tel 01823331222