

North Curry

Community Life
in
A Somerset Village
in
The Platinum Jubilee Year
of
Queen Elizabeth II



Introduction

The large village of North Curry on the edge of Sedgemoor boasts a range of clubs, societies and organisations which provide its 1800 inhabitants with many opportunities to come together in the creation of a vibrant community life. This Village Portrait is a visual and textual snapshot of some of the creative, cultural and social activities which have taken place in the year leading to the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Following almost two years of restricted social interaction caused by the Covid 19 lockdowns North Curry has responded vigorously to the pandemic-imposed slumber! As society continues to open up we all look forward to the future development of communal village life as the Second Elizabethan Age embarks upon its Fifty First Year.



A FOCUS - BOTH TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL



The Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, standing on a bluff overlooking Haymoor and Currymoor, is frequently referred to as 'The Cathedral of the Moors'. Dating from the 13th Century its octagonal tower, stained glass and churchyard carpeted with Alpine Anemones (windflowers) in Spring are much-admired features. Many village activities are associated in some way with the church which is seen as a community focal point as well as a place of Worship. The current vicar, The Rev'd Dr Simon Bale, was installed in late 2021, and his first year has seen a variety of church and community events for both the congregation and the parish at large.



A NEW VICAR

Reverend Simon was installed in November 2021 as the Vicar of the Athelney Benefice which includes the parishes of Lyng, Burrowbridge and Stoke St Gregory as well as North Curry. After the installation by Bishop Brian Castle of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, an invited congregation, restricted in number by Covid regulations and representing the four constituent parishes, enjoyed a buffet supper in the Williams Memorial Hall, Stoke St Gregory.



Armistice Sunday

The customary gathering of parishioners and congregations from the village church, the Independent Baptist Chapel and the Methodist Chapel, together with lay organisations based in the village, held the annual Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial in Queen Square in honour of the men of North Curry killed in two World Wars.



Barn Nativity



Churchwarden Mary Piers hosted an outdoor nativity play complete with real-life donkey and baby in her garden at Newport in December. Tradition and innovation are conjoined as in so many village activities.



Christmas in the Square

This popular annual singing
of carols took place once
again in the old Village
Pound in the week before
Christmas.



Appeal of Bells

The Jubilee Year sees the climax of the community's effort to raise £150,000 to replace the 200 year old church bells and their aging substructure. Many fund-raising events, some of which are documented in sections to follow, will be repeated as Jubilee Year progresses with ten events (quizzes, concerts, talks and social gatherings) contributing further to the £105,000 already raised by the parish. Hopes are high that by late summer 2023 the new bells of St Peter and St Paul, cast and hung by Taylors of Loughborough, will once again ring out over North Curry and the surrounding moors after several years of enforced silence. The Parish Church reaches out beyond its immediate congregation to the wider village community in so many ways.





Music in the Village

Concerts and recitals are held regularly in the parish, and the North Curry Choir, under its Director of Music, Miles Quick, rehearses weekly and gives two concerts a year. The Choir members are drawn from a wide radius around the village. There is also a separate Church Choir, a village orchestra and the popular Shandy Band to ensure that a wide range of musical tastes is catered for. The West Window in the village church is dedicated to a nineteenth century vicar of the parish who played a role in the production of The Anglican Church's 'Hymns Ancient and Modern'. Music in North Curry is impressive by virtue of both its range and the depth of its heritage!

Concert in aid of the Church Bells Appeal





The Village Choir in Concert

WOR The Flemish Folk Band play at the Jubilee Weekend
in aid of the Appeal of Bells



WOR
in
Concert



‘Treading the Boards’

For many years the Curry Amateur Theatrical Society (CATS) mounted plays and musicals in the new village hall which had been built in the early 1980s. Nowadays an annual pantomime, produced by Argyle Productions and with a cast of drama enthusiasts both from North Curry and surrounding communities, entertains for a week in February. The Jubilee Year production of ‘Treasure Island’ was a huge success selling out for all six performances.



Scenes from 'Treasure Island – The Pantomime'



Our Rural Heritage

Traditional English rural heritage is enthusiastically celebrated in North Curry. January saw the Annual Wassail in the Community Woodland when the trees are blessed and decorated. On Boxing Day the North Curry Mummers performed their own midwinter tale of the battle between St George and the Black Knight, a parable of the cycle of the seasons and the eternal struggle between Summer and Winter.



The Mummers Play A Midwinter Ritual



Clubs & Societies

Village Clubs and Societies bring different sections of the community together. Three of the largest are The North Curry Society, the Gardening Club and The Film Club. The Gardening Club is closely associated with the Annual North Curry Flower Show held each August and also holds regular monthly meetings. The Open Gardens weekend and the Produce Market figure prominently in the village calendar. The North Curry Film Club attracts good audiences to its monthly showings of films to suit every taste. A village branch of the Women's Institute meets monthly. There is also a Bridge Club, a Barn Dance Club, The North Curry Embroiderers and a Short Mat Bowling Club as well as a weekly Art Group among the 20 organisations which meet regularly in the Village Hall. The activities of Climate Action Athelney, the Community Woodland Project and the North Curry Wildlife Group ensure that the interests of environmentalists are encouraged. Outdoor sport is not neglected with thriving cricket and football clubs catering for all ages. The majority of these activities have emerged from the period of the Covid pandemic with a renewed determination to provide a varied cultural and community life for those who live in North Curry.





The Annual Flower Show

Flowers, Fruit, Conserves, Cakes, Photos and Paintings were all the subject of fierce competition for the 17 Trophies on offer in August in the Village Hall.





North Curry Open Gardens Weekend



IN JUBILEE YEAR 13
GARDENS WERE OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC ON
JUNE 18TH AND 19TH



The Produce Market

The first Saturday of the month sees local stallholders once again display their wares in the Village Hall with the 'Produce Market Breakfast' providing members of the parish with another opportunity to socialise. All profits from the market go to the upkeep of the church.





History and Heritage

Founded in 1985 to promote the appreciation and understanding of the heritage and environment of the village and its environs, the North Curry Society meets monthly to hear lectures and presentations on a wide variety of local cultural and historical topics. Many locations and personalities are remembered by plaques throughout the village. Occasional group visits are organised for members as well as social events. The Society is also closely involved with the North Curry Archive. Betty Koppa BEM was a Founder Member of the Society and established and is still very active in maintaining the Archive, located above the village Coffee Shop. This is based on her extensive collection of artefacts and documents relating to the parish. Betty was honoured by Her Majesty the Queen in 2018 for her outstanding service to the community.



North Curry Society

A selection of the posters of meetings held since the ending of Covid lockdown regulations in the winter of 2021 illustrates the breadth of the annual programme. In common with most societies and organisations the North Curry Society did not meet for 17 months but attendance at monthly meetings and lectures is now rising beyond pre-pandemic levels with audiences of 60 plus. A full programme is already in place for a new annual season beginning in September 2022.



Wednesday 15th December 2021



**North Curry's
First Telephone Subscriber**
and other village topics revealed by
John Cranston

8pm in the Village Hall

Refreshments from 7.30pm
Visitors most welcome



Wednesday 18th May 2022



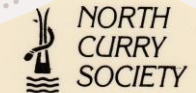
Tom Dunbar, thatching at Muchelney

**Kate Lynch
Traditional Crafts of Somerset**

8pm in the Village Hall

Refreshments from 7.30pm

Visitors most welcome



Wednesday 15th June 2022



**Chris Sidaway
The River Parrett Trail**

8pm in the Village Hall

Refreshments from 7.30pm

Visitors most welcome



NC Society – Visit to the SS Great Britain



Following a superb presentation by a visiting speaker in the winter 29 members went on a group visit to Bristol in May 2022.







Village Sport


North Curry CC fields 3 Junior and 2 Senior sides in Taunton District and West Somerset Leagues respectively with the Club Headquarters based at the White Street Sports Ground. Covid Restrictions in recent seasons and publication deadlines for this Parish Portrait preclude unfortunately the inclusion of material relating to North Curry Football Club.



FIXTURES 2022



WHITE STREET 2011



NORTH CURRY CRICKET CLUB

www.northcurry.play-cricket.com

Home Ground NCCC
White Street Sports Ground, Morris Way, North Curry TA3 6AS
Affiliated to the ECB & SCB

Village Cricket



NC Saints in action again
v Hemyock in May 2022





The Jubilee Weekend North Curry Celebrates

Individual street and garden parties and an evening in the Beer Tent before the lighting of the Village Beacon gave parishioners an opportunity to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee together. Bad weather unfortunately adversely affected the Village Picnic Lunch on the final day of the Jubilee Weekend. Private street and garden parties were however held throughout the village in sunny weather on the Saturday.





The Jubilee Beacon



OVER 300 PARISHIONERS AND
FRIENDS GATHERED AT NYTHE
FARM OVERLOOKING WEST
SEDGEMOOR FOR THE LIGHTING
OF THE VILLAGE BEACON ON
THURSDAY 2ND JUNE.



A Jubilee Tribute

Village organisations, societies and clubs were invited by the Parish Church Council to create A Festival of Tributes for 70 years of devoted service by the Queen. Artists, embroiderers and singers joined forces with the Women's Institute, the Village Primary School and the North Curry Society amongst others. The church was decorated by these individual groups representing the range of activities and the communal cultural life of this village on the edge of Sedgemoor.





Tributes



The Future of the Community

It is evident from the images in this Village Portrait that the active social and cultural life of a community such as North Curry is heavily dependant on the enthusiasm and support of older residents. This is inevitably the case in most developed societies where regular and prolonged leisure time has become largely the preserve of those who no longer work full-time. The 'Silver-Generation' has however emerged rejuvenated from the dark days of the Pandemic and begun the re-creation of community life. There is a strong nucleus of younger families in the village who will one day have more leisure time at their disposal. It is the role and duty of the current older generation to ensure that the social and cultural activities, as currently practised in this Platinum Jubilee Year, are maintained and developed. Succeeding generations will then be able to appreciate and enjoy such activities in ways most appropriate to the spirit of *their* age. Has this not also been the role, duty and practice of Queen Elizabeth II? Let us hope that *her* success will be a model for this village in the years to come, and that, as these images suggest, the baton of community life will be passed on to the younger generation.



Author's Acknowledgements

The images and text of this visual essay are the work of Colin Trim LRPS with the exception of the images of the village pantomime 'Treasure Island' which were taken by Paul Kenefick. Copyright of all the content, including photographs, is hereby transferred to the South West Heritage Trust, and the 'Portrait of North Curry in the Platinum Jubilee Year' is likewise gifted to the Trust. The author would like to thank all the individuals responsible for, or associated with, the many village organisations, clubs, societies and events featured in this Village Portrait. Most of these 'Movers and Shakers' are unnamed, but without their energy, expertise and enthusiasm, often extending over many years, there would be no cultural and social community life to portray! The author also thanks the Parish Council for its invitation to undertake this project in a Royal Jubilee Year 135 years after the one commemorated so much more imposingly by Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Monument in Queen Square, North Curry!

C.H.T

July 2022

