



# Stoke Parish Council

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Issue 2020.2

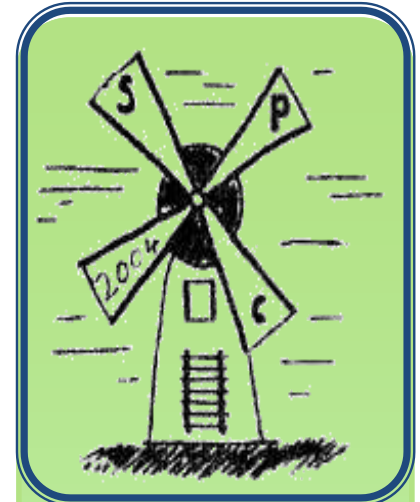
## PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER - WINTER

### SMARTWATER

The distribution of SmartWater by the Parish Council is now complete with West Mercia Police having put up warning notices around the Parish -see Page 2 for further information



Photograph by Assistant Clerk



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## PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

### Chairman's Report - December 2020

I would like to wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. This year has been difficult for us all and I hope that families will be able to get together and celebrate within any guidelines proposed by the Government. I would ask that we all remember those who live on their own who will have had a tough year and will welcome a little Christmas cheer

#### **SmartWater**

Back in Spring 2019 I included in my message for the Spring Newsletter that the Parish Council was considering providing SmartWater to all Parish households that wanted it.

Our Parish has 1800 or so residences and to begin with we offered SmartWater at various events and for collection from our Office, distributing around 160 kits covering nearly 9% of these homes.

West Mercia Police who have been very supportive kindly arranged the distribution of a further 860 or so kits taking the total distribution to nearly 57% of homes within the Parish.

During the last 6 months our Clerk Neil Gulliver and his Assistant Stan Petrovic have delivered and registered a further 780 or so kits, completing our distribution programme.

West Mercia Police have now put up 9 notices covering most of the roads entering the Parish and also in various prominent positions within it as you will have seen on the front page!

If any of you have not received your SmartWater kit then please contact Neil (see Page 15 for his contact details) and we will endeavour to provide one to you.

#### **Dog Fouling within Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior**

**Just one pile of dog mess can contain a million roundworm eggs. In humans this can lead to stomach upsets, throat infections, asthma and in some cases blindness. Over 100 cases of partial blindness in children are seen every year due to *toxocara canis* eggs in dog faeces**

Dog fouling has been an issue within our Parish for some time. Although since the first Covid-19 lock down the situation has improved to some degree it is still a problem. Dog waste bins are provided throughout the Parish so there is no excuse for not cleaning up after your dog.

The Parish Council is looking to work with the District Council to find ways to combat this problem. It is not only our playing fields and streets but also other areas such as Avoncroft Cricket Club that seem to have a growing problem on their ground. **Please remember this is not just an antisocial littering problem but is also a serious health risk to YOUR CHILDREN!**

If you see any dog walkers who do not clean up after their dog please report it. You can either call Bromsgrove Council on 01527 881188 or if you are not comfortable with calling them directly please do contact the Parish Clerk – see Page 11 for his contact details.



Merry Christmas to you all from myself, all of our Parish Councillors and Neil and Stan

**Peter Williams, Stoke Parish Council Chairman**

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

from the Parish Clerk

### CHRISTMAS LIGHTS COMPETITION 2020

The Parish Council will again this year be running a competition for the best external Christmas lights in the Parish. The display must obviously be Christmas related and in good taste.

A prize of a gift voucher towards the cost of a meal at a local hostelry will be given to the winner. There will be prizes for both the best display in Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior.

You do not need to register your entry as Parish Councillors will tour the Parish on an unspecified date in December to choose the winners.

Winners will be announced in the Spring 2021 Newsletter.

### Where was the Stoke Works 'Big Chimney'?

Many of you will have seen the stained glass window in the church (pictured below) that depicts the chimney that was once a famous landmark in our Parish.

The Stoke Works salt works chimney commemorated by this stained glass window in Stoke Prior Church was 309 feet tall and stood for 121 years, from 1836 to 1957

We are sometimes asked by Parishioners and visitors to the Parish where the chimney was located so we have included the picture below showing that it was close to Westonhall Road and near to where the main entrance to the Henbrook Gardens estate is on the site that was once the Salt Works and in more recent times the Polymer Latex chemical works.



## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS (continued)

As I write this latest newsletter, we are fast approaching what has been probably the most difficult year for most people in living memory and I think we are all hoping that 2021 will be a much better year whatever form it may take!

Despite all the rules and restrictions, the Parish Council has continued to carry out as many of its duties as reasonably possible such as dealing with planning applications, distributing free Smartwater kits, maintaining the local area etc. The Parish Council recognise how important such issues as planning applications are to local residents and I have set out below how we go about responding to applications and how you can also engage with that process as well.

Our Parish Lengthsman is heavily engaged in helping to ensure that the roads and pathways in the parish are safe as well as carrying out regular litter picks. This latter job is becoming increasingly demanding with the amount of litter that is strewn across the parish, often from traffic passing through.

Many of you will be aware that the District Council is currently undertaking a review in order to establish whether the existing parish should be split into 2 parishes, namely Stoke Prior and Stoke Heath. The final decision will ultimately rest with the District Council but I believe that the Parish Council would much rather see the Parish remain as it is.

So let me remind you again what is the Parish Council and what does it do for you.

### **General**

It is the lowest tier of local government and whilst we currently have little power we do have a reasonable amount of influence. Our main aim is to exert influence on the decisions of the District and County Councils. We are consulted on local planning applications, highway/road safety issues, long term planning and wider community involvement strategies. Stoke has twelve Councillors (8 for Stoke Prior and 4 for Stoke Heath) who are elected to serve and administer on behalf of the residents of the whole parish. All Councillors adhere to the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and complete a register of interests.

### **Planning**

Planning decisions are ultimately taken by Bromsgrove District Council. However, as already mentioned, the Parish Council can have some influence over those decisions. Equally any local resident is entitled to comment on any planning application and we would encourage you to do so. Anyone can access the planning applications via the District Council's website. You can also make the Parish Council aware of your views which can then be passed onto the District Council.

**Information about all current applications can also be found on the Parish Council's website.**

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS (continued)

### **What else can your Parish Council do?**

We have been given varying powers by Central Government relating to other areas such as the provision of recreational facilities, community centres and public buildings, crime prevention, community transport, footpaths, street lighting, certain aspects of highway maintenance, litter and open spaces. We can also act to represent you on issues such as the Local Plan, problems with highways and bins and with local businesses.

### **Where do we get our funding from?**

We set a budget every year known as the precept. The money is collected on our behalf by Bromsgrove District Council through the Council tax bills. This is paid by the electors in the parish. We may occasionally also receive grants and income in other ways.

### **What does Stoke Parish Council do?**

The Parish Council employs a part-time Clerk and Assistant Clerk to implement their decisions. The Parish Clerk and the Assistant Clerk carry out their duties from home but are easily contactable, details can be found on page 12 of this Newsletter. In addition to the areas of work mentioned above, we also provide a conduit for complaints regarding overgrown trees, silted up drains, sewerage problems, street lighting, grass verges and street cleansing. We are able to lobby for improvements in highways, footpaths, road safety etc.

We are also responsible for managing three large open spaces and play areas, a picnic site at Stoke Wharf which is currently undergoing a makeover, street lighting in Stoke Prior, village bus shelters, supporting village organisations, public seating, notice boards etc.

### **How do I find out what has been agreed at our Parish Council Meetings?**

You will find minutes of all meetings on the Parish Council website. Minutes cannot be published until approved (as a true record of the particular meeting) at the following Parish Council meeting.

I hope this gives you a better understanding of the role of the Parish Council and how we are there to support the local community. If you require any further information please contact myself, Neil Gulliver via email [neilgulliver@btinternet.com](mailto:neilgulliver@btinternet.com)

### **Tai Chi at the Stoke Heath Recreation Area earlier this year**



## WORCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CARERS

Do you look after a family member or friend who needs help or support due to illness, age, disability or addiction? Then you are a carer and we are here to support you.

We know that being a carer can be an incredibly rewarding experience but we also know it isn't always the easiest role and requires a great deal of time, energy and devotion.

Worcestershire Association of Carers (WAC) is a countywide organisation that was established over 20 years ago to offer an independent source of information, advice and guidance for the 63,000 unpaid adult carers in Worcestershire. WAC provides representation for carers at a local and national level and support carers to have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Our friendly and experienced team is here to help you. We offer practical and emotional support services to help you in your caring role. Because we work with a wide network of organisations and charities, if we can't help with a specific problem we know someone who can !

We offer:

Our helpline: **0300 012 4272** . Open 9am -7pm Mon-Fri and 9am – 12pm Saturdays for information, advice and support.

Carer pathway advisors to support you in your caring role

Practical training and information sessions on various aspects of caring

Legal and financial sessions

Information guides and factsheets

Wellbeing sessions

Dedicated website full of information and advice at [www.carerswocs.org.uk](http://www.carerswocs.org.uk)

Carers magazine

Carer support groups

Carers Emergency Card

Opportunities for respite and to meet other carers

If you would like to register with us you can call us on **0300 012 4272** or visit us online at [www.carersworcs.org.uk](http://www.carersworcs.org.uk) and click the 'self referral' button at the top of the page.



## BEST CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN 2019

Please see below, rather belatedly due to the effect of the ongoing Covid 19 issues, the winners of the 'best Christmas lights' competition for Stoke Heath and the other 'Stokes', the residents of each of these homes having received a £30 Gift Voucher

**Stoke Heath - 10 Dark Lane**



**The 'other Stokes' - 46a Foley Gardens**



## MOST COLOURFUL GARDENS IN 2020

Despite, or perhaps in some ways because of the effect of Covid-19 there seemed to be more very colourful gardens around the Parish this year. The two that are pictured below are typical of the efforts that many of you made during the summer to brighten things during these strange times

### Stoke Heath



### 'The Other Stokes'





## OUR PARISH IN FOCUS

Most people like to take photos, whether it is of family and friends, pets and gardens or of our surrounding area. You may have a large DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) camera or a point and shoot, or you may even still be using a film camera. And most of us have mobile phones these days that can take very good quality pictures, with the plus side that we nearly always have them with us should a photo opportunity occur.

Whatever type of camera you have we are certainly very lucky in our Parish with its range of differing areas, often within walking distance, that offer many opportunities for a good photograph, such as the following for example.

In Stoke Prior there are the wharf and canal, which is a great place to see the barges in all their bright colours making their way through the beautiful countryside



The canal is also ideal for landscape shots and lovely walks along the tow path. We have a wonderful family of swans currently living on the canal and they can be seen most days along with other ducks, geese and possibly the odd heron.

Then we also have St Michael's, our beautiful Church. Inside is a great place to capture the colour from the stained glass windows and the majestic arches and columns



Outside there is an abundance of wild flowers in Spring, including Snowdrops, Bluebells, Primroses, Anemones and Crocus to name but a few. And if you are patient there is also lots of wildlife to photograph in the Churchyard.

We also have the River Salwarpe, which runs through a large part of our Parish, with its surrounding habitats which are abundant with wildlife such as Egrets, Roe Deer and Muntjack, woodpeckers and Buzzards etc not to mention the large fish to be seen swimming in it.

## OUR PARISH IN FOCUS (continued)

At Stoke Heath we have the Avoncroft Museum, with its very photogenic windmill and many other lovely buildings which are great to use as backdrops. Also from the top of the hill there are wonderful views of the surrounding countryside.



There is also the park and many pretty gardens in the Stoke Heath area that offer opportunities to photograph bird life if you have feeders in your garden.

Not far away we have Dodderhill Common which is perfect for Autumn shots with fungi and beautiful colours all year round. Very photogenic with Hanbury Church in the background.



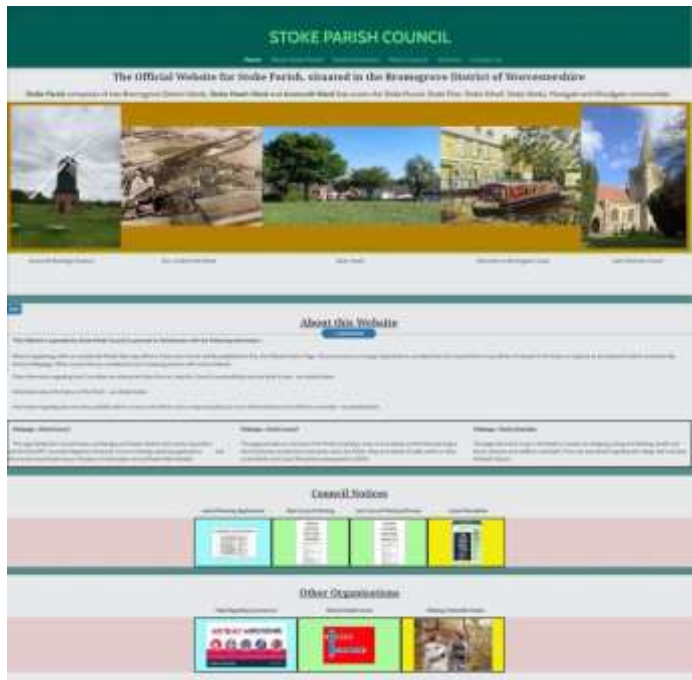
So get out with your cameras, buy cheap ones for your children and grandchildren, they will love it, and you won't need to go far to get some fabulous pictures. One last thing, remember to print them out or get them printed at Boots or by one of the online businesses that specialise in this and put them in an album, so many pictures get left on computers these days and forgotten!

An earlier version of this article was written by Cllr Jill Howe for the Community Link. Jill has now rewritten it and provided all of the photographs, for which she holds the Copyright

# NEW PARISH WEBSITE

Since before the lockdown I have been working on a new website for the Parish Council to replace the one we currently use but with limits on what it can accept.

The picture to the right is a much reduced screenshot of the Home Page where you will find the latest Council notices etc, Links to selected websites that offer support to those that need help for various personal issues.



Apart from the Home Page the website has three other main pages that mirror some of those on the current website but will be much easier to navigate and which pull items that complement each other together.

The first of these is the 'About the Stokes' provides a map of the Parish boundaries and details of its history as well as links to 'Pop Ups' of recollections, stories, and walks relating to the Parish and to copies of all the Newsletters for which we have copies.

The second Page, 'Parish Amenities' provides a map of the Parish with all its main amenities shown with buttons to open 'Pop Ups' for these whilst the third, 'Parish Council', provides access to information related to the Parish Council such as how to view and object to Planning Applications for example. All going well the new website will go live before Easter next year, more information will be provided in the spring Newsletter due out in March 2021.



Stan Petrovic, Assistant Clerk to Stoke Parish Council



## PARISH WALK - FINSTALL AND STOKE PRIOR

Although the walk starts at Bromsgrove Station it quickly runs into the lovely countryside of Finstall and Stoke Prior parishes. The Queens Head Pub is a good alternative place to start if you wish to avoid the station. Boots are advisable except in driest weather.

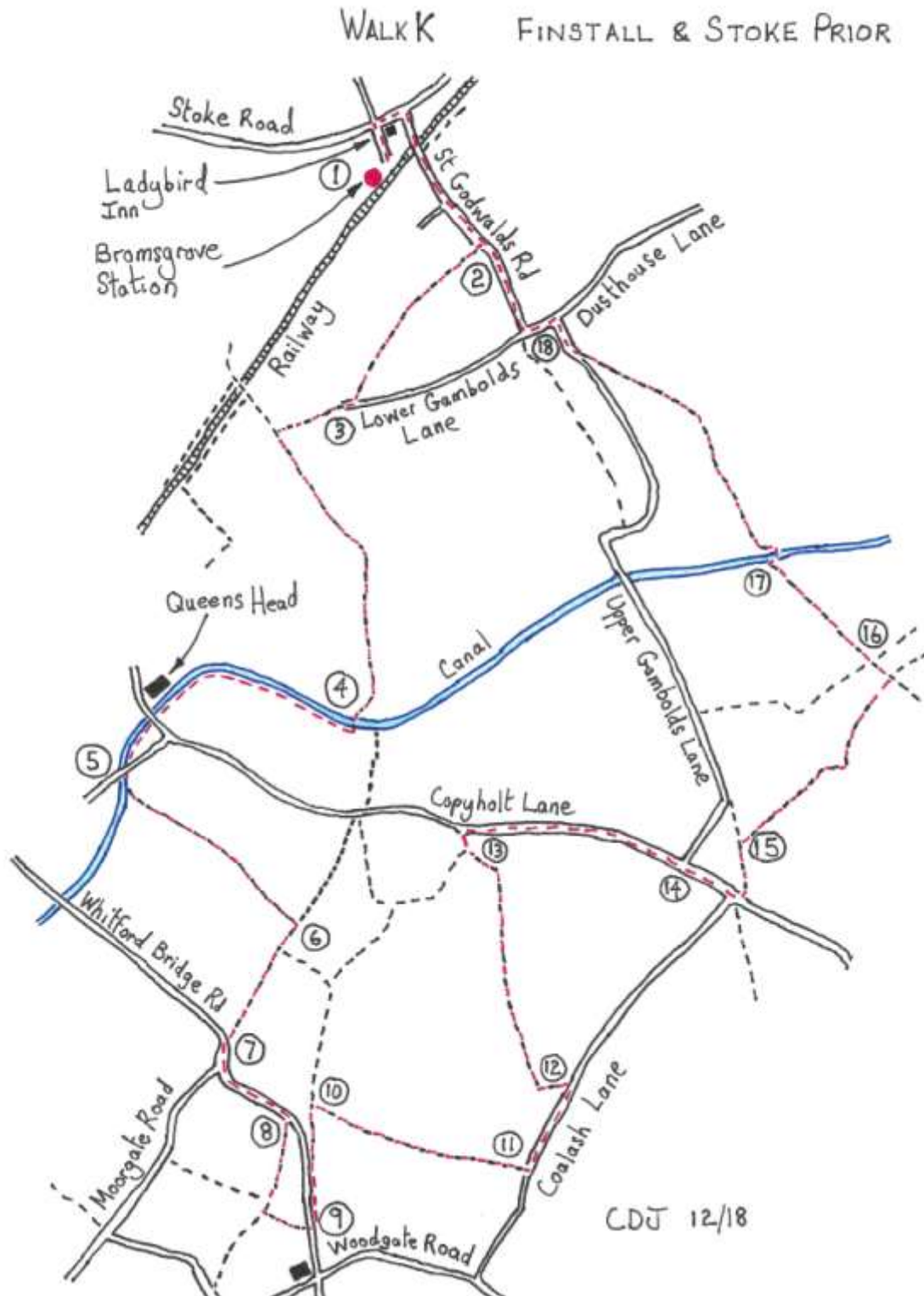
Parking is available at the start of the walk in the station car park (pay and display). The Queens Head pub may allow walkers to park but please check.

The walk is around 6¾ miles and should take around 2½-3 hours.

- 1. Bromsgrove Station** - Turn right by the Ladybird Inn and Lodge into Finstall Road and right again into St Godwalds Road by the Fish and Chip shop. Cross the railway at the start of the Lickey Incline that is at 1 in 37 the steepest on a mainline in Britain.
- 2. Bromsgrove Sports Club** - Turn right just before the Club entrance along the enclosed track. Continue straight through the gate and housing estate. Note the railway related theme to the road names. Go through another gate onto a path running at the side of playing fields. Cross a footbridge just behind the all-weather pitch and follow path to reach lane.
- 3. Lower Gambolds Lane** - Turn right past Maidsmere Cottage, go through gate, keep straight on to kissing gate. Turn left onto path coming up from Aston Fields and the railway. Go uphill alongside hedge to kissing gate and diagonally left uphill to gate by field junction. Cross farm track and second gate with hedge on left hand and covered reservoir to right. Go through gate in corner of field and go slightly right to another gate to reach canal and footbridge across the lock.
- 4. Worcester and Birmingham Canal** - Lock 33. Turn right along the tow path and go past the Tardebigge flight bottom lock and the Queens Head canal side pub.
- 5. Thompsons Bridge** - Bridge 47. Turn left through the gap in hedge immediately under the bridge. Bear right along track and through kissing gate. Turn left and aim for the gate at the far left hand corner of the field. Continue straight on keeping the hedge line to your left and go over the ditch crossing with double kissing gate.
- 6. Footpath Junction** - Turn right and keep alongside hedge. Go through left hand of two field gates just before farm buildings. Keep alongside farmhouse fence to gate in corner of field by electricity pole (F/P sign).
- 7. Whitford Bridge Road** - Turn left and keep left at Moorgate Road junction.
- 8. Orchard Cottage** - Turn right at F/P sign; go through gate into garden and cross brick and wooden bridges to exit garden. Cross field slightly left to reach stile by bungalow. Go through Willows garden and continue through driveway gate and turn left across footbridge. Follow the enclosed path to Steppingly Cottage.
- 9. Woodgate** - Turn left into Whitford Bridge Road for a second time, then over a stile on right (F/P sign). Keep virtually parallel with road over stile to footbridge in hedge.

## PARISH WALK (continued)

### MAP OF WALK



Details of the walk continue on the next page

## PARISH WALK (continued)

**10. Orchard Farm** - Go through kissing gate in field corner and turn right across concrete slab ditch crossing. Keep alongside hedge and through two gates. Continue in straight line across next field to footbridge and gate almost at end of opposite hedge. Continue straight along the hedge line on your right to reach roadside kissing gate and ditch crossing.

**11. Coalash Lane (F/P sign)** - Turn left along lane.

**12. Springfields (F/P sign)** - Turn left onto enclosed path to stile. Bear left across field to stile in opposite fence close to copse. Still bear slightly left to stile in opposite corner then follow field edge straight on. Turn left across stile in top corner and then half right to tractor track down to metal gate. (F/P sign)

**13. Copyholt Lane** - Turn right past Oakdene and Yew Tree Farm.

**14. Upper Gambolds Junction** - Keep straight on past black and white house. Just past Coalash Lane junction turn left through gate (F/P sign) along track through copse. Cross footbridge and go down small bank to footbridge virtually opposite behind some trees.

*Note: sometimes the route over the footbridge can be completely overgrown at both ends but the ditch can be easily forded just to the left of the bridge.*

**15. Footbridge** - Turn right alongside a ditch for a few yards then straight to stile in opposite hedge. Keep straight on to another stile in opposite hedge. Continue uphill across next field until gate by cattle trough in hedge is visible. Turn left alongside hedge to barns.

**16 Patchett's Farm** - Go straight on through double metal gates at side of barn and towards electricity pole until gate at bottom end of field becomes visible. Go down wooded bank to the footbridge and left through gate. Head to kissing gate in top left corner of field. Go through gate up to towpath.

**17. Worcester and Birmingham Canal** - Cross Bridge 52 and turn left after gate. Turn right after next gate along field edge. Go through gate and down field keeping hedge on right to gate in corner. Fine views of Bromsgrove. Continue straight on past electricity pole to kissing gate. Keep straight on down farm track to reach Upper Gambolds Lane (F/P sign).

**18 Finch End House** - Turn left into Dusthouse Lane, then right into St Godwalds Road past Primrose Hospice.

**19. Bromsgrove Sports Club** - Continue as before back to the start point

**FORTHCOMING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the Parish Council is currently holding its meetings virtually via Zoom. In the event that circumstances improve in the New Year, the Parish Council will look to returning to public meetings. This will obviously depend upon any restrictions imposed by Central Government.

Future meetings of the Parish Council are scheduled as follows:-

Monday 11 January 2021  
Monday 1 February 2021  
Monday 1 March 2021  
Monday 12 April 2021

All of the above meetings will commence at 7.30pm.

Assuming that circumstances permit the Annual Parish Meeting will take place in May 2021 at Stoke Prior Village Hall, followed by the May Council Meeting

**HOW TO CONTACT THE PARISH COUNCIL**

Although the Parish Council no longer have an office in the parish we are still available to help local parishioners with any issues or questions.

The Parish Clerk, Neil Gulliver, is available Monday to Thursday and may be contacted by phone or e-mail as follows:-

Phone     Call 07927 311041 Monday to Thursday

E-mail     Send at anytime to [neilgulliver@btinternet.com](mailto:neilgulliver@btinternet.com).

The Parish Council is there to support everyone who lives in the parish but we need your help to know what is going on out there and what you would like to see provided in the parish so please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

If any local resident has a particular issue or problem which they feel they would like to discuss with the Chairman or another Parish Councillor, or your local District or County Councillor, again please contact the Clerk who will make the necessary arrangements. Even in these difficult times, a way can be found to meet safely.

## COUNCILLORS AND OTHER CONTACTS

16

<b>Peter Williams (Chairman)</b>	07970 782690	Planning (Chairman), Communications. CPRE and Worcestershire CALC representative
<b>John Ellis (Vice-Chairman)</b>	01527 570289	Planning, Communications, Finance & Resources, Stoke Heath Recreation Area
<b>Diane Brown</b>	01527 821692	Planning, Finance & Resources, Worcestershire CALC representative, Picnic Site
<b>Jill Howe</b>	01527 570274	Communications, Finance & Resources, Stoke Prior Village Hall Management Committee
<b>Sue Abel</b>	07808 053556	Planning, Communications (Chairman)
<b>Chris Jewson</b>	01527 578821	Parish Footpaths Warden
<b>Liz Miller</b>	01527 831942	Planning
<b>Liz Eden</b>	07803 764360	Communications
<b>Alyson Jewson</b>	01527 578821	
<b>Alan Bayliss</b>	07999 835599	
<b>Jean Jackson</b>	01527 328971	
<b>Rory Shannon</b>	07527 724088	

<b>Parish Clerk</b>	<b>Neil Gulliver</b> Telephone 07927 311041 E-mail: neilgulliver@btinternet.com
<b>Assistant Clerk (Stan Petrovic)</b>	E-mail spcasstclerk@hotmail.com
<b>Parish Council Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stoke-pc-worcs.gov.uk">http://www.stoke-pc-worcs.gov.uk</a>
<b>Website Comments and Articles</b>	spcasstclerk@hotmail.com
<b>District Councillors</b>	Malcolm Glass (Avoncroft) at <a href="mailto:m.glass@bromsgrove.gov.uk">m.glass@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a> Harrison Rone-Clarke (Rock Hill) at <a href="mailto:h.rone-clarke@bromsgrove.gov.uk">h.rone-clarke@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a>
<b>County Councillor</b>	Bromsgrove South Division Kyle Daisley Tel 07722 241335 E-mail <a href="mailto:kdaisley@worcestershire.gov.uk">kdaisley@worcestershire.gov.uk</a>