SPRING 2026

NORTON NATTER

NEWSLETTER OF THE STOCKTON PARISH



Cover photo by Beck Bagnall

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RIDDLE ME THIS

CHURCH NEWS FROM THE SIX PARISHES

of Beckbury, Badger, Kemberton, Stockton, Sutton Maddock & Ryton

We are delighted that our new Interim Minister, Revd Harvey Gibbons and his wife Liz will be coming to look after the Six Parishes. They are moving into the Rectory in Beckbury at the end of January and their official start date is 16th February 7pm when he will be licensed at St Mary's Church, Sutton Maddock, at a service led by Bishop Sarah of Shrewsbury. ALL ARE WELCOME.

The following Sunday 22nd February 2026 we welcome no fewer than two Bishops, The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave, Bishop of Lichfield and The Rt Revd Richard Jackson, Bishop of Hereford for A service for Shropshire Day 2026 This will start with a Eucharist service at St Milburga, Beckbury at 10:30am led by Bishop Michael to celebrate St Milburga's Day. Beckbury is the only church in his Diocese dedicated to St Milburga. Then at 2pm there will be a service at St Mary the Virgin, Jackfield, followed by a walk through Coalport & Sutton Hill to St Mary, Sutton Maddock at 4pm. Again, all are welcome including dogs.

NORTON VILLAGE HALL

Dates for your diary

Norton Village Hall will be holding two car boots this year, weather permitting, at Apley Farm Shop. On Sunday 17th May & 28th June

We will be having the usual bacon baps and homemade cakes.

Hope to see many of you there.

Norton Village Hall Committee

At Stockton we have a busy year ahead with planned interior plaster work repairs , following the previous water ingress, and redecoration. Thirteen couples will have their marriage ceremonies at Stockton this year. Any help with cleaning or general support would be gratefully received.

Contact Tina Dalton at tina.dalton@hotmail.co.uk or Gavin Hamilton at gavin_hamilton@outlook.com

THE PARISH PUMP

May 2026 bring every parishioner in Stockton continued success and good health

Parish Council January 2026 meeting
The Parish Council held it's latest meeting on the 7th January 2026 . The areas of focus at the meeting are set out below.

Council Tax increase – Parish Council Precept for 2026/27.
At their meeting in January 2026 the Parish Council reviewed its base budget in relation to pressures such as inflation, rising costs, the continued need to maintain assets (particularly the play equipment) and a requirement to upgrade the web site for audit purposes. This has led to an additional increase for 2026/27 Council Tax of £651 for the Parish Council's additional contribution. This averages out on a band D property at 40 pence extra per month.

The A442 – renewed action for 2026 has again been confirmed through the Parish Council for the A442. The Chairman will be liaising with the local Shropshire Councillor to highlight what appears to be the **'forgotten main road'** in Shropshire. Parishioners are urged to report **ALL** road defects via the following link to help with the road improvement campaign -

Fix my Street https://improvingyourroads.shropshire.gov.uk/, if the problem is not reported in this way it will not get resolved at all.

Verges – The Parish Council is on the lookout for a third verge to plant up and seed with wildflowers to enhance the local area for pollinators and reduce maintenance costs. If you have any suggestions for a new site, please contact the Clerk using the information at the end of this article.

Historic Stockton finger post – A442 – Parishioners will have noticed that the cast iron 1920's finger post at the junction of Church Lane in Stockton is missing. The post was demolished by a car driver before Christmas and the pieces of cast have been retrieved and are being stored at Apley Estate. So, what to do next? The Police have been contacted but are not willing to purse a claim as there was no fatal injury. The next point of call is Shropshire Council as it is their asset and for them to pursue the car owner's insurance for the post to be repaired and re-sited. If this fails the Parish Council has agreed to launch a fund- raising campaign to repair, re-instate and take ownership of the post. Watch this space for further news.

Village Gates A442 and drainage works at Astol/Higford - Rob Weir at Fencing & Ground Maintenance has completed repairs to three of the four village gates on the A442 owned by the Parish Council. Samco is also contracted to complete some drainage works along the lanes that link Astol and Higford before the end of March 2026.

Play Park off Windmill Lane – All the repairs at the Play Park have now been completed thanks to Rob Weir at Fencing & Ground Maintenance. The Parish Council has also completed a site survey for the company who will be installing the new climbing track equipment scheduled for March and April 2026 promoted in previous newsletters.

Shropshire Council – Working with Town and Parish Councils - devolving services. Shropshire Council is involved in a major exercise looking to devolve a number of services to Town and Parish Councils if the said local council is interested in developing a better, transparent and locally accountable service. There are several 'pilot' programmes that are under way with some of the Town Councils including Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Shifnal and Broseley for 2026/27. All Town and Parish Councils have also been invited to complete a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which is designed to develop and foster improvements in partnership working. Stockton Parish Council have signed the MoU and have been enquiring if there are other parishes in the Shifnal Rural Division who may be interested in this type of service development. A meeting was held with six other local councils in December 2025 to see if there is interest to develop a local 'package of services'. Some, but not all parishes within the division are interested in some form of locally delivered services. Shifnal Town Council have agreed to convene a follow up meeting to develop any potential packages of service in 2027/28, once they have completed their own pilot with Shropshire Council in 2026/27.

The focus of any devolved service package at this stage could be around what is called 'Street Scene' which focuses on environmental services. The Parish Council will therefore be engaging with both neighbouring local councils, Shropshire Council and Shifnal Town Council around the list of services set out below to see what style of delivery could be most cost effective for Stockton and therefore worth developing in the future.



- litter picking prior to mowing.
- waste bin emptying.
- mechanical sweeping.
- Leaf fall collection.
- Maintenance/mowing of amenity grassed areas-removal of arisings.
- Highway visibility splays mowing-removal of arisings.
- Naturalised highway verge areas as part of a late cut – to include areas of bulb planting, wild flowers etc – removal of litter/arisings.
- Mowing of highway verges – including the prior removal of litter – removal of arisings.
- Risk assessment of any machinery in terms of actions required for any fuel and lubrication spillages.
- Hedge cutting – including prior removal of litter and post removal of arisings
- Clearance of weeds and litter.
- Footpath and walkway inspections and commissioning of works.
- Tree inspections and commissioning of works.
- Grit bin management.

The Parish Council will report progress on the above discussions and how any developments will impact upon Parishioners.

PARISH PUMP continued....

Parish Council Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.
The Parish Clerk who is also the Responsible Financial Officer for the Parish Council is due to retire in December 2026. Stockton Parish Councillors are starting the process of drawing up a job description and person specification for the post to be advertised later in the year. Anyone interested in the position should contact the present Clerk for more information.

Local Plan – Place Plan updates.
As reported in the last edition of Norton Natter the Parish Council raised the question of 'small scale infill and brown field sites could be supported locally within a define settlement boundary within the parish'. The Parish Council agreed at the last meeting to adopt the above proposal within its submission to Shropshire Council for the new local plan.

Public Rights of Way (ROW) Project.
All the routes across the parish have now been walked and surveyed. A site meeting is to be held in the first quarter of 2026 with Shropshire Council to look at the potential of some locally agreed ' new permissive paths' that bridges the gaps in the rights of ways across the area. The outcome of this site meeting will be reported upon in a future Norton Natter. Anyone interested in forming a regular walking group should contact the Clerk.

Dates have been agreed for future Parish Council meetings which are held at Norton Village Hall at 7.30pm on the following Wednesdays 4th March and 6th May 2026. **All Welcome.**

Contact details: Stockton Parish Council Clerk Graham Bould, 18, Mendip Close, Little Dawley, Telford. TF4 3JG. gbouldparish@yahoo.co.uk, 07792300702 (m)





RIDDLE ME THIS.....

I fall, but never break,
I rise, but have no sounds.
I steal an hour, yet give back more,
And turn the whole world round.

I seem like rain, I feel like time,
I look like light returned-
But name me right and you will see
I'm neither felt nor earned.
What am I?



Nothing new here... except absolutely everything .

Rae's Recipe

This is a favourite recipe of mine that I have cooked many times.

I would suggest serving it with baked or mash potatoes but my personal favourite is dauphinoise potatoes which lends an extra touch of luxury!



Boeuf Bourguignon

Pre- heat the oven to 160c (140c Fan) Gas 3

Ingredients:

2 tbsp Sunflower oil
1k (2lb Stewing beef
250g (8oz) thickly sliced smoked bacon
12 peeled shallots
30g (1oz) plain flour
300ml (1/2 pint) red wine
150ml (1/4 pint) beef stock
1 x bouquet garni
1 x clove garlic crushed
250g (8oz) button mushrooms or sliced
salt & pepper to taste

METHOD

1. Heat the oil in a large pan (a flameproof casserole dish is ideal) Add the beef in batches and cook on a high heat, turning occasionally until brown on both sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside to drain on paper towels.
2. Add the bacon strips and shallots cooking gently, stirring occasionally for about 3 minutes or until the bacon is crisp and the shallots softened.
3. Add the flour and cook stirring for 1 minute, gradually blend in the wine and stock bring to the boil whilst stirring until thickened.
4. Return the beef and bacon to the casserole add bouquet garni, garlic and season with salt & pepper.
5. Cover and cook in a preheated oven for 1 1/2 hours.
6. Return the shallots to the casserole add the mushrooms and cook for a further hour or until the beef is very tender.
7. Remove the bouquet garni and discard. Taste the sauce for seasoning before serving.

Enjoy

NORTON VILLAGE HALL

THINKING OF HOSTING A GATHERING AT THE VILLAGE HALL?

PLEASE CONTACT PAULA AT 07977 777557 FOR FURTHER DETAILS.



LETTER FROM WESTMINSTER

On the last day of Parliament before Christmas, the Government published their Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. I have been campaigning for more equitable funding, particularly due to concerns that the current settlement will result in higher council tax and reduced local services. As it stands, Shropshire Council is now set to face a significant reduction in government funding over the next three years, which will make it much more difficult to deliver basic services to residents. I was glad to have the opportunity to raise these concerns directly with Alison McGovern MP, Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness. This is a principal priority of mine going into the new year, and I will keep piling on the pressure in Parliament to secure meaningful change.

My Shop Local campaign in 2025 saw nearly four and a half thousand constituents sharing their views on how to support our local high streets. I have listened to these views and laid out three campaigns that I believe will make a difference: I will be campaigning this year to secure free parking, to cut business costs, and to clean up our high streets. Working together with local community partners, I am excited to see what we can achieve. The recent changes to the Family Farm and Business Tax demonstrate what a difference it makes when the whole community gets behind one cause. In the Commons Chamber, I have thanked all the South Shropshire farmers and businesses for their tireless campaign, and though more still needs to be done, I know from conversations with farmers across the constituency that the changes announced in December have come as a huge relief.

It is a great honour to serve as the UK's representative on the NATO-Ukraine Inter parliamentary Council, and through this role I am able to get a good idea of what needs to be done to bolster our national security. Our nation now faces multifaceted and serious threats, the likes of which have not been seen for decades. We are at a crossroads, where we can either continue down the path of decline in our armed forces or take the difficult decisions needed to ramp up spending and fund them in a way that responds appropriately to the nature of these threats. I have raised my serious concerns about committing to a deployment of UK troops in Ukraine if we do not have a clear strategy to fund and support our armed forces. I will be firing on all cylinders over the next few months to make sure MPs across the house are aware of the harsh reality of our current security situation. The changes that need to be made for the defence of the United Kingdom may be radical and, in some cases, unpopular in the short-term, but the outcome will be far worse if we simply refuse to confront them.

I have six priorities for South Shropshire in 2026. I will seek to unleash rural prosperity, which in practice will involve standing up for our high streets and campaigning for lower business rates. I will work to enhance public services alongside local partners, including raising support for our community hospitals. I will continue to champion our farmers. My work to support local communities will see me travelling across the constituency and fighting for our churches, village halls, leisure facilities, and post offices. I will protect our countryside against over development and continue working to improve water quality. Finally, I will invest in infrastructure, ensuring that our roads, transport networks, and community facilities get the funding they need. Me and my team are going into 2026 with renewed energy and an ironclad commitment to my guiding principles - to listen, support, and deliver for all my constituents in South Shropshire.

Stuart Anderson Member of Parliament for South Shropshire

Come and have a cuppa and a chat at Norton Village Hall

£2.00 each (to cover cost of room hire and cake) 2pm – 4pm

Thursday 12th March
Thursday 9th April
Thursday 7th May

All are welcome.

Any questions call Paula on 07977 777557



REPORT FRAUD LAUNCHES

This week, the City of London Police, the national lead force for fraud, announced the full public launch of Report Fraud, which has now officially replaced Action Fraud.

A new media and advertising campaign is going live from Monday 19 January to help raise awareness of the brand-new service for reporting cyber crime and fraud.

The advertising campaign will run across radio and social channels, featuring the service's clear new visual identity and message, 'Every Report Counts'.

Please see our campaign hero film here: https://youtu.be/CpZRbpNxCOM

COMMUNITY NEWS

We are fast approaching our new bowling season in the Highley & District Bowling League and the Mid-Shropshire league hopefully entering a second Stockton team in Division 4 on a Monday night which will enable the green to be used more and generate a bit more income for the club.

We are holding our Annual presentation Dinner on 8th February 2026 in the Tythe Barn at The Hundred House Hotel where 34 members, family and friends will be attending.

We will be holding our A.G.M on Tuesday 17th February at 7.30pm in Norton Village Hall, we are always on the lookout for new members to join, all ages welcome, whether to play or just be sociable and come along and have a drink and a natter.

Work is to commence shortly, to replace all eight floodlights with the help of grants awarded from the Parish council and the British crown green bowling association. Many thanks to local residents who came along and supported our fundraising BBQ and social nights.

We are looking to hold our annual BBQ again, and possibly a quiz night, and practice sessions for youngsters who want to learn the game.

Rob Weir our groundsman will soon be working on maintenance of our green in readiness for the new season starting.

If anyone is interested in joining us please contact Jeanette Bennett 01952 730339 or Martin Bennett on 07870511655. For more updates visit our Stockton bowling Facebook page and Norton Community page.

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GRINDLE - SHIFNAL- COTSBROOK

SPARTANS - STOP PRESS....

Rob Woodcock from the Spartans writes:...

Spartans have been beaten by the weather over recent months but have used the time wise to get the playing fields ready for when the wet stuff stops falling from the sky.

Rob Woodcock Spartans

Many thanks to John Webb our Six Parishes Dementia Friendly Co-ordinator for sending this in

An extract from Wendy Mitchell's book -What I Wish People Knew About Dementia

One of my American friends has lost the ability to speak. She was a journalist in her former life, and it seems so cruel that dementia would snatch the ability to speak from her of all people. Yet the part of her brain that uses the keyboard is still very much alive inside her. She can still write, so eloquently and with so much emotion, yet she cannot say the words she longs for people to hear. Does that mean she should be excluded from joining in? Should her silence make others feel uncomfortable when it's clear that inside there is still so much that she wants to say? She is further down the path than me, but I find it comforting that she still possesses that skill to communicate. Outwardly she might seem lost, a vacant, speechless being, yet not only does she type, but often paints how she feels as well. her paintings are as evocative as the thoughts that must race round her head. Does it matter that she cannot speak when this is not the only way we go on our way through this world?

A prayer
If I get dementia don't let people talk to me like I'm a child but help them remember I'm an adult. If I get dementia please bring me people who know how to comfort me.
Amen

John Webb Six Parishes Dementia Friendly coordinator.

APLEY FARM NEWS

Winter passing to spring on the Farm



As the winter settled in our work slowed, from the busy autumn jobs to the steadier tasks of the colder months. These are the jobs that keep the farm running even when the days are short and the weather is changeable.

With the cattle still indoors, our daily routine was all about feeding them, keeping their beds clean and dry and making sure the yards stay comfortable. It's hard work, but it's also when we spend the most time with the animals. We watch them closely; check their health and make sure they're doing well. We weigh them every six weeks to track their growth and plan their feed. Some of the heavier cattle have already been sold. As I loaded cattle on a cold -4 ◦ C frosty morning in the dark, the sun started to rise across the fields and I thought how picturesque and peaceful the morning was with no one around. Market wise, cattle prices were still good and we're feeding our own grain but the high cost of fodder and silage means we remain careful with our planning and monitoring.

The tack sheep (sheep that aren't ours but stay here for the winter) were also busy across the estate. They graze the parkland, stubble turnips and grass fields. They follow the cattle and help add variety to the soil.

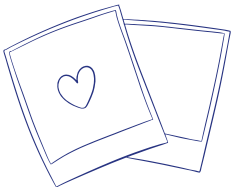
Our conservation and stewardship work started too. Tree planting, hedge laying, coppicing and fencing will fill the time when we're not feeding cattle. These Countryside Stewardship and SFI projects help shape the estate for the future. They create habitats, strengthen boundaries, create wildlife corridors and build resilience into the farm. It's rewarding to see new hedges and young trees going in, knowing they'll be here long after us.

Grain is still being loaded out of the sheds as orders arrive. Each load takes us one step closer to finishing last season's work.

Behind the scenes, we're planning for spring. Seed orders, fertiliser plans, grazing rotations and machinery maintenance all happen now. Winter may look quiet from the outside, but it's when many important decisions are made. It's also a time to think about what went well, what didn't, and how we can improve. As the climate continues to change, building resilience into every part of the farm feels more important than ever.

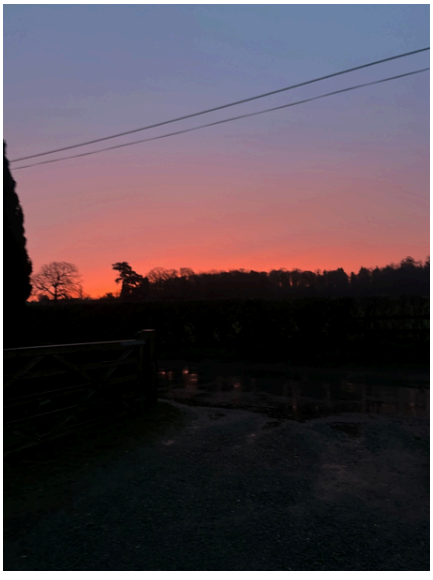
Despite the challenges—TB testing, disease pressure and the ongoing battle with the weather—we've entered the new year with purpose. The land is resting, the days are slowly getting longer, and we're looking forward to spring and to leaving the cold, wet months behind.

By Dan Bussey



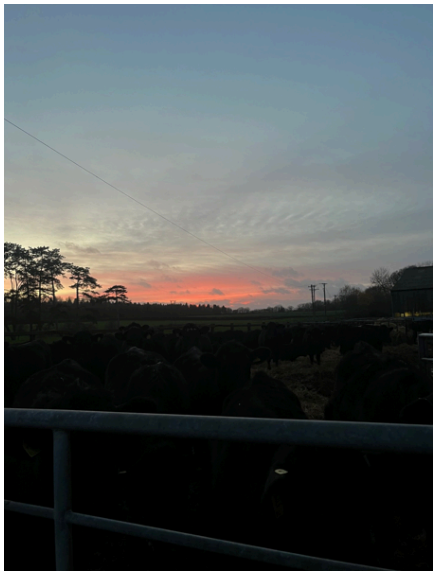
PHOTO'S BY AMELIA MORRIS







Norton Resident, Amelia Morris has kindly shared a wonderful selection of photographs - they're a real delight. Looking forward to featuring more very soon!







EDITORIAL TEAM

Jackie Bennett - Social & Digital Media & Content
Graham Bould - Parish Clerk, Content and Advertising
Louise Pollock - Editor & Executive Assistant to the Estate Director, Apley Estate
John Pigg - Distribution

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If you'd like to advertise your business in the Norton Natter, please get in touch.
Send your events, news, photographs and contributions for future editions to Jackie Bennett at jackie.a.bennett@hotmail.com or the Parish Clerk, Graham Bould at gbouldparish@yahoo.co.uk by **21st May 2026**. Follow our Parish Facebook page www.facebook.com/nortoncommunitygroup.

We'd love to hear what you think of the Norton Natter and we welcome ideas and suggestions to improve the content and add news and updates to the newsletter and Facebook pages.