



# Annual Town Meeting

22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2024

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# Allotment Society – Mike Grayson

My second year as Chairman

During this time we have seen many changes

The Pond Walk development of 6 bungalows and 3 houses to be built on our North and East boundaries which will create certain problems of access and will require the need to work closely with the site managers..

The re-organisation of plot sizes and allocation has resulted in the increase from 13 to 21 plots available and has allowed 7 new members to take an allotment.

As a result of a couple of open meetings we have received requested for a number of projects to be considered these include an apiary community shed and toilet facilities.

A continued demand from individuals and families for an allotment plot now stand at 7 applicants.

Perhaps it is time to consider developing another allotment site using the funds available.



# Archive Society

One of the key accomplishments this year was the significant expansion of our catalogue. Under the guidance of Lesley Wood, we were able to continue digitizing our vast collection of historical documents, photographs, and records, ensuring their preservation for future generations. This endeavour has not only made our archives more accessible but has enabled us to post the catalogue in PDF form on our website.

Thanks to the efforts of Christine Foster-Pegg, Jude Watts, and Jean Convoy, we persist in maintaining our collection through the index card system, a method revered for its traditional yet effective approach to organization.

Ian Semple is responsible for the maintenance of our website and Facebook group, ensuring that we effectively promote our collection to a broader audience. The Facebook group has grown to almost 1000 over the past year. We express our sincere appreciation to Dike and Son for their generous sponsorship of the societies website.

In June last year, Christine Foster-Pegg and Ann Moore delivered an engaging presentation to the junior school, delving into the rich history of Stalbridge over the past century. Their talk captivated the students and culminated in an interactive question and answer session.

Over the past year upon entering the Hub, there have been various displays showcasing different aspects of Stalbridge's heritage:

One of these displays featured archaeological finds from Stalbridge House, excavated over the past few years' by Stalbridge History Society.



# Archive Society

Jan Wardell put together an exhibition for the library, celebrating the contributions of Irene Jones, which attracted significant attention and appreciation from visitors.

The Stalbridge Amateur Archaeological Group put together a modest yet intriguing display featuring unearthed artifacts from Keepers Cottage (Stalbridge Park), offering a glimpse into the area's archaeological significance.

And not to be missed was John Foster-Pegg's exhibit showcasing the enchanting Christmas windows of yesteryears, evoking nostalgia and admiration among visitors.

Tony and Lesley Wood have once again demonstrated their dedication by completing four additional history boards for the junior school. In total, they have crafted eight boards, spanning Stalbridge's history from Roman times to the 19th century, which the headmaster said provided an invaluable educational resources for the school, and again we express our thanks to Dike and Son for the contrition they made towards the printing of the boards

We extend our gratitude to the members of the Stalbridge History Society for their unwavering dedication in translating the Stalbridge Manorial Court Rolls 1697 – 1702 from Latin. We recognize the immense time and expertise required to undertake such a project, their efforts have provided us with a valuable resource, a copy of which has been made available for our use.

This year, Christine Foster-Pegg and Lesley Wood faithfully continued our tradition of adorning a Christmas tree in the Congregational Church.

And finally we would like to remind everyone that the Archive is open on a Wednesday from 10am till 12 noon, we also extend our thanks to the Town Council and Clerk for their support over the past year.



# Congregational Church - Rev Sandra Turner

We are a small Independent Church affiliated to the Congregational Federation, managed by the Church Meeting comprising those received into Membership on confession of faith before the whole Church. We endeavour to create a friendly, welcoming fellowship across all ages and backgrounds with whom we can worship and explore our faith together. Our founding principle, 'The Priesthood of all Believers'. Our hope to witness to the Kingdom of God. Our Mission Statement 'To Love God and Serve Community'. We extend a warm welcome to all as part of our commitment to our mission statement.

Our Church is an integral part of Stalbridge community. It's members and friends are active across the town.

Sunday Worship at 10 am includes singing, praying and exploring the word of God as led by the worship leader/preacher of the day. Monthly second Sunday is Breakfast Church where all ages share breakfast followed by more informal worship.

Messy Church third Wednesdays 3.30 - 5pm - families engage in activities based on a Christian theme, a short act of all age worship followed by a hot meal for the children.

Coffee Morning each Wednesday from 10 am which is a social event.

Wednesdays 9.30 am until 11am a baby/toddler group where parents/carers and little ones can have a social time together with plenty of toys. Thursdays 9.30-11am Story Time meet for a fun time of singing, nursery rhymes, action songs and musical instruments with parents/carers and their pre-schoolers. A small charge of £2.50/family is made for both these groups which includes children's snack with a cuppa and cake for the adults. 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays 5.30 - 7pm Youth Club for school years 5 - 8+ where games, fun activities, discussion with a Christian ethos and hot meal is enjoyed for £1 towards meal.

Ad hoc Bible Study, Ecumenical activities, Social Evenings and Film Nights as advertised.

We support the local Primary School through Open the Book a bible-based Assembly Programme; join in Prayer Spaces, Lights on the Ring, and other events with St Mary's CofE.



# Friday Morning Coffee Group – Elaine Peacock

I have recently taken over from Ann Turnbull in running the Friday Morning Coffee Group which is held weekly from 10.00 to 11.30 in the village hall. The group was formed in 1971 by the late Liz Bassett.

There is no membership. It remains informal with the idea anyone can drop in for coffee, tea, cake and a chat.

We currently charge £1.50 for tea/coffee and cake. We also have biscuits available, There is a monthly raffle and a weekly sale of second hand books.

For those who wish to save for Christmas Ann Turnbull runs a thrift club.

Currently there are 14 volunteers who take it in turns making cakes and serving refreshments. There are 8 people on the committee who meet on a regular basis.

We recently purchased a toaster to enable us to serve toasted teacakes on some of the Fridays. There is also a coach outing booked for next month which will be free for the regular attendees and £10 for other people.

The numbers vary from week to week but we have about 40+ people who come regularly.. We are always ready to welcome new people.

# Friends of Stalbridge Library - Jan Wardell

The Friends of Stalbridge Library was formed in 2007, at a time when the library was under threat of closure, by the (then) Dorset County Council, and the future was very uncertain. However, under the strong leadership of Tim Lee, supported by a determined team of people, the library was saved, and the running of it transferred to a team of volunteers, supported by the Library Service.

Whilst that threat of closure is past, there is still the need for the Friends to support the management team of the library, in whatever way possible, and to provide 'extras' to ensure that visiting the library continues to be an enjoyable experience for all.

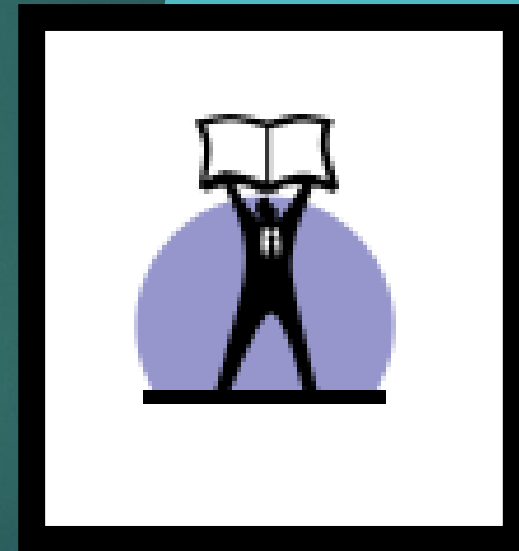
Our actions have included lobbying the Town Council to provide a representative to attend the Committee meetings of the Library Management Group. (This Committee is a sub committee of the TC) To raise funds for improvements, we organised a book sale, but the major event was the Irene Jones Exhibition in September last year, to celebrate the life of the local author of the The Stalbridge Inheritance books on the 30th anniversary of her death, in September 1993. These are essential reference documents for local historians, and we thank Richard Jones for his support.

The Friends' Committee meets three or four times a year, in convivial surroundings, and holds the AGM in May, on the same evening as the Open meeting of the Library Management Group. This year, to avoid clashing with this ATM, the meeting will be next week, on May 29th All are welcome.

This year our long-serving secretary will be standing down. We thank Carole and wish her well in her retirement. We are looking not only for a secretary, but also more Committee members to join our relaxed committee.

As Chairman of the 'Friends', I attend the Community Library Management Group meetings, and I am as always, impressed by the work that the LMG Committee and the volunteers undertake. They are supported by the Dorset Library Service in relation to the management, and Stalbridge Town Council for all matters relating to the premises, who we thank for their continuing support.

I also thank the existing Friends Committee for their work.



# Library Management Group

Firstly, my apologies for not being unable to attend this year's Annual Town Meeting.

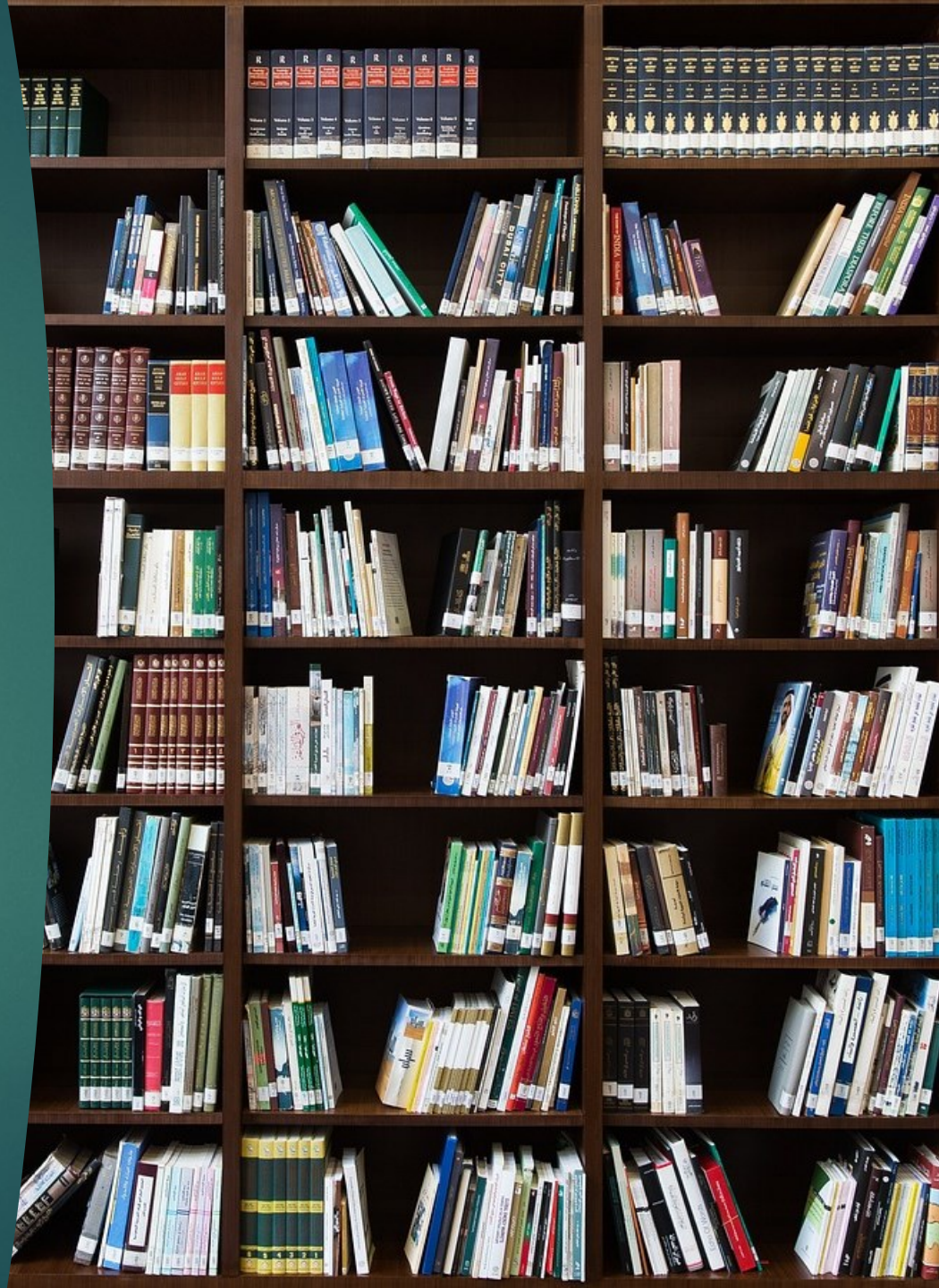
Secondly, on behalf of the Library Management Group, Volunteers and Patrons of the Library I would like to express our continued gratitude to the Town Council for their unstinting help and support shown to us once again over this past year. which has been, I feel, another overall successful year for the library.

Our thanks go to Tracey, Clerk to the TC, for being at the end of the telephone or email in answering the many queries, however small or large, we have and, also to Ian Kerr for his help and support during this time.

We have been lucky enough to be able to open another session, on a Monday afternoon having been able to recruit 4 new volunteers to cover the sessions. Without these volunteers, their time and effort, we would be unable to keep the library open for the benefit of the community of Stalbridge and the surrounding villages.

We have during this year seen an increase in the number of patrons, both adults and children, using the library. We are hoping this trend will carry on. We will be closed for a week from 23rd May until 4th June for a new library management system to be installed. Although we are currently slightly short on book stock we are told this should improve soon.

We are actively looking for more volunteers so that we can open on a Friday afternoon. If anyone is interested in volunteering please contact me at the library, via the library website or at [stalbridgecommunitylibrary@gmail.com](mailto:stalbridgecommunitylibrary@gmail.com)



# Playing Fields Trust – Colin Moore

The Playing Field has again been extensively used in the last year and continues to provide a valuable facility for the Town.

The sports grounds and their surrounding areas have been maintained in good condition with limited financial and personnel resources, with the sports specific facilities maintained voluntarily and funded largely by the Clubs themselves.

Many junior and senior members of both the Football and Cricket Clubs regularly use The Park, which is great to see. The Tennis Club continues to operate a system by which members can use the facilities on a casual basis.

The playing field was also used in 2023 by the Scout Group for their Bonfire Night event and many members of the public use the facilities for leisure activities. Dog walking is popular within the playing field, and while the Trust welcomes responsible owners, there continues to be a problem with dog fouling on sports pitches.

In 2023 the Trust received grant support from Dorset Council via Section 106 Developer Contributions for replacing the boundary fence. The Town Council also committed to supporting ongoing maintenance of the fence. The Trust is grateful to both bodies for their support with this project.

The next project for facility improvement is to establish a store on site for the grounds tractor. This is currently stored at Barrow Hill Farm, thanks to the kindness of the family of the late Tom Stroud, but this will soon be no longer possible.

Financially, the Playing Field Trust is grateful that the Town Council continues to give vital support enabling the Trust to continue its provision of the widely enjoyed amenities in The Park. I would also like to thank Stalbridge Community Shop who made a generous donation to the Trust in 2023 and Blackmore Vale Lions Club who donated and planted a new tree in the Playing Field.

Finally, as Chair I would like to thank the Trust Committee for their efforts on behalf of the Playing Field. If any members of our community are interested in being involved, please contact the Town Clerk who can forward contact details.

We look forward to the coming year and to continuing to work with the Town Council and other groups in our community.

# RoWLO (Rights of Way Liaison Officer) – Jan Wardell

We have 90 public rights of way in the parish of Stalbridge, of which 7 are bridleways, and the remainder footpaths. The total length of all of these paths is nearly 52 km (roughly 33 miles), spread over the area of the parish.

The role of a ROWLO includes:

- liaising with the local representatives of national bodies to promote understanding between path users, landowners and tenants
- maintaining regular contact with council officers who are involved in making modification, diversion and extinguishment orders
- communicating with representatives of neighbouring parishes to ensure continuity because paths generally do not recognise the administrative council boundaries
- liaising closely with the Dorset Council Green Space Management Team on matters such as path signing, way-marking and resolution of problems on the network. Local knowledge is usually the key to progress.
- responding to enquiries from residents and/or path users relating to aspects of rights of way law

Much of this takes place behind the scenes, but work is always being undertaken to improve rights of way, by one means or another. For example Section 106 monies from major developments in Stalbridge have been allocated to 'Rights of Way Improvement', and discussions are ongoing with the relevant Dorset Council Officer, relating to the priority routes for improvement within the parish. It is hoped that the Town Council's 'Future Vision' project will enable more involvement with local residents who are keen to assist. My personal 'wish-list' includes:

- updating the 'Stalbridge Walks' booklet, which was first produced by Ron and Beryl many years ago, and subsequently updated by Brian and Angela Scott
- replacing stiles with pedestrian gates to allow easier access wherever possible.

I try to get around as many of the paths during the year as possible, but the recent wet weather has not made this easy, and some paths are sadly neglected! In addition to the legally recorded rights of way, I keep an eye on opportunities to improve the connectivity within the town, for all walkers, and in particular to and from the new developments. We need to reduce the reliance on motor vehicles.



# SCARS (Stalbridge Cancer and Recovery Support) – Tracy White

- ▶ Firstly, Stalbridge Cancer & Recovery Support would like to take this opportunity to thank Stalbridge Town Council for the invite to attend at this year's Annual Town Meeting. A further thank you is offered to Stalbridge Town Council for the generous Grant of £200 as part of the 2024 precept. This grant will help with the yearly costs to run SCARS and we are extremely grateful for the support.
- ▶
- ▶ Tracy White has continued to work directly with Macmillan as well as having contacts within Yeovil & Dorset County Hospitals, and the Social Prescribers based in GP surgeries in the local area. Our work with the many and various organisations in the Dorset/Somerset area continues to be vital as it has become very clear, particularly in this past year that peer support and signposting to other organisations for help and guidance is a necessity.
- ▶
- ▶ The SCARS team continue to fundraise to fund the running costs of £1650.00 which include our public liability insurance, website hosting, marketing and more. SCARS accounts are audited at the end of each financial year and these accounts can be viewed at any time by contacting Mrs June Harman (SCARS contact details are on the website). Any suggestions for fundraising or offers to fundraise on behalf of SCARS would be gratefully received along with offers to volunteer at the various SCARS events so do contact us via our website at [www.scarscancerandrecovery.co.uk](http://www.scarscancerandrecovery.co.uk).



# SCARS Continued

## A SCARS COMMITTEE THANK YOU GOES TO...

### John Fieldhouse Design & Print

Tracy White would like to offer her thanks to Mr John Fieldhouse who built and is responsible for the SCARS website, hosting, and the SCARS marketing materials. John has been and continues to be a vital support to SCARS, nothing is too much trouble for him even at short notice and his attention to detail on the various marketing materials he designs and supplies to SCARS remain of the highest quality for which Tracy White is most grateful.

### Christine Foster-Pegg

An ongoing huge thank you to Christine Foster-Pegg for her kindness shown over the years by auditing the accounts for us.

### Dikes

Many thanks to Andy Dike and his team for the kind donations through MADL (Making a difference locally), these donations have helped SCARS to remain a vital peer support group for cancer sufferers and survivors. We are also grateful for your ongoing support with various items when we are running an event.



# SCARS Continued

## ▶ Williams Florist/Stalbridge Building Supplies

▶ Many thanks for the raffle prizes you have provided to us for an event we are holding.

## ▶ Stalbridge Community Shop

▶ Thank you to Stalbridge Community Shop for the two donations received, these sums were most welcome and will go a long way towards the direct support of those who attend and towards the yearly day trip that is undertaken to give those undergoing cancer treatment or survivors a chance to get away from the anxiety and fears that they face. This year the trip is to the Donkey Sanctuary in Sidmouth, everyone agreed this would be a wonderful place to go to support the Donkey Sanctuary and to spend time in a relaxing environment.

## ▶ Blackmore Vale Lions

▶ Thank you for the Grant agreed to cover the cost of a new printer for SCARS, the original printer was purchased thanks to a Grant in the early days. It is fabulous that you agreed the Grant for us to upgrade and purchase a more economic printer allowing us to do the day-to-day printing required as well as the printing required for our new member packs and other vital information, we provide to those who attend.

## ▶ STALBRIDGE DROP-IN

▶ The growth of the Stalbridge Drop-In continues to remain strong with new members attending regularly.



# SCARS Continued

## ▶ THE BALSAM CENTRE, WINCANTON

For the first few months of this new location for a drop in we welcomed a small group of people who found the support of like-minded people helpful to them and enjoyed visiting each month. Unfortunately, as the drop in did not grow as anticipated a decision was made to close this location albeit with a view to restarting should the need become apparent to The Balsam Centre. As SCARS was being funded to use this location Tracy White felt that this money was not being utilised to its full potential therefore Tracy White decided that these funds be offered elsewhere. Thankfully, those who were attending decided they did not want to lose the support they receive and made the decision to join us at the Stalbridge drop in which was wonderful.

## ▶ SCARS 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

▶ Tracy White is proud to announce that SCARS will be 10 years old in November 2024. The first get together for SCARS was held in Dikes Conservatory as part of the 'Paint the Town Pink' event set up by Colette Annesley-Gamester of St Marys Church, Stalbridge. The opportunity to be involved in this event and use it to launch SCARS was fabulous as was the coverage in the Blackmore Vale. From that small acorn SCARS has gone from strength to strength, forging relationships with other vital support services as well as hospitals, GP surgeries and from day one Macmillan. The vision of Tracy White was to offer peer support in the local area after she attempted to find that support after her diagnosis only to find that in a semi-rural location support is extremely difficult to secure.

▶ 10 years later SCARS continues its journey of being a safe and confidential space for cancer patients, survivors, family, and friends to be around like-minded people and know that they are not alone. If you need us, we are here so do not hesitate to contact us via our contact form on the website or the SCARS mobile phone number (on the website).

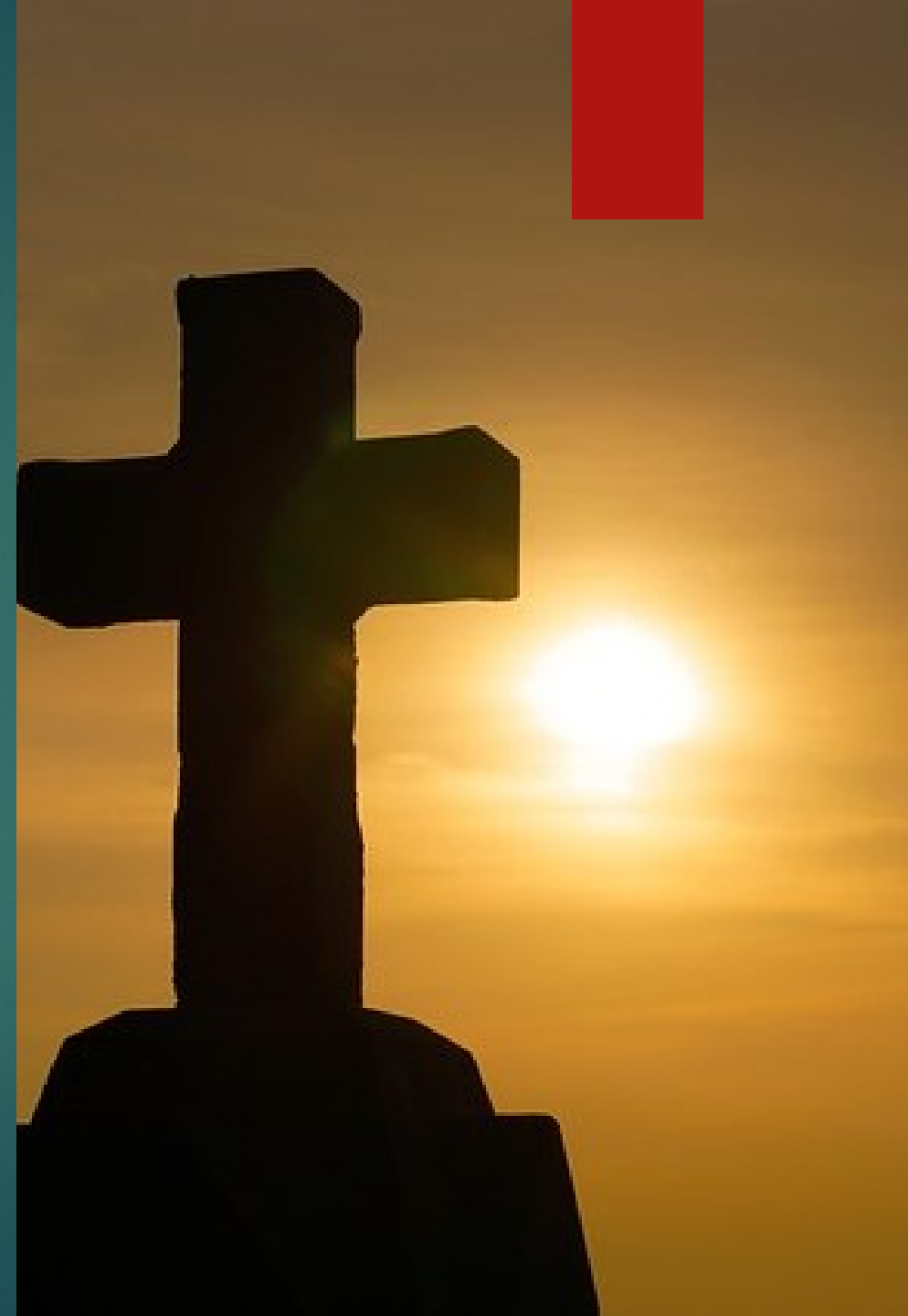
▶ Plans are afoot for the 10-year celebration, and we hope that the community of Stalbridge will support us with this special day and continue to support us for the next 10 years.



# St Marys PCC - Rev Canon Richard Hancock

This has been my first full year in the benefice, and it's been good to complete a full cycle since the previous APCM. It's been an interesting year with both some major challenges and some positive successes. Our PCCs have put a lot of work into their 10 Year Mission Action Plans [MAP] which will hopefully lead to growth and financial stability. This has been underpinned by the new Benefice Vision, to be YES PEOPLE, INCARNATIONAL, and ENBOLDENED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, launched last Pentecost. This is already bearing fruit in some of our parishes with new initiatives which are drawing new people in and widening the sphere of engagement of our churches. However, some are still struggling to reach out to their wider communities, but it's early days. Financially we are still some way off being able to meet all our costs and pay our full benefice share, but our treasurers and fundraisers have been working hard to develop new initiatives, including electronic giving, adopting the Parish Giving Scheme, gift days, concerts, and social events which are proving successful. Maintenance costs and share contributions continue to rise, and it can't be ignored that if we fail as a benefice to meet our financial commitments long term this will eventually lead to reorganisation and the possible loss of clergy posts. However, I do believe this benefice has the potential to be self-financing, but it is going to take some considerable effort if we are to do this in the five-year period, we set ourselves, now four years.

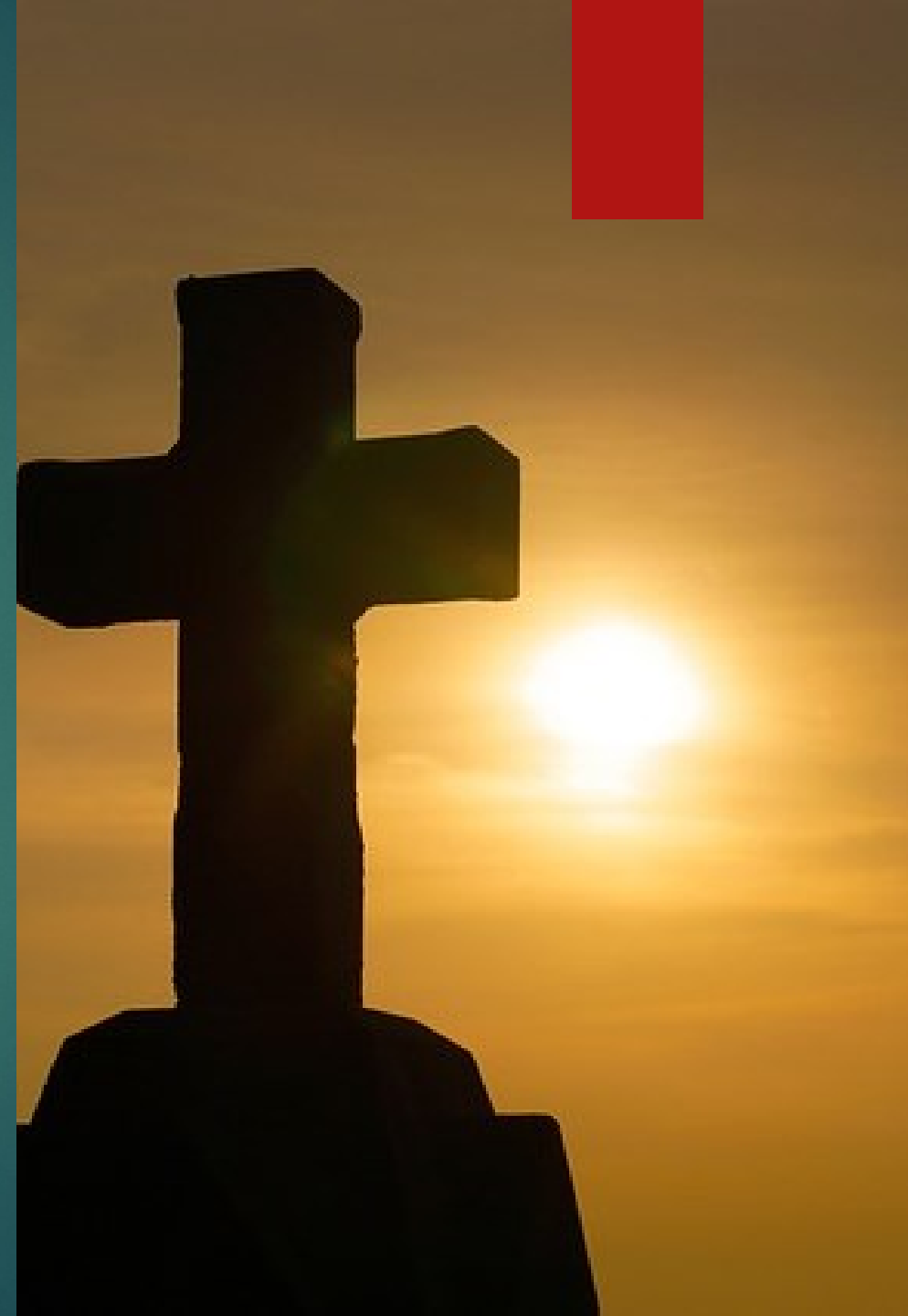
Sadly, this is not helped by the Church of England institution that has become highly bureaucratic, often creating new regulations which make it harder for smaller rural parishes to survive. St Mary's Stalbridge has had to deal with what I can only describe as bureaucratic nonsense regarding the instillation of their new boiler. A poorly thought-out initiative developed in Church House London to reduce carbon emissions was passed by General Synod in 2021, without looking at the effects it would have on small rural churches who lack funding and infrastructure. This has wasted huge amounts of the PCC's time and cost the PCC several thousand pounds in legal fees which could have been used on mission and outreach. This has been compounded by a poorly run and ineffectual DAC. In twenty-five years of parish ministry, it never ceases to amaze me that the biggest barrier we have to mission, and growth is our own out-of-date institution. I would like to personally thank Helen Hitchins, Stalbridge PCC secretary for the many hours of work she put in to help us fight our cause which eventually led to the faculty being granted at Consistory Court.



# St Marys PCC - Rev Canon Richard Hancock

This year the Pilgrim Group Ministry was legally formed following on from an informal link with parishes in the southern part of the deanery which had existed for some twenty years. It's early days yet and apart from mutual support for clergy in the group it's not clear how this will develop or if it can. In the past there was a large committee which developed events across the group, but as one of our own church wardens commented, those people are now much older and several have died, and new people are not coming forward. This is leaving any initiatives to already stretched clergy trying to ensure the future of their own benefices. On a positive note, St Barnabas's finished its heating and lighting project which was started by the late Nick Smith and this has transformed the church and made it much more usable for services and benefice events. There have been several highlights this past year which I would like to share with you. It's good that the benefice has been actively involved in developing vocations and ministry. We hosted David Sinclair as a placement student last year and I have continued to be his training supervisor. I'm delighted that David will be ordained Deacon this Petertide and will serve his title in the Iwerne Valley Benefice with a friend of mine, Rev David John.

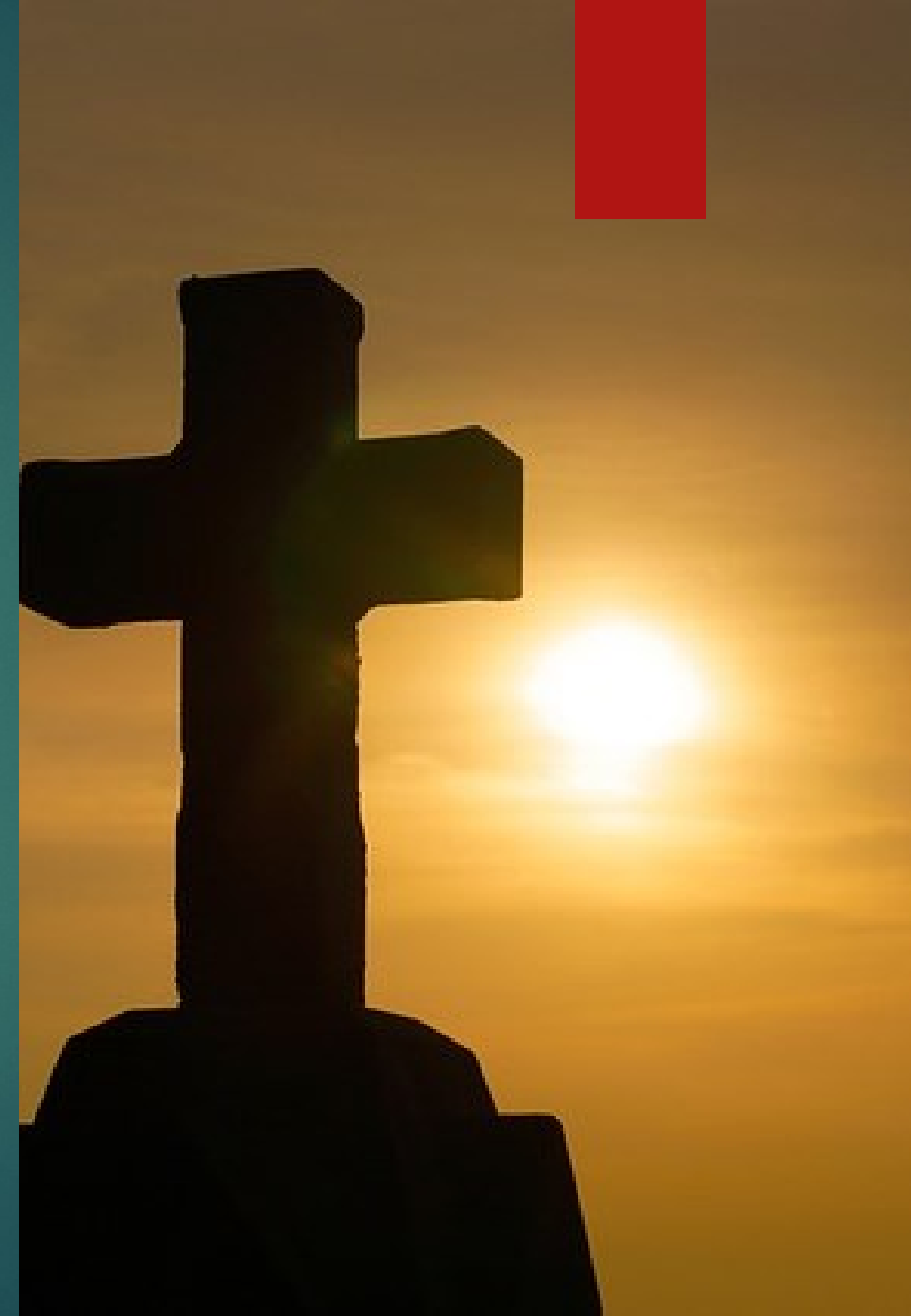
Rachel Page has completed her CMS Lay Pioneer Ministry Course and will become our Lay Pioneer Minister. In the past year Rachel, ably assisted by husband Rob and a small, dedicated team, has set up two new initiatives in Stourton Caundle. Firstly, the Beehive Café which has gone from strength to strength attracting over forty people every week which has not only provided a much-needed social focus for the community but also a place where the church can develop its pastoral outreach. It is now self-financing and making regular contributions to church funds. More recently Rachel has set up JAM, "Jesus & Me", running on the first Saturday of the month aimed at young families and this is beginning to show signs of growth. Some in the community and PCC were initially sceptical about these projects, but it just shows what is possible if we are YES people rather than NO people. I'm delighted that Rachel is now exploring Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) and we wish her well as she goes forward for selection.



# St Marys PCC - Rev Canon Richard Hancock

This year we welcomed Belinda West as our new Assistant Curate at a wonderful ordination service in St Mary's Stalbridge. Belinda had recently moved from Cheltenham and the Gloucester Diocese to Sherborne and is new to Rural Ministry but has quickly got to grips with the rural way of life and multi parish ministry. Belinda brings many gifts particularly in her work as a mental health practitioner. She has recently, with Sarah Bollen one of our LWLs, set up a new breakfast church at Stalbridge which has proved popular, and is working with Rachel Page and Penny Johnson to develop a benefice pastoral team. Belinda has also developed our new Wednesday online morning prayer service and recruited her grandsons as servers with Jeremy which adds to our worship across the benefice on special occasions. Belinda will be ordained Priest at Salisbury Cathedral on Saturday 29th June and her first Mass will be at St Peter's Purse Caundle on the Sunday following. I would like to wish her well on the next chapter of her ministry with us.

I'm also delighted that two of our flock, Penny Johnson and Jon-Paul Hughes, have been exploring a vocation to the Third Order Franciscans. One measure of a healthy benefice is the vocations it manages to foster. Our Benefice Choir has also grown in the past year under the able leadership of Helen Hitchins and it's wonderful to see faces from around the benefice in its ranks who enjoy both the music and social aspect of a choir. They have regularly sung at key services at Christmas and Easter as well as a beautiful choral evensong. Bell ringing has been developed at St Mary's Stalbridge with a new team and has been teaching new people to ring including youngsters. The ringers are embarking on a major restoration and refurbishment of the tower in the coming year ably led by Christine Tebbot a new member to the community. It has been good to see how St Peter's Purse Caundle (the smallest parish in our benefice) has developed their monthly service with themes which draw people in from the local community. Of special note was the St Hubert's day service which celebrates rural life. Our services at both Christmas and Easter were well attend, some with standing room only. A personal highlight for me was the Palm Sunday benefice service at St Barnabas on a beautiful spring day complete with Donkey, and the Easter Eve service at Stalbridge. I hope in this coming year we can focus more on developing the spiritual and worshipping life of our churches and communities.

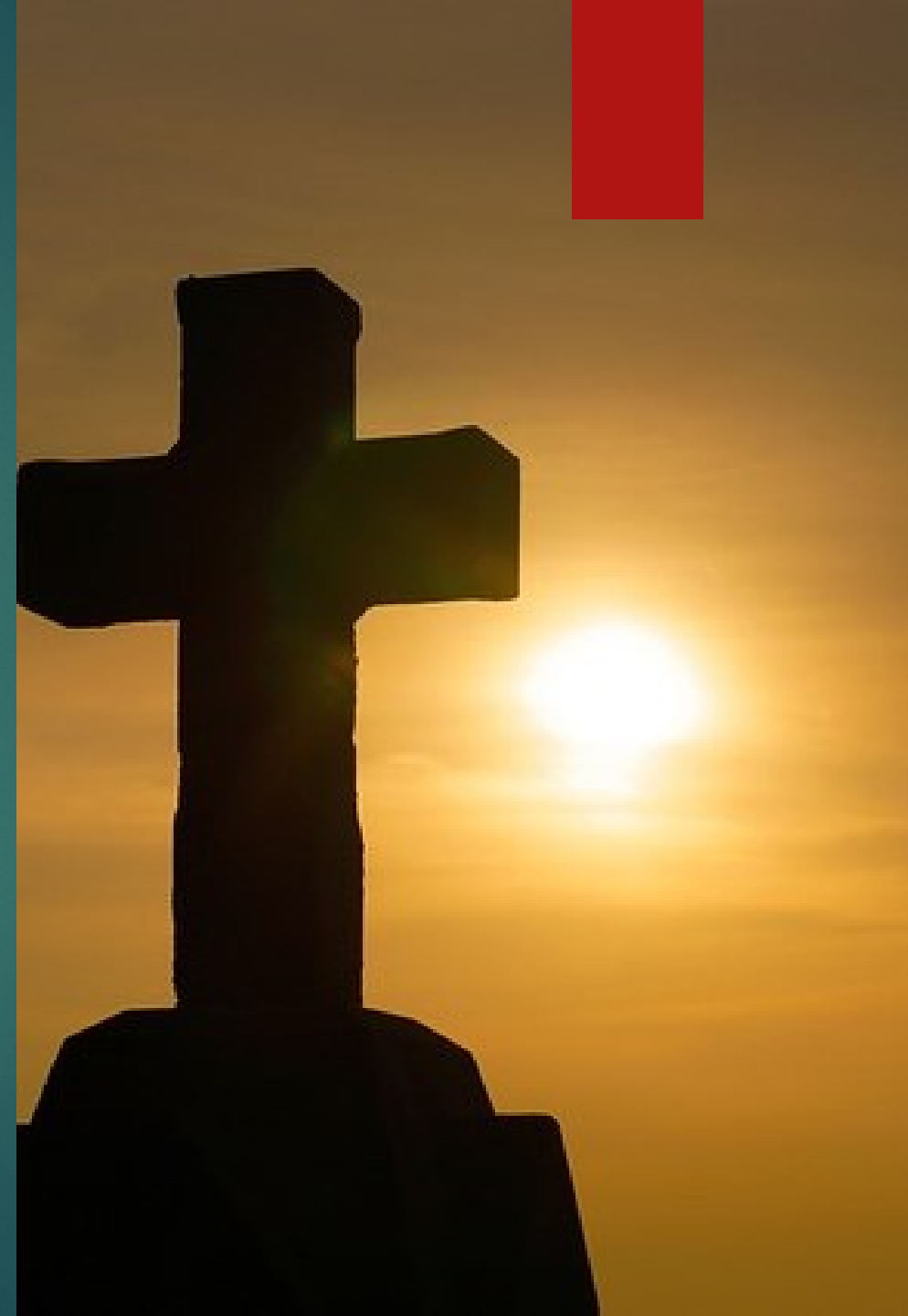


# St Marys PCC - Rev Canon Richard Hancock

Our link with schools has continued with Stalbridge School and Bishops Caundle School. We have had some good school services, an excellent Prayer Space Week and Father's Day event. Can I thank our Stalbridge Foundation Governors Judy Waite, Simon Witcomb and Hannah Smith from the Congregational Church. I would especially like to thank Judy Waite who has been the Chair of Governors at Stalbridge School and her hard work in this role in the past eighteen months as she retires as the chair at the end of the Summer Term.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have served our churches in the past year, particularly our church wardens. Special thanks to Vinny Taylor and Ethne Waltham who, after several years of dedicated service, are retiring from the role. Also, thanks to those who are stepping down from our PCCs after several years of service. May I also thank all of those behind the scenes who clean and decorate our churches, those offering hospitality after services our regular organists Maggie Chubb and Sue New. Thank you to all those who assist in leading worship particularly Judy Waite LLM, Rev Angela Syer, Rev Graham Hitchins and Rev Joe Edwards our Assistant PTO clergy and our team of Lay Worship Leaders along with those who read, lead intercessions and welcome. I would like to wish those who will be elected at our APCMs as Church Wardens and PCC members all the best for the coming year and I look forward to building on what has already been achieved.

From advent Sunday 2022 to 2023 we have been praying our benediction prayer for renewal asking for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and it is evident in the initiatives and changes that are taking place that our prayers are being answered. Let us continue to place our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to continue to renew us as we journey forward together.



# STARS (Stalbridge Trailway and Reserve Supporters) – Nick Brown

Stalbridge Trailway and Nature Reserve lies mainly on land owned by Wessex Water, comprising a section of the former Somerset and Dorset railway line, together with the site of the old town sewage works. The area has been designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, and contains a diversity of natural and semi-natural habitats including grassland, hedges, reedbeds and a small wood. Over 400 species of plants, animals, invertebrates and fungi have been recorded to date. The STARS voluntary group works with the Dorset Rangers to maintain and improve habitats, and to encourage public access and enjoyment. Anyone with a local interest in wildlife and conservation is welcome to enrol, and to help with practical management work or the recording of species. Through the autumn and winter of 2023/24 we cleared much dead and entangled growth from the woodland grove opposite Hunt's Food Store, in order to create a new woodland walk. We have also been steadily removing invasive bramble, blackthorn and hemlock from the reedbeds, which are now undergoing rotational cuts by the Rangers. Considerable financial support from the Blackmore Meadows development has been agreed, allocating £95,000 to the Trailway and £9,000 for the nature reserve. Exactly how and when this funding will be spent is yet to be clarified by the Dorset Rangers Service.



# North Dorset Trailway – Jan Wardell

Yet again and despite continuing efforts, there has been no progress on extending the Trailway in either direction out of Stalbridge. With the increase in residents, and ever increasing traffic on the roads, this is an even higher priority. We need to reduce the use of motorised vehicles, and to provide a safe environment for cyclists, mobility aid users, families and walkers especially, to access neighbouring villages and towns, and to provide recreational facilities for connecting with the countryside. There are plans to improve the surface of the short section we do have however, and as a Trustee of the North Dorset Trailway Network, I am keen to raise awareness of the work we do, and increase our membership to give greater weight to our campaigning efforts. Regrettably the Dorset Local Plan into which we hope that the establishment of the Trailway will be written, is not now due for adoption for at least another three years, in May 2027. We look forward with hope.

