

The Croak



The newsletter of the Frogmore Village Community Association
www.frogmore.info

Hello everyone

We trust you are all keeping well in these exceptional and difficult times. Of course, due to the Government Guidelines re Covid 19, we, the Frogmore Village Community Association must abide by these rules. It is with regret therefore, that we have had to cancel our village functions for this year. We have cancelled the social evening in October, Bonfire night and fireworks evening and the Seniors' Christmas Lunch. Hopefully, next year we will be able to bring the village together once again with more social events for us all. We will keep you all informed, rest assured.

All classes in the hall have been cancelled for the foreseeable future and the coffee mornings too. The FVCA Committee have also had to cancel their monthly meetings but are in constant touch with each other. We can always be reached by phone or email.

We have set out in this Croak, ongoing news about the village at this present time.

Fiona Dye, Secretary, FVCA



THE OLD BAKERY GETS A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Work has been going on apace during lockdown at the former Frogmore bakery which closed last Autumn.

The shop and flats have been bought by the enterprising Neal and Annette Smith who have a shop and exhibitions fitting business.

Their message:

'We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all of you who have made us so welcome here, Frogmore really is a special place for us.

With best wishes, Neal & Annette.'

Neal grew up in West Charleton and has always wanted to move back to the area at some point. Annette grew up on a Lake District farm but loves the seaside and being part of the community. Their company, Scorpion Project Solutions Ltd has some top clients and in 2017 they were awarded 'preferred contractor' status by Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre Group. But the pandemic business slow-down has given them and their industrious team the chance to give our village shop a beautiful and much needed make-over. All that's needed now is a bright new shop keeper! Enquiries to Neal: call 07970 103002.

The two flats are also undergoing complete renovation and modernisation and the ground floor former back bakery area is now a single bedroom flat, ideal for a first-time buyer. Care is being taken to retain original features and aspects and it's good to see the building being given much needed TLC.

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents of the Croak are correct, the FVCA does not guarantee the accuracy, and cannot accept liability for the consequences of any error in the material. The Croaks are also published on line on our website as well as delivered to your home.

STORM FLOODING



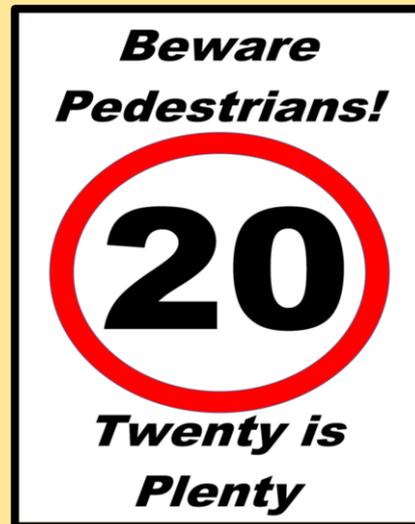
The late August storm brought quantities of silt and sharp stones tumbling down the A379 from the Old Turnpike Road at the top of Frogmore hill. It's no longer a rare occurrence given the deteriorating 'unmade' state of the turnpike.

Thanks to hard working, public spirited residents, the worst of the debris was quickly cleared away this time.

The Parish Council has requested help in fixing the problem from Devon Highways who are responsible for the old road. But unfortunately, it falls in the lowest category in the maintenance pecking order, so no cavalry yet on the way.

However, it has been pointed out that 200 metres of mud and loose stone strewn down the A379 constitutes a serious traffic and public safety hazard. 'A' roads get a high maintenance ranking and with the cause and effect, the penny may drop.

Discussions continue. Meanwhile, the Parish Council will organise a temporary sand bag bund at the bottom of the unmade turnpike to hold back the debris for the time being.



SLOW DOWN !

Many parishioners are worried about traffic speeding through Frogmore. It's frightening enough stepping around parked cars. It can be more hair-raising still avoiding vehicles speeding down Frogmore Hill, without a pavement for protection.

The A379, for the most part, is narrower than the minimum specification for an 'A' road. In Frogmore it is confined between houses and stone walls for much of its length.

But our Highway Authority, Devon County Council, don't see a problem; no one's died yet. And they say parked cars are a useful traffic calming measure. Perhaps they don't realise that pedestrians, obliged to walk in the carriageway, dent more easily than lorries, vans and cars.

Many of our neighbouring villages have 20-mph speed limits and the Frogmore Village Community Association now think the time has come to consider the same for our village.

Other communities are on the same page. It is reported that over 400 groups are currently lobbying for lower speed limits and the Welsh government has recently decided to pursue the introduction of a default, 20-mph limit in all residential areas.

A plan of action is being prepared. Speak to an FVCA trustee or visit www.frogmore.info for more information. You will also be receiving a hand delivered leaflet with everything explained, requesting your views. Is twenty plenty for you?

LAST CALL FROM BT'S ICONIC RED TELEPHONE KIOSK



BT will be removing our disused and damaged red telephone kiosk in the not too distant future. It's on private land and if it is to be kept in the village, a new site would be required. Consequently, it was not part of BT's 'Adopt Your Kiosk' scheme which has seen some 5,000 kiosks repurposed, often for village book exchanges or for other small community enterprises, across the country.

BT will now have the kiosk refurbished for re-sale by their specialist contractor, X2 Connect. The asking price will then be approximately £3,500, excluding VAT, but including delivery to a new site. The site would require a concrete base and an electricity supply for lighting.

Our own 'visual storyteller' Gethin Thomas captured the old kiosk well with his picture, aptly captioned 'Immobile Phone'.

Community interest

Limited community interest has been expressed in securing the kiosk as a heritage 'icon' and potential village community asset. Importantly it is recognised that a use would need to be identified and volunteers appointed to raise necessary funds to buy it and to look after its long-term management and maintenance.

The price is felt to be high and the Frogmore Village Community Association is not in a position to make funds available. But a few parishioners have expressed an interest. The Parish Council discussed the future of the kiosk in June 2020 and the minutes concluded: 'It was agreed that the Parish Council could assist with limited funds and ownership in order to recoup VAT, should an appropriately resourced community group emerge to ensure the full funding and management of the kiosk.'

What next?

An independent group would be needed to take forward any proposition to purchase and re-site the kiosk. There has been a generous offer to meet the cost of providing a new solid base and service connection and one option may be to site it in a prominent position near the village hall. But more donations and helpers would be needed.

As we approach the 'final call' it is time to act if you are interested in securing the refurbished kiosk's eventual return to Frogmore. Peter Hadley is a Parish Councillor and kiosk enthusiast. Give him a call or an email if you want to form or support a 'community kiosk' heritage recovery group. Setting up a 'go fund me' fundraising page may be the next step. Contact Tel: 01548 531240. Email: aphadley@talktalk.net.



NEW BENCH IN STABBS LANE

On 11 August, the FVCA Committee members met with Wendy Morris and her dear friend Ruth Howard to commemorate a new bench to Michael Morris, Wendy's late husband, at Stabbs Lane by the Creek.

The old bench had become rotten and so the Committee bought a new bench to replace it and we have commemorated this bench to Mike with a plaque. Wendy loves to sit here by the Creek, so it was very fitting as a memorial to her dear husband Mike who passed away a short while ago. Mike had always been a great supporter of the village and of course lived in Frogmore. For many years, he was a Church Warden at St Martin's Church in Sherford. We all met on a beautiful summer evening and toasted Mike in memory of him.

NATURE NOTES BY AMANDA STARKEY



Bats!

The photo shows some lesser horseshoe bats sheltering in my barn a few weeks ago on a hot summer evening. At first glance, it appears to show six bats, all socially distancing. However, if you look closer, second from the right is actually a pair, huddling very close together. Not sure if they are mother (or father) and baby, or just good friends!

The lesser horseshoe bat was once a cave-dweller, but now tends to roost in old buildings, such as stables and barns. It is rare in the UK and, like many other bats, they are declining in number. They are tiny, around the size of a small hen's egg. They get their name from their curious horseshoe shaped faces and they can live for around 30 years.



Sloe gin

If, like me, you enjoy the occasional sloe gin, now is the time to collect sloes to make sloe gin. A small glass is delicious after a bracing autumn or winter walk, or it is good at the bottom of a glass of Prosecco to produce a delicious pink cocktail for special occasions! Sloes are plentiful this year and I picked mine from around the creek.

You need around 450 grammes (yes, I have finally gone metric, 1 lb for those who haven't yet!) of sloes to 225 grammes (8 oz) of white sugar and a litre (a pint and a half) of gin. Supermarket own brand gin is fine, it does not have to be one of those more expensive artisan gins! Pick through the sloes, wash them thoroughly and put them in the freezer overnight in a plastic bag. In the morning, take them out to defrost, then put them into a large sterilised wide-necked glass bottle (preferably a clear glass one) and pour the sugar and the gin over them, then put the top on and shake two or three times a day for about a week, until the sugar is dissolved. Keep in a dark cupboard, shaking the bottle two or three times a week. Just before Christmas, decant and strain to remove all the sloes. I strain mine two or three times, either through a piece of muslin or a disposable paper coffee filter. The sloe gin should be clear and bright, a beautiful deep ruby colour. Decant into a series of sterilised smaller bottles, label and perhaps add a ribbon around the bottle neck, a perfect small gift.

If the sloes have all gone, you can make delicious blackberry gin in the same way, substituting blackberries which will not need freezing first.