

Church Notes

April 2025



"Therefore when we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that the time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labour and wrought substance of them, 'See! This our fathers did for us.'"

-John Ruskin

Welcome to Church Notes.

Now that winter's stubborn grip has finally loosened, spring has arrived in Stiffkey. The first mowing of the churchyard marks the official transition to the new season, and volunteers have already begun the annual deep clean of the building.

Work also continues apace on planning the forthcoming repairs and maintenance, as well as the fundraising needed to make it happen.

The main section of roof that covers the nave has several leaks where it joins with the church tower, and there are also several slipped and broken tiles that need replacement. The steeply pitched roof over the chancel also leaks - this time where it joins with the nave.

Research indicates that this section of roof was probably tiled sometime between the late 1950s and the end of the 1960s, when the lead sheets were replaced with black-glazed pantiles, known locally as 'smuts'. Unfortunately however, many of these tiles are frost damaged and are in need of replacement, so this section of roof will need to be completely re-tiled.



We Need Your Help

Beyond the urgent need to make the building watertight before next winter's storms, completing the work in 2025 will also enable us to reclaim the VAT on all associated costs. This will reduce the overall cost of any repairs by 20% and we need your help to make sure we don't miss this opportunity! We would be grateful for your support.



Upcoming Services

Maundy Thursday - 17th April 12:00pm

Easter Sunday - 20th April 09:30am

Regular services are usually held on the first and third Sundays of each month.

Morning Prayer 9.30am on the 1st Sunday - May 4th and June 1st

Holy Communion 9.30am on the 3rd Sunday - April 20th, May 18th and June 15th



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Stiffkey People

Henry Williamson, perhaps best known for his award-winning novel Tarka The Otter (which won the Hawthornden Prize in 1928), lived in Stiffkey between 1937 and 1945.

He moved to Stiffkey after purchasing Old Hall Farm for £2,250 in the autumn of 1936 and began life as a farmer. Though inexperienced, he had firm views on how the farm should be run.

In his book "The Story of a Norfolk Farm," he describes his struggles to transform the small, derelict and hilly property into a high-quality, progressive operation.

His allegiance to Oswald Mosley and in particular to Mosley's radical agricultural

policies that formed a significant component of the manifesto of the British Union of Fascists, led to distrust amongst many local villagers. This suspicion culminated in his brief arrest under Defence Regulation 18B in 1940. After a weekend in Wells Police Station, authorities released him without charge.



Whilst in Stiffkey, Williamson primarily lived in Walnut Cottage on Wells Road, where the Henry Williamson Society has erected a commemorative plaque. He also maintained a second property in the village, Meadow Lea Cottage, which served as his studio and library. He sold the farm in October 1945, having successfully transformed it to a grade one farm.

By 1946, he had left Stiffkey and returned to Devon. He made a brief return to Stiffkey in 1972 to discuss traditional agricultural methods and their contrast with 1970s practices for the BBC television programme The Vanishing Hedgerows.

Mysteries of the Churchyard

The discovery of the crypt on the eastern side of the church began with the appearance of a rather innocuous looking hole. Over several years, the hole became larger and larger until further investigation revealed a hitherto unknown brick wall descending into the depths below...



Excavations revealed that the hole formed due to the collapse of a stone slab covering a hidden stairway. At the base of this stairwell lies a crypt, supported by elegant masonry arches. Within the crypt rest two wooden and three lead coffins, holding the remains of five members of the Buck family, whose names can be seen on the grave markers that sit above ground, against the eastern chancel wall...

The crypt was carefully checked by a structural engineer to ensure that it poses no structural risk to the church. A simple service of committal was held, to pay respect to those laid to rest within. With the stairwell safely sealed once more, the earth was sown with grass and wild flower seed, a gentle promise of life renewed.



How You Can Help

Make a Payment Today.

- A cheque payable to Stiffkey PCC
 - A bank transfer
- A card payment via the QR code below
 - A card payment in the church

Make a Regular Donation.

Setup a monthly Standing Order
Make a Deed of Covenant

Leave a Legacy.

Please contact us for more information

Volunteer.

- Help in the church
- Help in the churchyard
 - Help fundraise

Please contact us for more information

Stiffkey Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the following members:

Rev. Ian Whittle . Heather Harrison . David Hooper . Alan Duff . Chris Halford . Roger Bland . Alexandra Hooper

Contact Details

The Secretary, St Mary and St John's, c/o Glebelands, Church Street, NR23 1QJ
Email: stjstiffkey.sec@outlook.com

Registered as a Charity in England and Wales No. 1210243

We are registered for  **sumup**


Bank Details

Bank Account Name: **Stiffkey Parochial Church Council**
Sort Code: **20-30-81**
Account Number: **20844306**

