

# Welcome to St Mary's, Nether Stowey,

## **Introduction:**

Welcome to Nether Stowey, a thriving village of approximately 1500 souls, nestled at the edge of the Quantock Hills; an area of outstanding natural beauty. The village is designated a Rural Centre and as such beckons people of all ages to settle here. We have social housing, sheltered housing, some rented accommodation and sheltered housing bungalows but most of it is owner-occupied. The village has a long and interesting history, the older part of which lies in a conservation area. The oldest buildings are



believed to be of early medieval origin.

Overlooking the village is the remains of an 11<sup>th</sup> century motte and bailey castle known locally as The Mount. Every Easter we, the parishioners of St Mary's Church, erect a large wooden cross visible for many miles around. A short service is held there each Good Friday.

With 3 grocers, a post office and butcher, a doctor's surgery with pharmacy, 2 hairdressers, a fire station, library, and part-time vet, Nether Stowey is rich in amenities. There are also two cafes, and two public houses and good public transport links. It is the place where the National

Trust runs their oldest gifted building – the home of Samuel Taylor Coleridge for three years from which he wrote his best works.

## **School**

There is a good village Voluntary Controlled Primary School with 150 pupils feeding secondary schools in Bridgwater and Williton. A good school bus service runs local children into both Bridgwater and Taunton.



*The Ancient Mariner Inn and Coleridge Cottage*

## **Church Buildings**



*St Mary's Church*

As you approach Nether Stowey from Bridgwater the first thing you will see on the right is St Mary's Church. It is mostly stone-built Victorian though the church tower is medieval. It seats up to 180 people in pews, has an updated kitchen and an outside loo.

The churchyard was officially closed in 2012 the upkeep for which the District Council has taken responsibility.

## The Church Centre:

As the Church Centre is closer to the village, has full disabled facilities and is easy to reach, we use it regularly for Family Worship, Messy Church and mid-week services. Sometimes it is a much warmer environment for our octogenarians during mid-winter. The Church Centre holds over 200 people, has a kitchen, a small comfortable lounge, office, storeroom and toilets.

When not in use for church purposes the Centre is let out to various local groups eg; badminton and bowls, the day centre and quarterly blood donation, an advice drop-in centre, art group, quilting group and Active Living on a regular basis; it is also let for private parties, weddings, church social and other church events including monthly coffee mornings, an annual art exhibition, quiz supper, jazz concert, and harvest supper. A Passover Supper is held once every two years.



*Christingle service as part of Messy Church*

### Children, Youth and Families

[Click here](#)



*Remembrance Day at the Cross*

## The Stable Loft

Situated above the garages of the Rectory, the Loft is an additional space with small kitchen area which is used for children and youth groups, smaller events or meetings and holds around 50 people.

## Open Air Services

We also hold three open-air public acts of worship, namely:

- **The Service on The Mount** on Good Friday followed by a walk of silent witness, carrying a cross, through the village to the Church;
- **Remembrance Sunday** – an Act of Worship in conjunction with the Royal British Legion at the

War Memorial in the centre of the village at the Market Cross.

- **Carols on the Cross**  
On Christmas Eve involving a local newborn baby and parents providing a live nativity tableau.

The services at the Market Cross are attended regularly by about 150 to 250 residents.





## Services

There is always a friendly welcome in Nether Stowey where Family Communion services are held in St Mary's Church and Family Worship is held in the Church Centre (except for Festivals, when services are held in the church). One of these is a Café-style Service, once a month. Congregational singing at all these services is led by a small group of musicians using guitar/vocal, violin, piano and bass guitar. Prayer Ministry is offered after every 11am service by a trained team and overseen by one of the Readers under the Incumbent's authority.

Said Communion services are also held weekly at 10.00am on a Friday at St Mary's Church Centre.

An annual Christingle service is held during Epiphany; a Harvest Festival, Rogation Sunday in autumn, and a TearFund Sunday at some time during the summer months. Occasionally Songs of Praise services are held at 4pm on a Sunday in the Centre.

## Church Organisations

- There is a monthly **prayer group**; a contemplative prayer group and a prayer chain for special requests.
- Three **Home Groups** are organised in different homes with around 40 people involved.
- A **Visiting Group** is being re-trained. It is a friendly support network overseen by two of our members. ready to visit those in need.
- Popular monthly **Coffee mornings**, held at the Church Centre, are now in their 9<sup>th</sup> year. These serve a valuable social service as well as raising funds for restoration of St Mary's.
- The **Day Centre** meets every Wednesday, partly staffed by church members



- **Advice Drop-In Centre**, HAAS (Help And Advice in Sedgemoor), comes for 2 hours each month. It is currently supported by the Diocese and church members. CAB, Credit Union and a Council representative are on duty each week with Age UK.
- A **Christmas Day Lunch** for those alone, or otherwise unable to produce a Christmas meal for themselves is hosted by two families each year.
- An **Alpha Course** was last run during 2014.

The **Quantock Messenger** magazine was originally a church publication and covers events for the villages of Nether and Over Stowey. It is now edited by non-church voluntary editors but is printed, compiled and despatched by church volunteers. Profits are shared with local charities at the end of the year.

## Village Activities

Nether Stowey has a wealth of activities and organisations from Amateur Dramatics and the annual Pantomime to Friends of the Library; Friends of Coleridge to the Gardening Club; Coleridge Probus to Stowey Bears Pre-school; from three book clubs to Short Mat Bowls and football; badminton groups to the Twinning Association and Allotment Association to the 1<sup>st</sup> Nether Stowey Brownies.

The Village Hall Committee has joined forces with the Playing Field Committee with a view to building an exciting new Pavilion beside the Playing Fields. Then there is Community Action for Nether Stowey which is a branch of the Parish Council and oversees all the activities.

An annual highlight, apart from the pantomime, is the re-instated May Street Fair which fills the three main streets of Nether Stowey fanning out from the Market Cross. Its history goes back to 1304.

There is also a tradition of an annual Women's Walk from the Cross to the church in memory of Thomas Poole a famous philanthropist and son of Stowey, who founded the primary school. The walk is led by young flower girls with baskets of flowers placed beside his grave.

More information can be found at  
[www.quantockonline.S.uk](http://www.quantockonline.S.uk)



*May Street Fair*

## People

As in the other rural parishes 29% of our population is over 65 yrs old with around 16% under 16. Housing varies from home ownership to social housing; sheltered bungalows for disabled or elderly to first time buyer housing. Recent expansion of the village means that a number of new houses have been built; some social housing and some owner-occupied, on the other side of the bypass. There is still a need for further social housing and plans are being made for a possible 50 or so extra homes in Nether Stowey over the next 5 years or so.

## Mission & charity support

Apart from the activities and services mentioned above St Mary's strives to give 10% of its general income to local, national and international charities. Nether Stowey has a special interest in Signpost International, a charity set up and run by a former parishioner, with whom they sponsor a child in the Phillipines and gives a special added collection after international emergency situations of dire need. Our giving has included The Children's Society, Christian Aid, Tear Fund, Home-Start Bridgwater, Macmillan Nurses, the Deanery Mission Project), Nether Stowey Fire Station, Nether Stowey Schools Meals Service, Marian Everard Trust, St Margaret's Hospice and the Food Bank in Alcombe. Food is also collected by parishioners for the food bank on a regular basis.



*A Benefice Bring 'n' Share meal at the Church Centre*