

Stow & Fountainhall

community newsletter
www.stow-borders.co.uk

issue
39
Spring
2020

TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2020 - THE START OF THE OLD STATION HOUSE CONVERSION



It has been a very busy couple of months for the Stow Community Trust. The good news is that in the run up to Christmas a sustainable financial package to bridge the financial gap caused by the increased costs from the tender bidding process was agreed. The contract for the building and construction works was signed with Swinton's Builders, Hawick just before Christmas. Work has now finally begun on the site with a completion date in September 2020. A meeting with representatives from the neighbouring houses and other local stakeholders about the practical arrangements for the building works was held early in January followed by a wider community meeting on Wednesday 26 February.



With the building works underway, the Stow Community Trust Board is now focusing its energies on the planning for activities in the building once it is completed. With the help of the local community we aim to have a name for the new Bar and Kitchen identified by the beginning of May. We're looking to find a name that will be meaningful for the local community, attract visitors from far and near and serve us well in years to come. Work is also underway to start the advertising and procurement for a tenant to run the Bar/ Kitchen.

We're also exploring the practical arrangements that we will need around the community room to ensure that it is a accessible community space that will encourage local people to gather and connect to do things together and pursue shared interests or activities; both serious and fun. Additionally, we have been in constructive discussions with Just Cycle, an established and successful Borders based social enterprise to extend their operations to run an outreach facility in the Station House.

We want to ensure that all the activities in and around the Station House will provide a well-integrated offer to the local community as well put Stow on the map as a great place to visit.

Keep in touch through www.stowhub.co.uk or our facebook page www.facebook.com/StowCommunityTrust



MARY WANTS YOUR IMAGES

Stow and Fountainhall Community Council have commissioned local archivist and historian Mary W. Craig to write a history of the Gala Water Valley. The book will examine our earliest beginnings, uncover what our ancestors did in the medieval period, explore the excitement of the Victorian era and look at the development of the valley in more modern times.

To accompany this we are looking for lots of images of the valley to illustrate the book. So we are appealing to everyone in the community to contribute some images.

Views can be of anything you think best illustrates our lovely valley; perhaps the beech woods of Stow; the steam train passing Fountainhall or farmers working with their dogs. If you are taking images of children please ensure you have permission from their parents.

If you'd like to contribute an image please send them as a tiff or jpeg file to mwcraig11@gmail.com

Images need to be a minimum of 300 dpi and be sure to add a title for the image and your name so we can credit you in the final book. Please note, depending on how many images we receive we cannot guarantee that all will be used.



WIND FARM FUNDS

APPLICATION DATES 2020
EDF LONGPARK (Foundation Scotland)
& SSE TODDLERBURN
 (combined deadlines & panels)

DEADLINE	PANEL MEETING
5 April	9 June
5 July	25 August
4 October	24 November

Notification of the outcome within two weeks.

AWARDS
 since last newsletter

EDF LONGPARK

Parish of Stow Community Council
£8,000
 To contribute to the cost of repairing the retaining wall and make safe the layby south of Stow opposite the Subscription Bridge

Fountainhall Baby and Toddler Group

£273
 To fund hall hire for one year, enabling the group to run without requiring fees from participants

Stow Community Trust

£9584.32
 To purchase furniture for the Community Hub, part of the Station House development

Notes
 on
 the
 Wind

NEWS FROM GREEN STOW

Green Stow is a new(-ish) community group which champions and supports green and eco-friendly activities in and around Stow. This has included the amazing 'disrupters' group in Stow Primary School, who have been leading on the green agenda in a range of ways, most recently by innovating ecologically friendly Christmas crackers and promoting use of bamboo toothbrushes.

Green Stow's first public event was a Stow Primary School hosted talk on 30 January by Lorna Slater, co-leader of the Scottish Green party. Lorna gave a personal and deeply inspiring account of a trip she made to the Antarctic as part of a women's leadership course on climate action. Lorna related her first-hand experiences of the ways that global heating is affecting the region, but also gave a hopeful message of how, by acting locally, we can make a difference. She also showed lots of cute pictures of penguins! It was fantastic how many Stow folk came along and engaged Lorna with thoughtful questions and discussion.

Lorna's message seemed to have had an effect as there were several new faces at the Green Stow meeting on the following Sunday, all bubbling with enthusiasm for how the community can take action on pressing environmental challenges, with many ideas suggested ranging from litter picking to rewilding.

We will be continuing with the threads of those conversations at our next informal meeting, which will be on **Sunday 29 March at 11.30** in the Cloudhouse Cafe.

If you are concerned about climate change or environmental issues and want to do something to help that is practical, positive and community centred, please do come along to our next meeting. Hope to see you there!

You can follow Green Stow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/308081753465275/
 Or call Tim Clancey on 07856605358

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STOW PLANTERS & AN INVITATION

I think everyone will agree the Station and Village planters in Stow last year have been the best so far. We would like to thank The Community Council, ScotRail, the SSE Toddleburn Wind farm for the grants and some very kind local donations which enable us to continue to purchase plants. We are also indebted to Philiphaugh Gardens for continuing to providing a large number of bedding plants at a reasonable cost.

Last year we planted more Perennials in the long border at the station to move towards a more sustainable future. We also had donations of plants from people in the village.

We could not keep the planters watered throughout the summer without the help of some dedicated people who fill the bowser and wheel it about the village. We would however appeal for anyone who is interested and able to join us. It takes between 2 and 3 hours to fill up all the reservoirs in the planters, but the more people we have helping, the fewer times we have to do it over the summer. The reservoirs keep the planters going for a week.

Here's looking forward to the daffodils just beginning to chance it. To find out more email fionajeffrey321@btinternet.com or mackenziejwf@gmail.com



Thursday 9 April 3pm Fountainhall Village Hall

Suitable for age 3+

Tickets available from:

email: JJ.Mushlin@gmail.com

tel: 01578 760297

Stow Post Office

online:

www.liveborders.org.uk/book/whats-on/

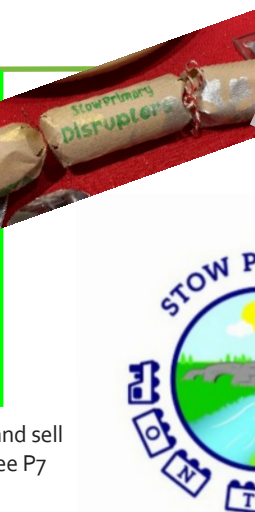


Can you imagine life without dogs? No? Well, no worries because Ugg 'n' Ogg are here to save us from a life of doglessness.

Join our two intrepid Yorkshire hunter-gatherer heroes as they pal up with their mortal enemies the wolves and - despite flying meat bones, time-travelling sticks and sabre-toothed tigers - finally get to play with the world's first Dogg.

A reet funny comic take on the amazing evolutionary process that transformed the wolf into man's best friend.

Theatre Fideri Fidera is one of the UK's leading children's touring companies and is dedicated to producing exciting, original theatre for children and their families.



At Christmas the pupils decided to make and sell sustainable crackers. This was led by three P7 pupils but involved the entire school community.

Younger pupils decorated the paper whilst older children managed the financial arrangements. Items were sourced or made and then ordered. The contents for them, sustainable of course, included – seeds, a hat, a pledge and a sustainable item such as homemade soap, bracelet, or puzzle. Orders were taken in advance via email/ order forms and the school community helped to assemble them.

Pupils then voted as to how to spend the healthy profit. It was decided to send it to help animals suffering as a result of the bushfires in Australia.



The 2018-19 station usage figures for the whole of Great Britain were published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) in early January and these show a small but significant increase in patronage at Stow - I say significant because part of the period covered was badly affected by train crew related cancellations and it would have been no surprise if passenger numbers on the Borders Railway as a whole had actually dropped. To be more exact, there were 71,222 recorded entries and exits here, an increase of just under 2% compared with 2017-18. All the Borders Railway stations showed an increase except for Newtongrange where there was 1.8% drop in patronage. Interestingly, Shawfair achieved a very healthy 30% increase, but still lags well behind Stow at 41,138 entries and exits, and one does wonder what the justification is for Shawfair being privileged with the full service while 18 of these trains whizz through Stow without stopping!

Total Numbers of Entries and Exits

	2018/19	(2017/18)
Tweedbank	443,766	(436,978)
Galashiels	360,416	(356,262)
Stow	71,222	(69,834)
Gorebridge	123,930	(115,102)
Newtongrange	154,202	(157,016)
Eskbank	367,042	(338,932)
Shawfair	41,138	(31,588)

The indefatigable Bill Jamieson, who did so much as part of the Campaign for Borders Rail to bring about the return of the Borders Railway (see Newsletter No. 22, Summer 2015) continues to keep an eye on the progress of the service.

Here he brings us up to date with:

- news of a delay in plans for every train to stop at Stow and
- the increase in footfall at all bar one stations along the line.





The Parent Council made sure that their fundraising efforts were sustainable again, creating table centre pieces and wooden snowmen with the pupils.

The school play - Cinderella Rockafella - a modern twist on the original, was a whole school pantomime. A massive achievement that brought all ages together to create a hilarious show that was once again incredibly professionally done from the songs and costumes to the scenery and acting.

Over the past few months pupils have been discovering the importance of reducing food waste. As a direct result the clean plate challenge was initiated. Waste food from lunch is weighed and recorded each day and statistical analysis ensues; the children are engaged and utilise fundamental skills in their work.



A year ago this newsletter was able to report in optimistic terms on the prospects of all trains stopping at Stow with effect from the May 2020 timetable change. Unfortunately any hopes of this happening had already been dashed before 2019 was out when ScotRail's Scott Prentice emailed the following to Fraser Simm and myself:-

"We did develop a timetable with a half hourly service at Stow but it was rejected through the verification process because it was considered that the extra calls made the timetable across the whole route unacceptably poorly performance (sic) (ie. more trains would be late each day).

*As you are aware the Scottish Government served ScotRail with a Remedial Notice earlier this year because performance on the East Coast routes had fallen to unacceptable levels. The reliability of service is improving but is not yet at the level which customers expect and deserve. **We still want to provide Stow with a half hourly service** (my emphasis) but now need to find a way of speeding trains up so that the time of the extra call can be incorporated without worsening the service reliability for all customers on the route. There are a number of projects underway which will enable this to happen, I'm just not confident enough of the timescales for their completion to advise when we might be able to introduce the additional calls.*

I apologise for the disappointing news and assure you that we will make this happen."



This is certainly disappointing but hardly surprising given the poor - at times abysmal - performance throughout 2019, not least the number of crew related cancellations which continued to be an issue into the autumn (although this seems to have been resolved from the December timetable change). The main 'way of speeding trains up' referred to by Scott is almost certainly the remodelling of Portobello Junction, which I understand will raise the speed restriction for trains joining/ leaving the Borders Railway from 15 to 40 mph. In conjunction with full operation by class 170 diesel multiple units, this should easily permit the necessary time savings to be found.

The bad news is that the remodelling of Portobello Junction (which has been under discussion for at least 15 years to my knowledge) is unlikely to take place until 2022-23, but hopefully more 3-coach class 170 units will become available during the course of 2020, allowing the remaining 2-coach (and ageing) class 158 units to be replaced.

The latter being the case, I find it difficult to see why some incremental improvements could not be made before Portobello Junction is remodelled - for example the half-hourly frequency northbound could be extended into the late morning with just two additional trains calling at 09:11 and 10:11. Similarly, additional calls at 15:39 and 16:39 southbound would give a half hourly frequency from Edinburgh commencing in the mid-afternoon. To my mind such changes (which I have already suggested to ScotRail) would target the periods of higher demand during the off-peak, and as such would constitute a significant improvement in the service at Stow, but it would be interesting to know what anyone else thinks.



Quiz Night

Fountainhall Village Hall
Individuals and pairs can come along and join a team on the night
16 years plus

Quiz Masters
Jackie & Charlie

Leg charity number SC024124

Teams of Four
£12 per team
£3 per individual
Friday 13th March
7.30pm
Licenced Bar

GRAB A TEAM
IT'S
QUIZ
NIGHT



PUB NIGHT

May 16th 8pm
Fountainhall Village Hall
Come along have a drink and a laugh.
Free entry.
Licensed Bar. Over 18's only

Time to Wine Down

KEEP CALM IT'S PUB NIGHT

IT'S GIN O'CLOCK

Leg charity No. SC023124

Selection of Gins will be available



PLANT SALE & coffee morning
Saturday 13 June
10.00 am until 12.00 noon
Stow Town Hall
Gala Water Horticultural Society

BABY CLUB 0-3's
(WITH SWIMMIE)
TUESDAYS
9:30 - 10.30AM

STOW TODDLER & BABY GROUP

TODDLERS (PRE-SCHOOL)
THURSDAYS
9:30 - 11AM

STOW TOWN HALL

BABY CLUB ON TUESDAY HAS STOPPED FOR THE TIME BEING DUE TO LOW NUMBERS.

TODDLER GROUP ON THURSDAY CONTINUES AS NORMAL. ALL AGES 0 - PRE SCHOOL WELCOME!

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We are actively seeking new families to come along to the group. We need people. We need fresh ideas. What would people like? A different day? Different time? Would you like to hold a meeting?. We've been having various meetings with Live Borders etc. to see what can be re-vamped.

If you are a parent of an under school age child or children in the village and surrounding area we want to connect with you. We need fresh heads, fresh thoughts (and for those who are willing) fresh committee members.

We offer hot tea, snack and friendly fun chat. Daddy's more than welcome too!

Find us on Facebook for more info [www.facebook.com/Stow-toddlers-and-music-group-740671849469405/](http://www.facebook.com/Stow-toddlers-and-music-group-740671849469405/) or email [Stowparentgroup@gmail.com](mailto:Stowparentgroup@gmail.com) or contact Lisa on 07706 199505

**STOW kids club**

The weather has been so awful forcing the children to spend a lot of time indoors, therefore the gym hall has been very heavily used with lots of imaginative games, music and sports.

Baking continues to be one of our favourite activities, I wonder why?! followed by clay, arts and crafts in general, and XBoxing!!

The SKC committee would like to repeat its appeal for volunteers to help with various tasks, nothing too taxing, necessary to continue our after school club. Also we need staff for occasional cover of shifts. If you are interested please contact us via Facebook or email us at [stowkidsclub@hotmail.com](mailto:stowkidsclub@hotmail.com)



Finally we are planning to have a Spring (whenever that might be) party open to everybody. It will be like our famous Halloween parties but with a spring theme. Details will be announced on our Facebook page.

A big thank you to our teenager volunteers who make the children's afternoons special: Louis, Rowan, Layla, Ryan and, having just joined us, Aidan.

All the best from Andrea and Janice

!!! A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY !!!

On Friday 1 May, Stow Kids Club will be holding a Barn Dance Fundraiser event. This will be an evening event.

More details will be circulated soon and look out for tickets in late March. Please save the date. Adults Only. Please spread the word. Thank you



## STOW PUMP TRACK UPDATE



A huge thank you to all the people who came to the Stow Pump Track Community Consultation event in December. It was great to see so many people turn out on a Friday only two weeks before Christmas. Both the afternoon and the evening sessions were well attended and we had 75 responses to our consultation questionnaire. The purpose of the community consultation was to provide more information about the plans to have a pump track in Stow and to ask the community what their preferred site was. Only two sites had been identified as potentially feasible for a pump track from an options appraisal of 8 sites. Site 1 is the land between the Bowling Club and Mill Lane and Site 5 is the land between the football pitch and Mill Road (where the tents are for Stow Sports week). The results from the community consultation identified Site 1 as being the preferred site (84% of respondents preferred this site).

Both sites are on the flood plain as identified by SEPA. Early discussions with SBC's Flood Risk Engineer informed us that it is possible to build a pump track on a flood plain provided that it does not increase flood risk. Hawick Community Pump track recently have been granted planning permission and funding to build a pump track on a site with the same flood risk as the Stow sites.

We have had further discussions with SBC and now have permission to undertake the surveys, pump track design and flood risk assessments that would be required to assure SBC, the pump track group and wider community that the pump track, if built on Site 1, would not increase flood risk. This information will also be required for a planning application. We are also looking to see how we could, if possible, reduce the existing flood risk at Site 1. We have applied for funding to cover the costs of the surveys, design fees, flood risk assessments and planning application.

If successful in our funding application a user group will be formed to input into and be consulted on the design stages. We already have a number of young people who have volunteered to be part of this group but the group is open to anyone who has an interest in the pump track design. Please email [stowpumptrack@gmail.com](mailto:stowpumptrack@gmail.com) or message the Facebook page (@Stowpumptrack) if you would like to be part of this group and we will keep you informed. There will also be a further community event to provide an opportunity for anyone interested to see the final design.

Thank you for all the interest and support that has been shown for the pump track to date. We will provide further information on our Facebook page and the Stow Community Trust website ([stowhub.co.uk](http://stowhub.co.uk)).

## STOW COMMUNITY GARDEN

The community garden is looking good and hopefully the few signs of life that had begun to appear at the beginning of February haven't been destroyed by frost and snow.

The first gardening session at our community garden this year for some general tidying up will be on **Sunday the 29 March from 10 am, weather permitting.**

I have a new Gaggia coffee machine so the coffee is going to be even better. Looking forward to seeing you.

Donations of plants, seeds and bulbs are always welcome. Contact Andrea on at [andrea.carlino@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:andrea.carlino@yahoo.co.uk) or on **01578 730763**.

# Stowed Out 2020

After a year off, **Stowed Out will be back this year with a proposed date of 15 August.** After a spell of seven consecutive years building to a fantastic event receiving local and national acclaim and popularity, we needed to take a break to consider direction and sustainability.

The make-up of the committee has changed with the departures of last year several much appreciated committee members and office bearers - you know who you are and you have our gratitude for years of hard work building up Stowed Out over the years to the great event it was in 2018. We therefore have decided that perhaps it was time to revisit the roots of the festival.

The result of the above is that this year will be a one-day festival, with the aim of making it more community-based and family friendly. It will be smaller in scale, with an emphasis on local (Borders) talent, and there are some names in our sights already, but we will also look further afield to help balance the programme. We are also aiming to emphasize the arts side of this 'Music and Arts' festival, and elements of the arts, spoken word and possibly film are being discussed for inclusion in this year's festival. The festival has always been quite eclectic and so we want to spread that across the day and events.

Going to a festival should be about experiences and that is something we want to emphasize, with more interactive events in addition to music. With that in mind would be delighted to hear from any artists/ makers who would be interested in staging interactive demonstrations of what they do (anything from fine arts to dance and anything in between). Anyone interested is very welcome to get in touch and/ or come along to our meetings and get involved to whatever extent they feel comfortable.

**Anyone who might be interested in helping to put together this year's event or with any ideas they would like to bring to the table, please do get in touch via email or through Facebook, or by calling Andy on the number below. There will be an open meeting in late March so please check the Facebook page for updates. We are also looking for volunteers for the event day.** We have been very fortunate in the number of volunteers that have come forward in the past, so we are hoping that they will help out again this year: any new volunteers will be very welcome. We will start updating the Facebook shortly with more information. Until then, put 15 August in your diary... We will be putting in an order form for the sunshine that weekend.

The Stowed Out Team

email: [stowedoutfestival@gmail.com](mailto:stowedoutfestival@gmail.com)

facebook: [@stowedoutfestival](https://www.facebook.com/stowedoutfestival)

or call Andy Anderson on **07977821017**



Singing. Singing with others. That's one of the strongest strands running through John Wilkinson's life and one that he's enabled others to share through co-founding Gala Water Singers in 2011. The idea for the community choir came a couple of years after then local minister Catherine Buchan and her family left the area in 2009; Catherine's husband Alan was the church organist and choir leader and the choral gap he left remained unfilled until, at a gathering of the 'old' church choir, Nettie Simm (in the Spotlight in Newsletter No. 33, Autumn 2018) had the idea for a community choir. John and Paul Baxter (a Heriot man, so, for the moment, not able to be featured here) followed this up and learned that Hawick High School's well-known Principal Teacher of Music, Jim Letham, was about to retire. Jim was approached, responded positively, and a couple of 'Come and Sing' events took place in the valley in the summer of 2011 leading to over 50 people enthusiastically joining the new Gala Water Singers Community Choir when it began in August 2011, meeting in Fountainhall. John became Chair of the committee, a position he still fills.

Gala Water Singers is just the latest singing ensemble in John's life. He's sung with school choirs, church choirs, rugby... groups, Melrose Amateur Opera Society until it stopped performing in 2015 and now Gala Water Singers. As it's been 52 years since he moved into the valley, he's also been singing alongside some members of the community choir in one singing group or another for around half a century - a quite amazing record (oops, no pun intended) indeed. So how did John come to be in the Gala Water valley?

In 1968 John and his wife Allwin were expecting their second child while living in a room and kitchen in Edinburgh. They looked for somewhere they could afford for their increasing family (to become four children in all) and found Stow. They appreciated the old traditional village and John reckons they were one of the first commuters to move to the area; John was a medical representative at the time and a car and fuel allowance came with the job giving flexibility to where home could be in relation to work. Both John and Allwin were used to living close to the countryside in Dumfriesshire and Fife respectively, having met in Edinburgh during post secondary school education, so rural living suited them well. They also inherited a unique part of Scotland's literary history. The Wilkinsons live in part of Galabank (on the A7 one mile north of Stow) which was built as an old droving inn centuries ago - exactly when is not known. However, on a date sometime in the 1780s/90s, Robert Burns, Scotland's National Bard, was staying at the inn when he penned "The Braw Lads o' Gala Water" - the first verse of which he inscribed on the window pane of the 'best' upstairs room. Sadly it is no longer there but there are authentic witness accounts to the truth of the story. In less busy times

# spotlight on

JOHN  
WILKINSON

the school used to bring the children to see it and the song is now part of Gala Water Singers' repertoire.

John describes himself as someone who likes to follow his own direction and drive forward what he wants to see happen. This has often happily coincided with bringing benefit to our local community with many examples over the past half century. An equally strong and long thread in John's life is outdoor activity and it's perhaps not surprising that he was a co-founder of the Gala Water Outdoor Activity Club, initially a canoeing club in Stow for young people and families who wanted to be active outdoors. The idea came first, then the funding efforts and grant applications, acquisition of canoes though adults and young people building them together, life-jackets and - finally - the instructor skills to safely teach youngsters. The club then moved on to developing orienteering in the area and, over time, was proud to have seen five junior orienteering internationalists come from



its ranks. Hill-walking too flourished from within the group and is still going strong today (see last Newsletter No 38, Winter 2019-20). At one time, John estimates about 10% of the village were members. John is still chair of the club but nowadays 'committee meetings' are more likely to be talking in a bothy than a hall - much more John's style. Typically, after successful cancer treatment last year, he not only still walks with the club, he is leading walks for Macmillan Move More Borders for people recovering from cancer as part of their healthy living and recovery.

Casting his mind back to previous community involvement John can bring to mind: a spell on the Community

Council; starting up the first Parent/ Teacher Association with the then head of Stow Primary School, Derek Jones; volunteering with Borders Samaritans in its early years; being on the Board of Management of Stow and Heriot Church and a Panel Member of the Children's Panel for the Scottish Borders.

As someone who professes to find 'just sitting around talking' frustrating, preferring to 'get on and do' things, John has spent a lot of time planning and working with others to make things happen; to drive things forward in concert. His career in sales and working for The Shaw Trust negotiating work placements for people with disabilities which John describes as 'a sheltered workshop without premises', involved making connections with many people to understand their needs and see how or if he could help. That enjoyment of people and a wish to help while remaining true to his own path has benefited our area over many years and paid no little part in shaping our community life. We're fortunate that John is still keen to follow up and make happen anything he cares about and considers important. We can all stay on song with that!

## NEXT NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2020 : No. 40

COPY DATE DELIVERED FROM  
18 May 20 5 June 20

to: Heather Johnston, Editor  
heather@southcottage.co.uk  
01578 730507

If you are a new business in Stow Parish CC area and would like a mention in the newsletter, please contact the editor  
for an email reminder of the copy date nearer the time  
email the editor and ask to be put on the list

## CLOUDHOUSE CAFÉ

The Cloudhouse Café  
is once again  
open 7 days a week  
10-3 Saturday - Thursday  
and  
10-4 on Fridays

## STOW POST OFFICE & VILLAGE SHOP HOLIDAY DATES

MONDAY 6 APRIL LOCAL HOLIDAY  
MONDAY 4 MAY BANK HOLIDAY

The Post Office Counter will be closed  
The shop will be open from 6am - 10am  
on the above dates