

RACKENFORD NEWS

Summer 2026
Edition 10

Update from the Parish Council

It's been another busy year in and around Rackenford with plenty of community projects and improvements taking shape across the parish.

Following a period of ill health, our long-serving Clerk, Rob, decided it was the right time to step back from his role with Rackenford Parish Council. We thank Rob for his years of dedicated service and wish him all the very best. We are pleased to have welcomed Faye as our new Clerk, who has quickly settled into the role and become a valued member of the team.

As part of a recent government initiative, the council is preparing to launch a new gov.uk website. We hope the new website will improve access to parish information and address some of the limitations of the current site.

The annual Village Day was once again a great success, bringing the community together and providing a fantastic day for residents and visitors alike. Thank you to everyone who helped organise and support the event.

Road safety remains an important issue within the parish. We are supporting the establishment of a Community Speed Watch group, which we hope will help raise awareness of speeding and encourage safer driving through the village. We continue to report potholes and other highways issues affecting the parish. Please do your bit by reporting any concerns via the Devon County Council website, as every report helps.

A new parish noticeboard has been installed on the wall of the shop replacing the old rotten one which was removed as part of creating an access to the outdoor seating area. We have also completed repairs to the village marquee, helping to ensure it remains available for community events for years to come. New 5-a-side goals have been installed in the MUGA and the rusty basketball hoops will be replaced in the coming weeks.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all our councillors and everyone who gives their time to keep Rackenford vibrant and looking its best. Whether gritting, clearing gullies, strimming, litter picking or tackling other jobs around the village, your efforts make a real difference. Special thanks go to Nic for the fantastic effort pulling up Himalayan Balsam on the Common, and to Ed and Stewart for the excellent job they do maintaining the village's green spaces. Your dedication is greatly appreciated.

Chair of Parish Council, Cllr Scott Ware

News from the Shop Directors

Our community shop is almost 30 years old and our goal is to still have a shop in Rackenford in another 30 years. To achieve this we need to get two main things right – to have a team of wonderful volunteers to run the shop and to persuade more of you to spend a little extra with us each week.

We serve a small community and this does make it hard to compete with supermarkets and bigger farm shops. Feedback from you confirms you want more local produce, more choice and for us to remain competitive on price where we can. We have had a lot of success with our new monthly wine offers, our local beers and ciders and our locally sourced meat. Our local honey, jams and chutneys are always popular. We aim to match these with cheaper brands. We want to continue to improve in all these areas and we welcome your feedback! You can follow us on Facebook to get regular shop news and updates.





Our new shop system EPOS was a year old in May. It was able to tell us a lot about shopping habits.





Our community shop is so much more than a convenience store. That is why this year we have invested in improving the social side of the shop. We now have an inside table and chairs and some all-weather outside seating. Our newly leased coffee machine and range of traybakes have been popular with customers and help us test the waters on the idea of a future shop café. The exterior of the Old School Room has had much needed repairs and repainting this spring. Our new beautifully planted raised bed offers a warm welcome and is complemented by our joyous hanging baskets from Ash Moor nursery. Our new aprons, shop bags and flyers showcase our new branding and help us to promote the shop. We had some very generous donations to achieve a lot of this from both local people and a small grant from the Batsworthy Community Benefit Fund. A huge THANK YOU to all of them!

We are always on the hunt for more volunteers. If you have any time to give, however small, we would love to hear from you.

Flora Blackburn







Village Day

A Fantastic Celebration of Community



Rackenford Village Day returned with great weather and a wonderful atmosphere, bringing the community together for what was one of the best attended events to date. A large crowd enjoyed a fantastic day of activities, entertainment and celebration, helping to create a memorable occasion.

The Summer Show organised by Rackenford Gardening Club once again filled the marquee with incredible displays of flowers, showcasing the amazing talent and dedication of local growers. The dog show was a highlight, with plenty of proud owners and cheerful canines taking part, while traditional games provided entertainment for all ages.

The day was supported by a great selection of local stalls and community organisations, helping to showcase the many groups and activities that make Rackenford such a vibrant community. The refreshments were as popular as ever, with excellent homemade cakes, hot drinks and a well-supported BBQ keeping everyone fuelled.

The evening party was a fantastic way to round off the celebrations. Local band Bicycle Repair Man were on top form, getting everyone dancing and singing along and bringing the day to a brilliant close.

A huge thank you goes to all the volunteers, organisers, stallholders, performers and everyone who helped make Rackenford Village Day such a success. It was a wonderful celebration of everything that makes our community special.

Photos: Ian Wilson



Rackenford Community Shop

A date for your calendar...

Sunday 22nd November
11.00am to 3.00pm

Preview of Christmas stock, artisan stands, mulled wine, snacks and more.





Stands are still available, if you are interested, email stephen@rackenfordshop.co.uk

East Nutcott Inert Waste Site

- Planning Application DCC/4451/2025



A petition, along with a large number of public comments, has been submitted in strong opposition to the planning application for the East Nutcott site. The application is still awaiting a decision by the planning committee, and it is not yet confirmed when it will be heard, although it may be considered in September.

The proposal seeks permission to import up to 663,000 tonnes of inert construction waste to East Nutcott Farm over a phased five-year programme for landfill and land restoration. It has generated significant public concern, with many residents and stakeholders raising objections through formal comments and the petition process.

Key issues highlighted include the potential environmental impact, increased heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic on narrow and unsuitable rural roads, and associated road safety risks. Concerns have also been raised about the lack of a clearly demonstrated need for either the proposed restoration scheme or an additional inert waste facility in Devon.

The Environment Agency, North Devon Council, and Devon County Council are currently monitoring and investigating the concerns raised by the community regarding both the application and existing operations at the site.

Cllr Peter Jones

All Saints Church news



Services continue in church on two or three Sundays a month throughout the year. Look out for posters around the village as well as *Today*, the Parish Magazine for the Exe Valley Mission Community. Many of these are lay-led, brought to you by the PCC, Mary Cann (Churchwarden), Liz Paxton, Helen Hyland and Ruth Fennell. They are short 30 minute services and we have a small friendly congregation. We are extremely lucky to have Graham Fennell to play the organ. You can request favourite hymns to sing, listen to a reading from the Bible, a thought for the day and join in prayer for the needs of the world, as well as for those closer to home.

We were delighted Ian and Madick chose to get married in the church last October and to see so many from the village attending. More recently we have had a baptism, taken by Rev Christopher Rowley. On a sadder note, he has also taken three funerals in the village since the last edition of Rackenford News. We are pleased to have clergy-led services. Our Rector, Steph Gordon-Jeffs, is spread thinly between nine churches. We would like to have her more often!

There is always the need for church fundraising, not only to keep the fabric in good shape, but to pay our Common Fund to Exeter Diocese. This was £3350 in 2025 and together with church insurance, £1886, are our large annual expenses.

In recognition for the work of church wardens, secretaries, treasurers and safe-guarding leads, Bishop Mike hosted a number of summer cream tea events in the garden of the Bishop's Palace in Exeter. Mary, Ruth and Liz were very pleased to enjoy his hospitality and the beautiful 3-acre garden.

A successful fundraiser each year is the sponsored walk. Last year we chose a circular route of around five miles in Oakford, another village in the Exe Valley Mission Community. This was walk 7 in the Circular Walks in Central Devon, a book on sale in Rackenford Shop. The Red Lion opened especially to provide us with a delicious soup and sandwich lunch. Thank you to them and to all the sponsors.

This year the sponsored walk will be held on Saturday 12th September. Contact Liz for further details.

We would love to see you in church and/or walking, all are very welcome to join us!

Liz Paxton







THE GARDENING CLUB

What a lovely year we have had as members of the Rackenford Gardening Club! We enjoyed a winter social evening at the Rackenford Club (thank you Debbie for hosting and helping us!). We ran a quiz and provided a delicious cheeseboard to enjoy, all while raising money for charity. We raised £150 for the Bradley Lowry Foundation which supported a child who attended Amelia's Pre School.

From the depths of winter we moved towards our beautiful Spring Show held in our Church. Many wonderful entries arrived and cups were won and we all enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea - £94 raised and donated to a motor neurone charity. Our next event was our plant sale in May which made £227 on the day - this money has been donated to the North Devon Hospice. The next event was to enjoy the wonderful gardens at Bradford Tracey, courtesy of the Tobin family. They very kindly support the National Garden Scheme (NGS) for Charity - this year they raised around £1400 and we raised another £182 from our plant sale there for NGS. Our Village Day show was great fun and thank you for all the entries and your votes this time! Our winner was Linda Heywood for the two floral arrangements and Beatrice Mills won the children's class.

We have many people to thank in the village who lend a hand for all our events and we really appreciate your support, from making cakes for us, lending a hand on teas, moving tables and running plant stalls and donating prizes for our tombola and raffle - thank you all!

We would love to welcome ideas for events for the future. We are in need of some new committee members to keep our events going through next year too. Our next event will be a winter social evening in January, but in the meantime look out for our Harvest window and hamper for the Harvest Supper! We are so fortunate to live in such an active and busy village!

Amelia Joyner



Rackenford PTFA
– an amazing six months

What a fantastic six months it has been for Rackenford PTFA! A huge thank you to everyone across our school and village community who has supported our events, volunteered their time, donated and helped us raise vital funds for our wonderful school.

Our fundraising has helped support school activities, including contributing towards an end-of-year trip to World of Country Life, helping to ensure that every child could take part and enjoy a brilliant day together.

We also had an amazing turnout for our end-of-year picnic on the Common, complete with a bouncy castle and a very enthusiastic water fight! A huge thank you to Tom and Cee for providing the brilliant bouncy castle and helping make the day so special.

Our Challenge 100 brought some incredible achievements from our pupils, including Rowan M, who completed an amazing 100 miles through a combination of travelling by car, bus and walking, all while raising money towards improvements to the back playground. What a fantastic accomplishment!



Village Day was another brilliant success. A very special shout-out goes to Ellie Denno and her friend Louise, who have tirelessly provided fantastic face painting at so many of our events, bringing smiles to countless children.

Finally, we are very sad to say goodbye to our brilliant PTFA Chair, Jen. An immense thank you for everything she has done this year to support our PTFA, our school and our children. Your hard work has made a real difference.

As we look ahead, we really need more parents, carers, friends and members of the village to get involved. Even a little help makes a huge difference! Interested? Please email ptfarackenford@gmail.com We'd love to hear from you!

Cécile Fouillot-Jones

Music at the Club

Back in the Spring, Darren and a few of his seasoned musician friends entertained us for an impromptu and very informal gathering in the Club. We were captivated by beautifully sung folk ballads, interspersed with upbeat Irish jigs which got everyone clapping and stomping. We'd love more of these evenings so a call out to anyone in the area who has an interest in an informal get together to play some music. It could be folky type stuff, acoustic, instrumental or singing. Just testing the water so see if there is any interest. If you, or someone you know, might be interested please contact Darren Blackburn on darburn1@yahoo.com



Back again in September - look out for a post on our Facebook page...



Devon Culm's Marsh Fritillary Project

Last year, Devon Culm launched its Marsh Fritillary project. The idea was to plant 10,000 Devil's bit scabious plants in the land between Outer Knowstone Moor and Witheridge Moor. Devil's bit scabious is the foodplant of the marsh fritillary butterfly and is vital to its survival. There are colonies of marsh fritillary butterflies on both moors and Rackenford is right in between them.

In all, 46 landowners planted 10,130 plants on 51 sites. Volunteers planted Devil's bit scabious out on Higher Comfort Nature Reserve which is adjacent to Outer Knowstone Moor and on Rackenford Common, but most of the plants were planted by landowners and their families on their own land.

We're now being contacted by people who are seeing the plants that they planted last year starting to flower. We're appealing to people in the area to continue to expand marsh fritillary habitat by collecting seed when it's ready and planting it. We've put a guide on our website of how to do this at **www.devonculm.org.uk/dbs/**

If you planted out Devil's bit scabious as part of the project last year, or if you see any Devil's bit scabious near Rackenford, please send a picture to info@devonculm.org.uk letting us know where it's growing. That way, we can evaluate the success of the project and map the spread of Devil's bit scabious locally.



Devil's bit scabious on Rackenford Common

If you'd like to volunteer to plant Devil's bit scabious with us, we're planting on Outer Knowstone Moor in the morning on Saturday the 24th of October.

Pete Grugeon

FUTURE OF THE STAG

What is Rackenford Community Benefit Society?

After a survey of Rackenford residents in 2024 demonstrated the demand for a community -owned pub, Rackenford Community Benefit Society (RCBS) was set up. The purpose is to be able to move quickly should The Stag come up for sale. RCBS is a legal entity, with a bank account and constitution, which means that it is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority.

But the pub is not for sale!

No, however, it has been registered as an asset of community value which means that if the pub goes up for sale, this grants the community a year to raise funds and purchase it. We are now at the stage of writing statements and bids for funding in readiness.

We will have a formal share offering should the pub become available, with a minimum shareholding of £100 per person, the membership (shareholders) will have democratic control of the society. Raising sufficient funds to purchase the pub will require more than £100 per person. Therefore, we kindly ask those who are able to do so to consider investing an amount beyond the minimum shareholding. Expressions of interest can be made through the website.

Whilst there is a loss of pubs generally in UK, the success rate of community-owned pubs is 99%. The focus will not be on profit, but on creating and reinvesting in a place for the community to spend time together. We have very few shared spaces in Rackenford, and a need for a space to foster community cohesion, to create a welcoming space where people come together, build relationships, and strengthen the community. Rather than being driven solely by profit, a community-owned pub exists to create lasting social, economic, and cultural value. It helps combat loneliness, welcomes newcomers, and fosters a genuine sense of belonging across generations.

We hope to host quiz nights, live music, book clubs, community lunches, and family events. It may also be possible to have a relaxed café, meeting room, or co-working space, becoming an essential centre for everyday life, and creating Rackenford's communal living room.

For more details head over to our website: https://rackenford.org.uk/ - or find us on social media:
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61581855074226
https://www.instagram.com/rackenfordcbs

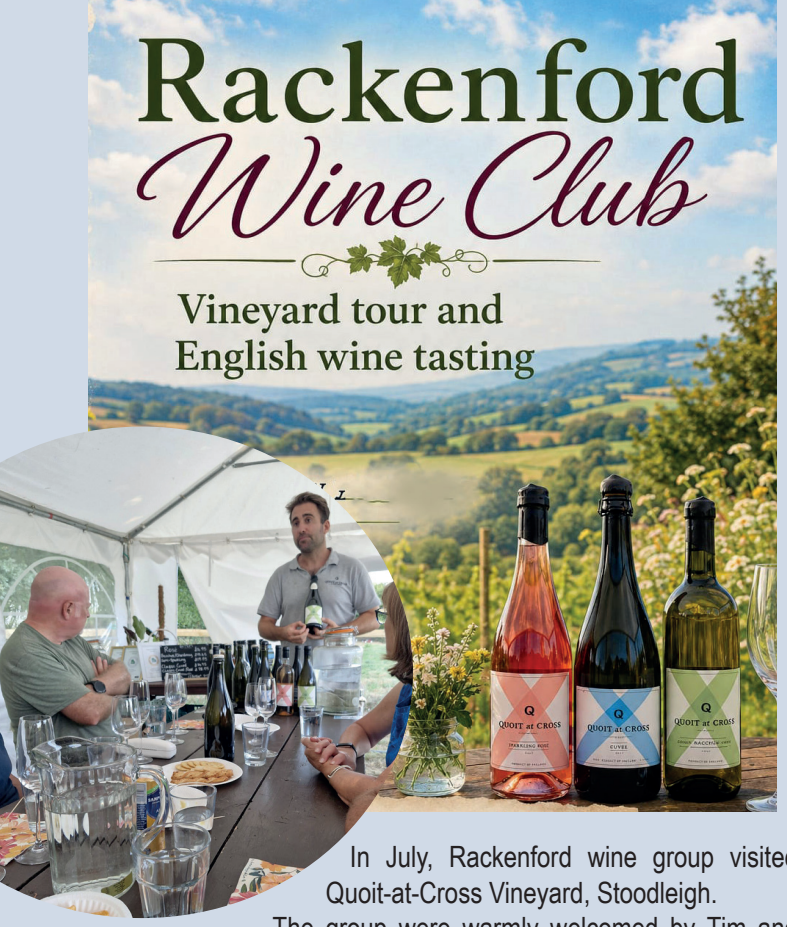
The Rackenford Book Group

The Book Group was founded in 1999 by Helen Hyland and Gail Markel, who used to live at Bradford Tracy, shortly joined by Hazel Skinner from Baters. Hazel was a professional librarian so this village organisation has always benefitted from updates from the wider publishing world. An early decision was to limit membership to women. After 25 years there is now a Gentlemen's Walking Group to balance us (presumably this also includes conversation). Our numbers are limited to 7-8 so that everyone gets enough time to contribute to the monthly meeting. Each member hosts this at least once a year, providing drinks and nibbles and in winter sometimes lunch.

We don't read anything until it's available on paperback or Kindle. Our book of the month is most often a modern novel, but we also read a classic at least once a year, detective stories, historical novels, biographies and occasionally non-fiction (Hilary Clinton's "What Happened" was appreciated). We like to include translations, though a recent sally into Japanese writing ("Butter") was not popular. If agreement on the next book can't be reached we may choose a type, such as a classic children's book or a subject, such as the suffragette movement. Both these produced very good discussions.

The main benefits are the discovery of unknown treasures. For me these would include "Pure" by Andrew Miller (French Revolution) and Anna Burns "Milkman" (women in Belfast in the years of the Troubles). For someone else it might have been Trollope's "The Warden". Also, on occasion, there is a satisfactory general agreement that a very aggressively promoted author is actually totally unreadable.

Sarah Child



In July, Rackenford wine group visited Quoit-at-Cross Vineyard, Stoodleigh.

The group were warmly welcomed by Tim and his family who have been farming on the site for almost a hundred years.

It was a perfect summer evening,. The group sampled five locally produced wines, showcasing Tim's passion for winemaking, despite all the work involved in planting a new vineyard.

There are 4,600 vines producing a signature sparkling made from Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier grapes, along with a still Bacchus/Chardonnay, and a rosé made from a blend of Champagne grapes, a new Pink Sparkling and Col Fondo. *Siobhan Warne*

North Devon Biosphere Walk

On Saturday 11 July Villagers from Rackenford and Nomansland took part in the inaugural 'Little Dart River Ramble and Run'.



As many people know, we are privileged to live and care for one of the very special UNESCO North Devon Biosphere areas. The Biosphere covers not just the wild beauty of the North Devon Coastline but the 'hinterland', with streams and rivers carving out valleys in the whole catchment area.

The 'ramble', in our case, went from East Worlington to Bridge Reeve, Chulmleigh. The day was made special by local landowners and farmers opening up their land, so the walk went uninterrupted along the Little Dart and opened up areas where few humans tread. There was some stunning flora and fauna, particularly butterflies. The route was shortened due to the extreme hot weather, but much of the route was in the shade!

We hope it now becomes an annual event, and grows in popularity to support the work undertaken to protect this very special part of Devon, of which we are part!

Don Wild



Virtual wine tours of Italy and Spain, varietal grapes, summer wines and a visit from a sommelier are just a few of the highlights of the year enjoyed by Rackenford's wine group. The group also had tasting sessions to select a range of wines for Rackenford Club (tough work!) and a visit to Stoodleigh's Quoit at Cross vineyard.

Meeting every other month at the Club, Ian, Don and Bruce's wine tours took the group on a trip from Verona in the north to Puglia in the boot of Italy, sampling Prosecco, Montepulciano and Primitivo on the way. In Spain they toured the north from Bilbao to Barcelona sampling Riojas, Garnachas and wines from Catalayud. All the wines were paired with selected meats and cheeses with some really surprising results!

The highlight for most was the visit of Bruce Evans from Grape and Grain wine merchants in Crediton who has opened Amapola wine bar there. He guided everyone through an excellent range of affordable wines for Christmas. Many pre-Christmas purchases were made, a percentage of which Bruce donated to the Club.

The guys running the group have many innovative and fun meetings planned for the year ahead including cocktails, fine wines and more virtual world wine tours. Everyone is welcome to come along, just contact Ian (i.wilson34@btinternet.com) or Don (donaldwild13@btinternet.com) and book a place.

Ian Wilson

Next meeting
18th September, venue tbc

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Nicola Maxfield: Associate of the Dyslexia Guild, PGCE, PG Cert SpLD (Dyslexia), PASSHE QA.

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Rackenford Riders

This is now the fourth year that Rackenford Riders has been in existence, cycling along the byways and lanes of North Devon! In that time the group has grown and sought out new rides and experiences.

Once again we had great representation in the Force Cancer Charity 'Nello' ride out of Topsham and cycling through Nomansland.

We now have cyclists from the neighbouring metropolises of Sandford, Nomansland, Oakford, Mariansleigh, Tiverton and the grand duchy of Loxbeare!





We are very fortunate to have had so many lovely rides, directly out of Rackenford and further afield into Exmoor and the Blackdown Hills ... and don't we just love a few 'hillocks and undulations'.

The two day event this year took us into the lovely county of Somerset to stay in Stogumber, just south of the medieval harbour of Watchet and by the Quantocks. The bed and breakfast owners looked after us very well. That, together with the pie and chips at the White Horse, ensured we were well rested, fed and watered for the second day.

This summer we are hoping to do a few rides further afield. A recent one covered Wells and Glastonbury ... and more to follow.

The next **big** adventure is a return to Britanny in September, this time to travel east from Roscoff and explore the beautiful Maritime Velo coastal road!

We welcome all new members .... and we have cyclists as young as 50! We enjoy the outdoors and the sociability of cycling. You can contact us on Facebook or message me (Donald.Wild13@btinternet.com) directly.

Have a lovely summer and autumn.

Don Wild, Rackenford Riders

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AND OCEAN VIEW
On the beach



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Devon Open Studios – Visit local artist Jenny Nash at her studio in September



Jenny is taking part in Devon Open Studios 12-20 September. This year she is collaborating with three local artists – together they form Witheridge Artists and will all be exhibiting at Leat Farm, EX16 8QH. Visitors will have a rare opportunity to meet and see the work of four artists, four disciplines all inspired by the coastlines, farmland and moors of Devon and Somerset.

Maria, Woody, Laura and Jenny will also be holding several demonstrations or workshops during Devon Open Studios.

Jenny invites you to visit Witheridge Artists to see their work and of course enjoy some tea & cake. For more details please visit jennynash.co.uk or witheridgeartists.co.uk

Rackenford Community Shop



Why not take a break?

There's fresh coffee, tea, hot chocolate and a tempting range of snacks at your community shop.

Go on ... you deserve it!