



Welcome to Combwich

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**Your village website**  
[www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk) is the  
place to go for up to date  
information on what is  
happening in the parish and  
much more. Take a look to see  
what you have been missing.  
You can subscribe by adding  
your email address to the home  
page to receive email notices of  
new posts to ensure you don't  
miss anything.

# **Otter Tales**

**At the end of one year and the beginning of the next it is a time for reflection. We are fortunate enough to live in a lovely part of the country and in a wonderful community.**

During the year we saw the return of the Combwich Buoy after many years languishing in a Burnham-on-Sea boatyard. It is still to be finished courtesy of the Combwich Boat Club.



An almost completely new set of parish councillors are now finding their feet and bringing fresh ideas to the work of the council. A great deal of work has been done by the Otterhampton Parish Project Team (OPPT) to secure the funding for a new play area in Combwich in conjunction with the parish council. If the final amount of funding can be secured the play area will be open for use by the early summer.

The village hall has been decorated to make it much more attractive for all sorts of events - thanks to the Committee.

OPRA has been busy too raising money for village projects and organising events such as the ever popular Seniors' Christmas Dinner and the Christmas tree and lights which were unfortunately vandalised within hours of being switched on. Thanks to Harbour View Social Club who funded replacements. The Kite workshop was a great success and the Firework display, which was preceded by the lantern parade, made it all rather special this year.

As we look ahead to 2016, if all goes well the children should have an ultra modern play area with a shelter and even outdoor gym equipment for adults and older children. In July we will have the Fete to look forward to.

**For over 10 years  
Liz Sidebotham  
has organised the  
Poppy Day appeal  
in Combwich and**

**in 2015 raised the  
magnificent sum of  
£475.13. Liz now  
says it is time to  
retire and is looking for someone to  
take over. If you can help please  
ring Liz on 653028; she will give  
all the help she can to the new  
organiser.**



A big thank you from all  
of us for the work Liz  
has done over the years.

**A Happy New Year to all our readers**

# Otterhampton Offcuts

## Snippets from the December 2015 and January 2016 Parish Council and other meetings

### Bus Service at the Bus Stop

Following our meeting with WebberBus, Highways and Somerset County Council (SCC) to discuss the request for passengers to be dropped off at the bus stop rather than at the layby on the far side of the main road, Highways came up with a possible solution. The suggestion is to block up the slip road at the Brookside Rd end by placing bollards across the entrance. This would stop traffic coming into the village direct from Withycombe Hill and would create a safe environment to reverse the bus. Residents in close proximity of the slip road have received letters advising them of this proposal. We welcome your comments to either the Clerk or Chairman by 31.1.16.



### Contact details for the parish council

#### PARISH COUNCILLORS

Barry Leathwood (Chairman)	01278 652399
Heath Bennett	01278 651356
John Berry (Vice Chairman)	01278 562682
Dick Best (Stearth Ward)	01278 651063
Bob Birkenhead	01278 653127
Julie Evans	01278 652735
Rachel Perrett	01278 652958
Mrs Aly Prowse (Clerk)	01278 652426

[otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com)

#### County and District Ward Members

John Edney (County)	01278 653026
Mike Caswell (District)	01278 652043
Julie Pay (District)	01278 732956

### Proposed Enhanced Play and Recreation Area - Progress

Excellent news.....we have been awarded £47.4k from Viridor Credits. We also received a £150 grant from SCC, via County Cllr John Edney (for a bicycle rack at the play area). We now have £53.4k towards the £99k total cost. The last two grant applications to Sedgemoor District Council for £8.8k and the Hinkley C Community Impact Mitigation fund for £38k are under consideration and we should know the outcome of these during March 2016. Hopefully these will be successful which means the project can start mid to late April and be finished at the end of May 2016. Mr Benbow the new School Head is kindly displaying the plans at the School, but if anyone else wishes to see them, please contact the Clerk. The plans will also be available at parish council meetings.

### Parish Precept

For the 2016/17 financial year, we have increased the parish precept from £17500 to £18500. This will result in the council tax for an average Band D taxpayer rising from £55.61 to £58.93 an increase of £3.32 for the year. The increase is required to take account of devolved work to the parish council from SCC and government cuts; for example, the Government Support Tax Grant, that we have received for a number of years (£686 for 2016/17) which will decrease year on year until it ceases in 2019/20. We also need to carry out significant repairs to Combwich track; allow for increased insurance costs for the enhanced play area; and also a new item - an annual grant equating to 5% of the precept (£875) to the Village Hall towards the running costs of the Hall. There are also other miscellaneous and minor increases which we will try to contain. Please contact the Clerk if you would like further information.

### New Parish Councillor

We are pleased to welcome Rachel Perrett who was co-opted to the Parish Council at our meeting on 7.1.16. Rachel has lived in the village for 22 years, currently in Estuary Park.

### Community Car Scheme

We now have our volunteer officers and co-ordinators. Thank you to all those who have volunteered. We are in the process of confirming insurance obligations for drivers and opening a bank account. All drivers will need to have Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) clearance which will be looked at shortly. The next meeting will be mid-February. We are very grateful to our County Councillor John Edney, who recommended the scheme for a £250 grant. This together with the £300 parish council grant will ensure the scheme has sufficient start-up funds. There are still a few issues to resolve, calculating fares for example, but the scheme could possibly start March/April 2016.



## PUBLIC NOTICES

### Change of Date for February 2016 Parish Council Meeting

Please note we have changed the meeting date for the next parish council meeting from Thursday 4th February to Wednesday 10th February.

**Operation HAROLD** (Hinkley Alternative Routes Operating Local Diversions) is the name given to the system of diversions that will be put in place to deal with local road closures in the event of an incident. A booklet explaining the scheme plus detail of the alternative routes can be downloaded from the [www.Combwich.org.uk](http://www.Combwich.org.uk) Website.



## CHILDRENS PLAY AREA WORKING PARTY REQUIRED

We need some volunteers please, to help clear some of the vegetation and hedge adjacent to the play area prior to the enhanced play area works. This needs to be done during February/early March. If we have enough people, it should take no longer than a morning (ever the optimist!). Please contact the Clerk or Chairman if you have some time to spare and would like to be involved. Thank you.

### Parish Council Garage at Brookside Rd, Combach

The parish council has a garage at Brookside Rd to store sand and sandbags in case of flooding and grit for use in icy conditions. Shovels are provided. The key-holders are John Berry, Julie Evans, Dick Best, Barry Leathwood and the Clerk, whom you should contact if you are in need of either the sand or grit.

### The West Country Ultramarathon – 50 miles

The Albion Running Organisation is staging an ultramarathon event on 21.5.16. Approximately 200 runners will be passing through the parish along the Parrett Trail. They are seeking volunteers to help with water stations and marshalling. More information will be placed on the notice boards, but if you would like to be involved, please email [albionrunning@hotmail.com](mailto:albionrunning@hotmail.com)

### WELCOME PACK

Have you ever moved house, perhaps to a new area and wondered when the bins will be collected, or where the doctors' surgery is, or even where you can secure the services of a local tradesperson?

We live in a very friendly community with lots going on, but how much easier it would be if new people moving in to the village were given a 'Welcome Pack' full of information that will help them settle in and more quickly become part of our community.

If you are interested in helping to develop such a pack which will be paid for by the parish council, please get in touch with the chairman or clerk

## Combach Ponds



A view of the Ponds not seen for a long time

Those of you who have lived in Combach for a few years will remember the days when we could walk around the Combach Ponds and enjoy the wildlife so close to the village. Swans nested there and cormorants perched waiting for the opportunity to catch their next meal. It was a place of peace for many and wonderment for children, but after more than 70 years it all came to an end in May 2007 when the Bridgwater Angling Club who owned the land arbitrarily erected and padlocked gates to keep the villagers out. Despite attempts by the parish council to mediate the gates remain shut.

Villagers were outraged and packed the village hall to protest and a campaign to have the paths reopened. In April 2008, we submitted an application to Somerset County Council (SCC) and we were confident that SCC who had legal responsibility for adjudicating on such matters would find in our favour as

we were able to demonstrate (prove) that the public had uninterrupted access for over 70 years. Technically we were obliged to apply for a Modification to the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way relating to the footpaths around Combach Ponds. At the time we were advised there was a backlog of over 200 applications and our application would be scored at a review in 2011.

We recently wrote to SCC advising this issue is still of great concern and that we would like an update on its progress. In the last week we have had a response which states that : -

*'Your application is number 40 in the priority queue, the next application to be investigated will be number 16. I am afraid your application will not be considered for a number of years.'*

It is outrageous that SCC has failed in its duty to at least consider the representations made to them in relation to this issue. The parish council will be considering what else can be done. If you feel strongly about this and want to help (particularly if you have legal experience) please get in touch with the chairman or clerk.





# Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Register Charity Number 1124017

A very happy new year to you from the OPRA committee and we hope you enjoyed the Christmas festivities and are refreshed and looking forward to 2016.

Since the last newsletter we held a race night on 21<sup>st</sup> November in the village hall. We would like to thank all our sponsors and race goers who helped us to raise £240 for our funds. We would also like to thank Rainbow Promotions who ran the night for us. An enjoyable night was had by all and I am sure we will repeat this event again in the future.

Our Christmas activities started on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December with the Seniors Christmas Dinner held in the village hall; this event was attended by 65 people who enjoyed good food, wine and entertainment. As always our thanks go to Matt at the Anchor for cooking the turkey and potatoes, our chef Ray Bollen, Robert from the Post Office and all the volunteers who made it possible.



The next day saw the lighting of the village Christmas Tree. We must thank Wessex Water who provide the electricity for the lights. This year we were fortunate that members of Harbour View Players switched on the lights and gave out sweets to the children. It was a shame that six hours later the lights on the tree had been vandalised. To say that we were disappointed would be an understatement, but what was satisfying was the way the village rallied round. We purposely left the tree without lights for a while as a statement. It was wonderful to see that someone had placed homemade decorations on the tree, so thank you to whoever it was. An appeal went out for people to place their own decorations on the tree. This was done on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December along with new lights that were kindly donated by Harbour View Social Club. We received a number of offers of lights, including a star which we placed on the village hall and a number of offers from individuals as well as the Parish Council to contribute towards the purchase of replacement lights. We also had an offer to set up a surveillance camera! So thank you to everyone.

For any of you thinking about improving your health and fitness after the Christmas break we will be having our first OPRA walk of the year on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January. If you would like to join us, then meet in the Anchor car park at 9.30am.

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January Alys Laver will be returning to the village hall to give a talk on the development of Steart Marshes.

As mentioned in the last newsletter the biennial fete will take place this summer if we get enough volunteers. We will be holding an informal meeting in the Anchor on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm. So if you would like to get involved in any way no matter how small then please come along. The fete takes a lot of organising and the OPRA committee are unable to do it without your help. If you are unable to attend the meeting but would like to help, then please contact any of the committee. If we do not get the support, then the fete will not take place.

## OPRA Village FETE

### Volunteers Meeting

The Biennial Fete is normally a highlight of the year, but it won't happen without your help. An informal meeting to start planning the event will be held in the Anchor at 7.30pm Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January

## OPRA Officers and Committee Chair

Tina Gardener	652642
<b>Secretary</b>	
Ann Leathwood	652399
<b>Treasurer</b>	
Sue Francis	653663
<b>Committee</b>	
Mary Cornish	653868
Jacqui Sparks	652069
Beverly Smith	652595
Rob Wright	652277
Di Davie	652141
Barry Leathwood	652399
<b>100 Club Organiser</b>	
Ann Leathwood	652399

The 100 Club draw takes place every month at the Coffee Morning Otterhampton Village Hall and the winning numbers are displayed in the Post Office and the parish website [www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk) shortly afterwards.

If you want to join the 100 Club or become involved in OPRA activities please contact Ann on 652399 or any committee member.

## OPRA Talk

**Alys Laver**

Site manager

**Steart Marshes**

7.30pm Thursday

21st January

Village Hall

Come and enjoy an illustrated talk by Alys on all that is happening on the wonderful Steart Marshes

**Interested in local history.** If so get in touch with Jacqui Sparks on 652069 or email [Jacsparks@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Jacsparks@yahoo.co.uk). If enough people are interested we will set up a local history Group in the parish.





## Steart Marshes - Dick Best, Breaking Records

It seems that nearly every month we hear of, or experience, record-breaking severe weather events occurring, and during the last month the highest ever average monthly temperatures for December were recorded as was the heaviest monthly rainfall for 100 years. Just before Christmas when driving home after midnight our car thermometer was registering 15°C (60°F) - almost as warm as some days in last summer! In Combwich gardens Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were regularly seen, and even on the coast at Steart the grass continued to grow and garden plants flowered unseasonably.



Such extreme weather events might not be unique but their frequency must indicate some significant changes in global climate patterns, the causes of which are greatly disputed. A large body of informed opinion consider these events to be associated with an increase in average global temperature, which is considered to be associated with changes in atmospheric gases caused directly or indirectly by human activity. Others consider that the changes in temperature are not associated with human activity but are due to natural processes. Whatever the cause, a rapid rise in global temperature is a fact and, whether or not it is directly associated with the burning fossil fuels, the expansion of sources of sustainable energy must be good for the planet.

## Cider with Robin Prowse

In 1979 I arrived in Somerset as the 'new broom' to manage Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve and soon became involved in other areas on the Somerset Levels. I have always been interested in rural crafts and wild food, and soon enough I found myself at Mudgley, the home of Wilkin's cider. The whole process of cider making and its history fascinated me and years later the opportunity arose to make my own.



Pressing the apples

A chance conversation with a neighbour in Steart encouraged me to make a primitive press in my shed from offcuts of plywood, gateposts and a military screw jack. Locally sourced apples were gathered, chopped in a converted garden shredder and the juice poured into a barrel and left. A few days later a stream of froth from the bung hole indicated fermentation had started. A week later, a fermentation lock was inserted and nature was left to do her work. The natural yeast in apples slowly converted the juice to cider and six months later a very palatable cider was ready.

This first year's work was very encouraging and shortly after a local farmer let me have the rudiments of an old screw press. With the help of friends, the press you can see pictured was slowly built up; wine and rum barrels were acquired and the process was refined over the following years.

Every autumn a small community event happens in the yard at Dowells Farm. A few friends and I 'scrump' local orchards and then set about washing, milling and filling the barrels. Nothing is added or taken away, producing a completely

natural product with only a little sweetener added if desired.

The operation is non-commercial, purely for home consumption but for the last few years, none has been left! Of course the main benefit is that a few friends are able to congregate in the yard or by the wood burner in the shed and talk nonsense over a glass of two as we watch the sun go down.

Next autumn watch this space for a community pressing day when you will be able to bring your own apples to Steart for pressing, to make your own juice or cider.



Washing and sorting the apples



Enjoying the fruits of our labour



## Combwich Art Group

The art group meets on Monday afternoons from 2 pm to 4 pm in Otterhampton Village Hall in Combwich. We are a casual, friendly group who meet to draw or paint and have a chat about matters of art or otherwise.

The group was formerly run and genially tutored by John Bailey, who is enormously missed. John brought his own vast experience and skills to a bunch of would-be artists of varied ability and style, advising, demonstrating, pushing us to apply ourselves – and all with great humour and sense. He always found good things to praise in any attempt, but would not let us off the hook all the same. None of us will ever forget his pet themes – tone is all important (don't just outline), don't use the rubber, be looser. We drew with our dominant hand, our wrong hand, with our eyes shut. We drew him, each other, objects such as his viola da gamba (a true challenge). We invented, copied pictures and tackled perspective. We are all the better for it.

We now continue to practise these skills on our own work, but are also occasionally inviting local artists in to tutor one-off sessions to broaden our horizons. These may be demonstrations or workshops in a variety of media and styles. For example, artist Richard Brazier took a session in October '15. We may also organise art-related outings from time to time, such as a visit to an Arts Weeks venue recently.

Anyone with a couple of hours to spare on Monday afternoons is welcome to join us. Just pick up a pencil and come along – no special ability necessary! We provide our own materials, but these can be as basic or varied as you like.

**For more information,** call: Jean 01278 653136, Gill 01278 652748, Rachel 01278 652914

## A Big thank You

A big thanks to everyone who supported Combwich Community Choir's Carols by Candlelight evening on December 11<sup>th</sup>. It was great to see the hall packed with over 100 people in attendance. The choir combined performance and sing-a-long Christmas songs, drinks, mince pies and a festive raffle to help get everyone in the festive spirit.



With the support of OPRA, the Friday Coffee Club, the Village Hall Committee, the village shop and Bridgwater College we raised a magnificent £640 for local children's charity STAR. Of course a

special thank you goes to the choir members for all their hard work and generosity.

For anyone inspired, the choir meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month from 7-8 pm in Otterhampton Village Hall (further details on the website).

Nicole Wigley (choir leader)

## Could you help a child or teenager in 2016?

A New Year is the perfect time to embrace a new, life-changing challenge.

Somerset's Fostering Service is seeking caring, enthusiastic individuals to come forward who are interested in becoming foster carers within their communities in 2016 – especially for children over the age of 10, teenagers, and siblings.

Fostering is about offering a safe, stable home to a child or teenager when their own family are unable to. These children and young people may have complex circumstances or parents who are unable to care for them. They may have experienced abuse or neglect.

They need enthusiastic, resilient and supportive Foster Carers or Foster Families to be there for them.

There are lots of ways to find out more about this rewarding role. You can visit our website, [www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk](http://www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk) or phone our Fostering Team on 0800 587 9900 to enquire or for a confidential chat. To find out about our next information event, visit [www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk/events](http://www.fosteradoptsomerset.org.uk/events)

## 1st COMBWICH BROWNIES

The very active 1st Combwich Brownie Unit now has room for some new Brownies. We meet on a Monday evening during term time from 5.45pm - 7.30pm at Otterhampton C.P. School. Prospective girls need to be seven years old, and we can guarantee that they will have lots of fun and will be given the opportunity to try new skills and make new friends. For further information please contact Liz Brown 01278652687 or Karen Barton 01278652673 or come along to visit us on a Monday evening.



# Otterhampton Village Hall

A message from the Chair Sue Barton

Are you having a special birthday or anniversary this year? Planning a children's party? The village hall could be the perfect place offering the main hall with stage, kitchen and upstairs a skittle alley and a small meeting room. Bar facilities can also be arranged with the Harbour View Social Club.



The hall is a central part of the Otterhampton Parish area community and available for all residents to use and enjoy. Want to start up a new club and need a venue? We already have Aerobic, Pilates, Mixed Craft, Coffee and Art Clubs and the ever popular Choir and Panto Groups but have space for more.

For 2016 we are currently planning bingo nights, quiz and buffets and entertainment nights with hot food. If you have any ideas for village events you would like provided at the hall then let us know. Alternatively if you know or can recommend anyone who needs a venue to perform then please get in touch. This could include;

- musicians to magicians;
- choirs to string quartets;
- local folk bands to pop up kitchens;
- casino nights to race nights;
- one off training courses from IT for beginners to flower arranging.

The monthly village market will continue on the 2nd Saturday each month with a variety of food produce and craftwork; so come along and browse, buy and have a cup of tea and a cake, or coffee and a bacon sarnie.

Perhaps you might like to join the Committee and help? We always need volunteers with new ideas and a bit of time to help. In particular we are in need of a new Treasurer to help run the accounts. The Treasurer does not need to be a trustee of the Committee and you would be helping with the smooth running of the hall, so if you do have some spare time please do consider and become involved.

Finally we have a few Otterhampton Village Hall calendars available at £5 for the A4 version and £3.50 for the desktop version. The calendars contain old photos of the village and have been very popular. Buy one before they go!

**Village Hall Quiz**  
**Saturday 27th**  
**February**  
**7.30pm Start**

If you would like to contact me about any of the issues above please email me at [baritones@btinternet.com](mailto:baritones@btinternet.com) or phone on 653531 and leave a message.

On behalf of all the Otterhampton Village Hall Committee I would like to wish you all a wonderful 2016 and hope to see you at the village hall.

## IT for Seniors Joe and Graeme Wigley

It's been while since we came along to the Coffee Morning to gauge the demand for some IT support sessions, so here's an update. What we found out is that people had a very broad range of IT-related questions, so it would be difficult to run group sessions which are relevant to all.

So instead we are going to try running "IT Clinics" during Coffee Mornings from 15<sup>th</sup> January. The idea is that we'll be in the Village Hall during the morning to try and answer any IT-related questions you may have. You won't need to book a time with us, just pop over when we are free.

Obviously it will help if you have your tablet, phone or laptop with you. We can't guarantee to have an immediate answer for everything but would be happy to try and find it out for you. If necessary, more detailed one to one support may be available at a later date for a small charge. If you need a home visit, eg. if you want us to look at something on a desktop computer, then come and ask us and we'll see what we can do. If you are not able to make it to a Coffee Morning then give us a call on 653431.



## From Your Village Agent

As many of you already know I retired from my role as Village Agent at the end of December; however the Community Council for Somerset is hoping to appoint a replacement in the early months of this year.

I have enjoyed my role enormously and hope I have been able to help people in our community; as many of you know I live in Combswich and whilst I still have the information available and until a new Village Agent is in place I will be happy to help in any way I can.

Please don't hesitate to ask if you think I might be able to be of assistance and although my role has ended I will still be involved in the car scheme which is progressing slowly towards becoming active.

In the meantime take care and be safe.

Yvonne

## Subscribe to your Combswich Website



We are pleased to publish this Newsletter on alternate months throughout the year. January, March, May, July, September and November, to provide you with information from the Parish Council, OPRA, the Village Hall and various other local organisations.

We also try to list coming events, but if you really want to keep up with all that is happening on a day to day basis you really need to access our own website [www.combswich.org.uk](http://www.combswich.org.uk) where by adding your email address on the left side of the home screen and pressing 'subscribe' you will automatically be notified of new posts by email.

Try it today and whilst you are there spend some time to look through the massive amount of information, including photographs of times past and more recent events, and much more .

## DIARY OF EVENTS (Otterhampton Village Hall unless otherwise stated)

REGULAR EVENTS			
Monday	Art Club	2pm – 4pm	
Tuesday	Aerobics	9.30am – 10.30am	
	Pilates	10.35am – 11.35am	
Tuesday	Mobile Library	School ~ 9.30-10.25am Harbour ~ 10.30-10.50am Post Office ~10.55-1.15am	2016 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb, 1 <sup>st</sup> Mar, 29 <sup>th</sup> Mar
Wednesday	Doctor's Surgery	3pm – 4pm	
Thursday (1 <sup>st</sup> of month)	Parish Council Meeting	7pm	Starts with public forum
Thursday (2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> )	Choir	7pm – 8pm	
Thursday (3 <sup>rd</sup> of month)	Combswich & District WI	7.30pm	Stockland Sports & Social Club
Friday	Coffee Morning	10am – 12noon	
Saturday (2 <sup>nd</sup> of month)	Combswich Market	10am - 12noon	
FUTURE EVENTS			
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup> January	OPRA Walk	Meet 9.30am the Anchor to share cars	
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	OPRA Talk	7.30pm Village Hall	Speaker Alys Laver Manager Steart Marshes
Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> January	OPRA Fete Meeting	7.30pm The Anchor	Open to anyone interested in helping to organise the event
<b>Weds 10 February 2016</b>	Next Parish Council Mtg	7pm Village Hall	<b>NB Change of Date</b>
Saturday 27 <sup>th</sup> February	Village Hall Quiz	7.30pm start	Village Hall
<b>15 March 2016</b>	<b>Next Otter Tales</b>		<b>Articles by 5 March</b>

### Otter Tales

Articles for publication to Barry Leathwood (editor) Tel: 652399, email: [barry.leathwood@btinternet.com](mailto:barry.leathwood@btinternet.com)

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