



Welcome to Combwich

Otter Tales

New Newsletter for the villagers of Combwich, Otterhampton and Steart

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Bus Service

A petition calling for a better bus service for Combwich is being organised by local residents and supported by Somerset County Councillor John Edney.



To add your name to the list please go to the Post Office.

The Parish Council and the Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association, better known as OPRA have decided to abandon their own newsletters in favour of a new one for the whole community.

A team of volunteers has been put together to produce this and future editions. EDF Hinkley B has agreed to print it for us on a bi-monthly basis for which we are

very grateful, and it will be delivered to every household in the parish by volunteers.

All community organisations are invited to submit articles for publication, tell us what you are doing and advertise your events in the diary section.

Don't like what you see or think we are missing something important? Then let us know, or better still write some-

thing for publication. There will be regular updates from your parish council and other organisations.



All Saints Church, Otterhampton



Stearth Marshes

Our Beautiful Countryside

We may grumble from time to time, particularly about the weather (because we are British), but we recognise that we live in one of the most attractive parts of the country. Our parish has been enhanced by the development of the Steart Marshes which apart from providing both salt and fresh water habitat and opportunities for bird watchers, also provides miles of safe walking and cycling right on our doorstep. Summer or winter there is always something new to see.

If you have a picture of our lovely landscape you wish to share with us, email a copy to the editor with details of when and where it was taken.

Your village website www.combwich.org.uk is the place to go for up to date information on what is happening in the parish and much more



War-time Quadrant Hut at Steart

Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from the June and July 2015 Parish Council Meetings

Combwich Track

We have received a lot of comments from parishioners regarding the lack of disabled parking or provision for those with mobility issues to park on the track on the Common adjacent to the Steart Marsh access. This is a very complex issue. Strictly speaking it is illegal to park on a Village Green (which the Common, including the track, is registered as) and as owners, we had always previously turned a 'blind eye'. However, many vehicles (including camper vans etc) started coming in from outside of the village to park there (presumably quicker access than the drive to Steart). This of course increased traffic through the village which also led to complaints. To counteract this we requested a sign outside of the village to direct vehicles straight to Steart. We replaced the small no parking sign at the entrance to the track with the two new signs, which appear to be having some impact. We also arranged for two disabled bays to be positioned as close to the new reserve as possible.

Recently we have had complaints about the state of the track, again making difficulties for those with mobility issues. The cost to repair the track is considerable and as a parish council we could not afford to continually maintain it, as it will probably require with increased use.

We are of course sympathetic to disabled persons and those with mobility issues. There are no easy solutions, but over the next couple of months we have agreed to revisit the whole situation, including discussions with statutory bodies and stakeholders to see if we can come up with a compromise.

Parish Improvements

Three seats have been erected in the Village. One is in the children's play area, paid for by the parish council, another has been placed at the entrance to the village by the wildflower area, as requested by the Wildflower Group. The parish council granted £200 towards the cost of this bench, and OPRA donated £100.

The third bench is a memorial bench in memory of the late Colin Borsay. This has been paid for by Mr Borsay's son and is situated on the flood bank opposite the wharf.

Parish Champion Award

We have great pleasure nominating Elizabeth and John Marriott this year for their work with the Village Hall, Combwich Market, the previous Parish Council Newsletter and OPRA over many years.

Highways Issues.

We were due to meet with Highways in July to discuss the following requests /issues raised by parishioners: altering or removing the pedestrian barriers between Estuary Park and the Wharf Rd to allow easier access for those with mobility issues; safety reflective bollards and water run-off problems on Dame Withycombe Hill; the feasibility of 20mph speed restriction in Combwich (consultation with the community would take place before proceeding); flood poles together with raising the road in Steart.

Also ongoing are discussions with Somerset County Council regarding street lighting at the Combwich junction and the bus shelter. Members agreed to provide a light at the bus shelter before winter, even if only a temporary measure.

We requested the large road sign before entering the village to include 'Combwich'. We have been advised that this has been ordered. Major road repairs have also been carried out in Steart with tar and chipping to follow shortly.

Get Up To Speed (Connecting Devon and Somerset)

In relation to the Broadband roll-out, the Get Up to Speed team has offered to provide a free workshop event in the parish to teach making the most of iPad, Tablets, Social Media and Digital photography etc. If you would like us to arrange a workshop, please advise the Clerk by mid August and we will organise it.

Contact details for the parish council

PARISH COUNCILLORS

Barry Leathwood (Chairman)	01278 652399
Heath Bennett	01278 651356
John Berry	01278 562682
Dick Best (Steart Ward)	01278 651063
Bob Birkenhead	01278 653127
Julie Evans	01278 652735
Stuart Mason	01278 652067
Mrs Aly Powse (Clerk)	01278 652426
otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com	

County and District Ward Members

John Edney (County)	01278 653026
Mike Caswell (District)	01278 652034



Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Register Charity Number 1124017

OPRA is well known in the community, but there is still some confusion about its role. It is as the name suggests, essentially concerned about recreation and organises many events including the village Fete, fireworks display, children's Easter egg hunt, senior's Christmas dinner and much more.

We also support new community initiatives with start-up funding and provide grants to help other local organisations such as the Little Otters and the Brownies

Our funds come mainly from the members of the 100 Club who contribute a £1 a week and participate in the weekly draw (made monthly). This is your local charity where all the money raised (after the prize money is paid out) is spent in the community and in support of local people and organisations.

By joining the 100 Club you not only have a chance of winning a cash prize, you automatically become a member of OPRA and eligible to have a say in how the money raised is spent. At our recent AGM we welcomed three new members to the Committee, they are Mary Cornish, Beverly Smith and Di Davey.

OPRA is currently developing plans to make an application to the Community Impact Mitigation Fund (CIM) for various projects.

OPRA Officers and Committee

Chair

Tina Gardener 652642

Secretary

Ann Leathwood 652399

Treasurer

Sue Francis 653663

Committee

Mary Cornish 652337

Jacqui Sparks 652069

Beverly Smith 652595

Rob Wright 652277

Di Davey 652141

Barry Leathwood 652399

100 Club Organiser

Ann Leathwood 652399

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Coastal Access Scheme

The section between Minehead to Bridgwater is planned to open in the autumn. It will link in with the existing schemes at Steart (Bridgwater Bay Nature Reserve and WWT Marshes) and through Combwich. Marker posts are already in place on the Common at Combwich.

Bridgwater Bay Tidal Lagoon

We requested Tidal Lagoon Power Ltd to give a presentation of their tidal lagoon programme. The first lagoon at Swansea received planning permission in 9June. Of particular interest to us perhaps are the plans for a lagoon at Bridgwater Bay. The date of the presentation is 17 September at 7pm at the Village Hall. Parishioners are welcome.

Otterhampton Parish Volunteer Car Scheme

Volunteers Wanted

We are considering setting up a Community Car Scheme to help those in our parish who have difficulty getting to health and social appointments.

We need the following:-



- Customers!- Would you be interested in using the scheme?
- Volunteer Drivers (using own car) - you will receive up to 45p per mile
- Volunteer (s) to administer the scheme

A number of successful schemes are in operation in many parishes throughout the country including locally, Stogursey, Kilve and Holford. There is an established and simple procedure that can easily be adopted and includes things such as advice on legal, tax and insurance matters, as well as eligibility to become a passenger, fare structure, waiting times etc.

Please contact the Parish Council Clerk , Aly Prowse
Tel 01278 652426 email: otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com

Stearth Marshes - Dick Best on the natural history of the parish



The world is always changing, some places faster than others and in the recent past the environment and its wildlife in our Parish has seen some significant changes - some colossal, some more subtle. The greatest change is the Environment Agency's creation of new wetland habitats. As these habitats develop there will be changes in the wildlife - mostly changes that will enhance biodiversity. Already salt-tolerant plants are establishing in the intertidal areas, and several species of wading bird have bred in the Marshes (some for the first time in the Parish). Although the loss of hedgerow in the Scheme has affected small breeding birds, hopefully this is short-term as the

replanted hedges and scrub will replace lost habitat.

On the coastal areas of the Parish some rapid changes are occurring, on Wall Common beach and along Stearth village frontage there has been a build-up of sand and shingle to create new sand dunes and sandy beach and in the Parrett a massive build-up of sediment has created a new mud flat on the Stearth side of the estuary. This has become an important feeding area for wintering waders, especially on a freshly ebbing tide. The sight of thousands of waders twisting and turning in winter sunshine beats any old flock of starlings on the Levels!

Open Day Results

Thank you to all those who attended the Open Day in June. All your ideas and suggestions will be added to the replies received previously via the leaflets and will be reviewed over the next few weeks.

Briefly, we believe the suggestions will fall into one of the following four categories:

- 1 Eligible for Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) funding (subject to volunteer effort to put proposals together)
- 2 Parish Council action
- 3 Community Plan consideration
- 4 None of the above (reasons will be explained)

The Community Plan will be updated following determination of the above.

It is likely that all feasible projects will be put forward to the community to vote on them in order of priority. We will keep you informed.

One final consideration is that the CIM money is unlikely to be available until commencement of the Wharf build. However this preparatory work is both useful and essential, if we are to put forward reasoned and well researched projects which will give us the time to hit the ground running when appropriate.

Return of the Comwich Buoy!

The Comwich Buoy seen here looking a little tired in its original position on the Pill, is now back in Comwich after nine years of restoration work in Burnham-on-Sea. Thanks to Simon Darch and Robin Prowse for transporting it back to Comwich. The final stages of the restoration including repainting will be carried out by the Boat Club under the watchful eye of Bill Johnson.

When finished the Buoy will be on a new plinth between the first two seats on the Pill resplendent in its bright red and white paintwork within a black iron frame.



More details in the September issue.

Otterhampton Village Hall



The Otterhampton Village Hall Committee held their AGM in May 2015 and the new committee was formed. The Committee members are: Sue Barton, Chair 653531; Audrey Rowley, Secretary 653298; Di Davie, Hall Booking Co-ordinator 652141; Amber Austin 652111; Liz Sidebotham 653028; Tina Gardner 652462; Marcus Ford 652971; and Helen Jowett 652322.

In addition to day to day duties regarding the general upkeep of the hall we are committed to continue to improve the hall facilities and encourage more use by the community. As you know the hall has recently been repainted throughout and now looks much smarter. The damp wall in the hall has been treated and is now rising damp free for the first time in many years.

The main hall is available for use by everyone in the Otterhampton area so if you are planning a party, family celebration or fund raising event why not use the hall? The cost is £12 per hour and if you require the bar facilities from the Harbour View Social Club let them know in advance so they can provide a bar service. The hall is also available for use for by groups to hire: contact Di Davie 652141 for more information.

Our next projects are:

- install new double glazed windows in the hall which will help reduce heating costs and provide sound proofing;
- install window blinds in the hall which will enhance the ambiance and reduce the day and sunlight for future events held in the hall;
- install Vellux windows in the short mat bowls room to provide much needed natural light and ventilation to this room.

We are in the process of applying for grants for these projects as we would like to proceed with them as quickly as possible before we consider our next project!

The Committee also runs the monthly Village Markets with the help of Liz Brown. The market is held on the second Saturday of every month between 10am and midday and we aim to provide a variety of stalls selling handmade crafts with occasional stalls selling non handmade items. Stalls generally include plants, local cider and cheeses, homemade pasties, pies, handmade pictures, cards and needlework. If you would like to rent a table for £7 please contact Liz Brown on 652687 who will be happy to assist. Tea, coffee, cake and bacon rolls are also available so well worth a visit to pick up some bargains; put a reminder on your calendar.

If you have any questions or suggestions to make concerning the hall please don't hesitate to contact one of the Committee Members.

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	
Wednesday	Doctor's Surgery	3pm – 4pm	
Thursday (1 st)	Parish Council Meeting	7pm	Starts with public forum
Thursday (2 nd & 4 th)	Choir	7pm – 8pm	
Friday	Coffee Morning	10am – 12noon	
Saturday (2 nd)	Combwich Market	10am 12noon	
FUTURE EVENTS			
Thursday 17 Sept	Tidal Lagoon Power Presentation	7pm – 8.30pm	Parishioners are welcome to attend.

Otterhampton Community Primary School

If you do not have children or grandchildren of primary school age it can sometimes be easy to forget that we have a thriving school in an idyllic location at the top of the hill on the aptly named School Lane! The Otterhampton Community Primary School (OPS) continues to give the next generations a safe and fun start in life from the age of two years when they can first join the preschool to 11 years when most of them move on to Haygrove School in Bridgwater for their secondary education.



This year the school has said goodbye to Bridget Hemmings who has been the Headteacher for the last 12 years. She is now enjoying a well deserved retirement with her own grandchildren. The children look forward to welcoming a new Headteacher in September. He is Nick Benbow who will be joining the school from a forces school in Germany where he is currently working. Currently the school has a Locum Headteacher, Derek Nevell to whom the school is indebted for stepping in for a term and making sure that the school maintains progress until Mr Benbow takes up the reins in September.

There are presently just short of 80 pupils of compulsory school age (5 – 11 years) enrolled at OPS. In addition the school runs a self sustaining facility for preschool children and provides care for pupils before and after school between the hours of 07:45 and 18:00 in its Otters Holt building out of which there will no doubt be many Otters Tales to come over the years! This represents in all more than 100 children a significant proportion of the local community – the school is a Community School and touches the lives of many more in the community whether they are parents, carers, grandparents or whether they perhaps join the pupils for school dinners as many who regularly attend the village coffee morning do. Some of you may even be “old boys and girls”.

The School has a fund raising arm in the form of The Friends of Otterhampton School (FOS) to which it is grateful for the marvellous work it does to raise money for those items the budget received from the Department of Education does not run to. The current focus of their attention is the replacement of outside play equipment that is no longer safe for the children and has had to be removed. The main annual fund raisers FOS is responsible for are a Pamper Evening and Christmas Fayre and the Bag2School collection in partnership with another local charity BIBIC. Thank you to all in the community for your support of those activities.

The pupils, staff and governors of Otterhampton Community Primary School wish Otters Tales success in linking news from all our community groups and look forward to providing articles to keep you up to date with news and events at the school in future; like details of its WOW days, Sports Days, Musical and Acting Productions as well as its academic achievements.

Perhaps the appointment of one of your number as a School Governor could make the headlines! There are vacancies and if you are interested dear reader then please contact the Clerk to the Governors by telephone or e-mail for more details on 01278 652735 JDEvans@educ.somerset.gov.uk or call into the school and speak to the Headteacher.

Otter Tales

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