



Welcome to Combwich

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# Otter Tales

Published with the generous support of Otterhampton Parish Council



Sure signs that spring is in the air!



Early morning on the river  
Combwich Boat Club Gig section rowers

# Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from the February & March 2019 Parish Council Meetings

## Temporary Chair and Vice Chair

Following the resignation of Dave Cather from the parish council, our existing Vice-Chair Julie Evans, will temporarily take on the role with Dick Best as temporary Vice-Chair until the May election. We thank Dave for his service as both councillor and Chair over the past couple of years. He was a very effective Chair and we wish him our very best wishes for the future.

## Forthcoming District and Parish Council Elections

These will take place on 2 May 2019. It is likely there will be 3 vacancies on the parish council so if you have ever thought you would like to become involved in the parish council, here is your chance! There is a more detailed article on page 5 detailing the work of the parish council and the process of becoming a councillor. Look out for information on the parish noticeboards and [www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk).

Or alternatively, please contact the Clerk or any councillor who will be happy to talk to you.

## Affordable Housing Survey

Following the presentation from SDC on 7.2.19 it was decided to ask SDC to undertake a survey of affordable housing requirements in the parish to give us an insight into the scale and nature of the local housing need. A form will be sent to every property to complete and then SDC will produce a report for the parish council. The next phase would then be a 'call for sites' where landowners advise SDC if they have any parcel(s) of land that may be suitable for affordable housing.

## Bolham Layby

We have made strong representations to SCC Highways, EDF, SDC and the Police regarding the state of the layby with particular regard to safety concerns (e.g. mud and water on the Hinkley Point road). The HGV lorries associated with Hinkley C should not be using any of the laybys along the Hinkley road; they are effectively fly-parking. We have been given assurances from SCC that it is seeking a resolution. We will continue to exert as much pressure as we can on this issue.

## Dame Withycombe Layby

We have been asked why the layby was not made wider whilst there was the opportunity. The layby was only 1.9m wide. Highways committed to widening the layby to 2.4m (the recommended statutory width) but was unable to go any wider because of BT apparatus running parallel with the layby.

## Forthcoming enhancement works

Two new noticeboards have been ordered (using Hinkley C Community funding). These should be erected towards the end of March/beginning of April. We are currently in the process of securing funding to erect a light at the bus shelter. This work is unlikely to happen before the summer, but should be completed before the winter.

## Contact details for the parish council

### PARISH COUNCILLORS

Julie Evans (Acting Chair)	01278 652735
Dick Best	01278 651063
Barry Leathwood	01278 652399
Bob Birkenhead	01278 653127
Rachel Perrett	01278 652958
Murray Lister	07802 823497
Mrs Aly Prowse (Clerk)	01278 652426
Vacancy	

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

### County and District Ward Members

Mike Caswell	01278 652043
(District & County)	
Julie Pay (District)	01278 732956

## Combwich Wharf Drop-In-Session

EDF is holding a drop-in session to discuss the next stage of the wharf development prior to the parish council meeting on 4 April, 6.30pm in the Village Hall. There will be a Q & A session.

## Somerset's Brilliant Coast Project

As reported in the January Otter Tales, this project is seeking community engagement and volunteers to develop a conservation project encompassing the 'shoreline' in the parish. An initial informal gathering has been arranged in the afternoon of Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April. Keep an eye open for information posted on the notice boards and [www.Combwich.org.uk](http://www.Combwich.org.uk) or Somerset Wildlife Trust's website: [https://www.somersetwildlife.org/Somerset's\\_Brilliant\\_Coast.html](https://www.somersetwildlife.org/Somerset's_Brilliant_Coast.html)

## Next Meeting

We would love to see more residents at parish council meetings. You will be given a warm welcome and the opportunity to participate and give your views on the various topics discussed. In addition, tea, coffee and biscuits are available from 5-10 minutes before the meeting start time.

The next parish council meeting will be held on Thursday 4 April 2019, **6.30pm** (to include the Combwich Wharf Drop-In-Session) at Otterhampton Village Hall. Contact for Clerk (Aly Prowse) [otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com) or Tel 01278 652426





## Traffic Monitoring on C182 - Julie Evans, Otterhampton Parish Councillor

When I joined the local police in November 2018 to monitor traffic on the C182 shortly after the speed had changed to 50 mph. We recorded perhaps 3/4 cars exceeding the 50mph speed limit, the majority of the traffic was not speeding but there were incidents of driving too fast for the road and one dangerous overtaking manoeuvre.

It is my understanding that the road is not suitable to routinely have a team of local volunteers to help monitor use of the road and by their very presence remind drivers to watch their speed but Sue Marks of Avon and Somerset police is happy to facilitate individuals or pairs of individuals joining her in traffic monitoring activity, which may help identify the need for more formal enforcement measures. If you are interested in getting involved in this way please contact me via the Clerk to Otterhampton Parish Council. It would be good to get a rota of people to facilitate monitoring 3 or 4 time a year with each on the rota joining Sue as little or often as they would like. It is an interesting experience.



The communities regularly using the C182 are the local resident communities and the communities at Hinkley A, B & C. The HPC community is largely transported by newly professional bus drivers whose courtesy, skills and appreciation of the nature of the road and its hazards are improving as they become more experienced bus drivers. The HGV drivers have their licences and with it their living to lose. The remainder are private vehicles.

As a local community we need to use the road responsibly and with courtesy; for example when you are on the C182 please look out for cars seeking to join it from junctions and properties that are abutting it and let them out at busy times. Speed is only one factor in our driving habits and we should drive to the road not to the speed limit. Accidents are generally caused not by drivers exceeding the speed limit but by going too fast for the nature of the road and failing to be alert to hazards such as approaching junctions. These are all signposted but when we use the road habitually we fail to register the signs – if it says SLOW on the road it is there for a reason. It is not easy to get new road markings or signage. More signage and road markings will be introduced soon, watch out for them.

**A BIG THANK YOU** to Leon who lives in Estuary Park. It was snowing heavily on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January when Leon knocked on my door and asked if I needed anything from the shop. I understand he called on other senior citizens in Estuary Park as well and offered to shop for them as well. I'm sure we all appreciate his thoughtfulness, I know I do.

Thank you Leon, you're a star.

**Hazel Bishop**



# Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Registered Charity Number 1124017

Last month we were able to organise a successful history project stall at the village market when many local residents viewed photographs and newspaper cuttings of old Combwich, Otterhampton and Steart. Many were able to provide anecdotes of their time in the villages many years ago.

Bill Johnson author of Otterhampton Parish 2000, an excellent local history book commissioned by the parish council for the millennium was present and brought with him old maps and other documents relating to the area. A number of resident brought their old documents and photographs to be copied and added to the collection. The stall was so busy that we were not able to respond to everyone as we would have liked. If you were one of those people, our apologies.



Recognise this place which stood at the end of the Pill on Riverside, Combwich?

Parrett for people from the west in their pilgrimages to Glastonbury. Later the Pill developed into an important local trading port. In living memory the village and parish has changed enormously as the old brickyard closed and commercial shipping ended. Very recently Steart Marshes has been returned to something like the landscape of previous centuries and in contrast the wharf will soon be rebuilt to accommodate the import of huge pieces of machinery necessary for the construction of HPC nuclear power station.

What next? A number of people agreed to become more involved in the project and a meeting has been arranged to consider how to develop interest in the history of our parish and its communities. More in the next issue.

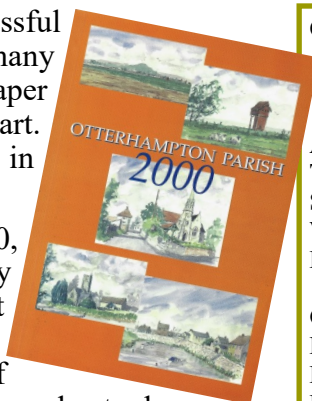
We thank all those who contributed to the event. If you would like to become involved ring Barry on 652399 or email [barry.leathwood@btinternet.com](mailto:barry.leathwood@btinternet.com) for further information.



Coming up is the **OPRA AGM** at 7.30pm on Monday 18th March in the Anchor. This is the occasion when we deliver our Chairman's annual report and elect the committee for the following year which is expected to take half an hour or so. Then we all relax over a glass of wine, or two, and we chat

about our programme for the coming year, including our Easter Activities (see right) and oh! to remind 3 of our number that they have been booked on emergency first aid refresher courses with St. Johns Ambulance.

If you are interested in getting involved in our activities or just want to find out what we do then please come along.



## OPRA Officers and Committee

### Chair

Tina Gardener 652642

### Secretary

Ann Leathwood 652399

### Treasurer

Sue Francis 653663

### Vice Chair

Barry Leathwood 652399

### Committee

Mary Cornish 653868

Beverly Smith 652595

Di Davie 652141

Felicity Ashworth 653633

Jacqui Sparks 652069

Melvin Fooks 322459

### 100 Club Organisers

Ann Leathwood 652399

Sue Francis 653663

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.

## Childrens' Easter Egg Hunt

### Good Friday

11am 19th April

### The Anchor

All children and grand children of the parish welcome.  
A free Easter Egg to all who complete the course.  
Bumper Egg for the lucky winner

## Easter Quiz

With Shaun and Mary

## Easter Sunday

7.30 for 8pm 21st April

### The Anchor

All welcome





## What has the parish council ever done for US? And Parish Council Elections

Quite a lot really considering it is the lowest level of local government and receives only 5.6% (2018-2019) of your council tax bill. Perhaps though, the biggest impact the parish council has made in recent years is the tough negotiating it undertook in securing the £500k Hinkley Point Community Impact Mitigation fund and the role it now plays (together with the Otterhampton Parish Project Team) trying to ensure the money is spent on worthwhile projects to leave a lasting legacy. Some of the projects that have received funding are the two rowing gigs, a defibrillator for Steart; design and feasibility study for the village hall refurbishment, Dame Withycombe layby widening and two new notice boards (to be erected shortly). Funding applications in progress include tee shirts for the choir, the refurbishment of the village hall, lighting at the bus shelter and a replacement OPRA pavilion.



The major enhancement within the last 4-year parish council cycle was the new play area, transformed from the old dilapidated wooden equipment, fence and swings. This involved a huge amount of work, research, planning, meetings and securing the £100k required from several sources.

Remember the state of the overgrown and neglected Pill opposite the village hall, the dilapidated shed and the Combwich Buoy which had been missing for years? The shed has gone and the refurbished Buoy has returned and together with new seating and landscaping (maintained by Keith the village gardener) makes this an attractive place to watch the activities in the Pill, harbour and river.

The perennial problem of dog fouling has been tackled, although not entirely resolved, by providing dog poo bags/dispensers; new and additional safety fencing was purchased and erected alongside the brook by the defibrillator; the wood has been replaced on the bus shelter and various Highway's improvements have been fought for particularly along the Hinkley Point Rd which should see chevron signage soon on Dame Withycombe Hill.

In addition to new enhancements we also have statutory obligations including grounds maintenance throughout the parish, act as a consultee for planning applications, Public Rights of Way, audit, accounting and to provide representatives to attend meetings such as the EDF Transport and Community Forums, Steart Forum, Parish Cluster meetings, Hinkley Point Site Stakeholder Group.

The revised Community Plan, Emergency Plan and Welcome Information Sheet are also almost ready to be distributed. The councils' activities are carried out in close co-operation with other community groups such as the Village Hall Committee, OPPT, OPRA, School, Otter Wheels and many others.

The council normally meets at 7pm on the first Thursday of the month in the village hall and welcomes the public who have an opportunity to have their say on the agenda items at the beginning of the meeting (whilst enjoying free tea and biscuits). The council is supported by the professional skills of a "clerk" who is the responsible legal and financial officer. The agendas, minutes and other documents are displayed on the village notice boards and, on the website, [www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk).

This is only a snapshot and by no means a complete picture of the work of the council which members seem to find enjoyable and worthwhile. Have you ever considered becoming a councillor? Here's how: -

### PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

All the councillors (details on page 2) are coming to the end of the electoral period and whilst most will be seeking re-election in May, there will be at least 3 vacancies to be filled.

If you are interested, or want to know more, the Sedgemoor District Council website "Standing as a candidate - May 2019" is the place to go for the technical stuff (nomination papers available now from SDC and Monday 18 March is the first day that candidate(s) can deliver nomination papers to SDC) or to get more practical information and advice, contact the Clerk telephone 01278 652426 or email [otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com), or any parish councillor. There is a strict time table and you must return your completed nomination papers by hand, no later than 4pm on Wednesday 3 April 2019 to the Returning Officer, Sedgemoor District Council, Bridgwater House, King Squares, Bridgwater, Somerset,

## Dick and Rosie Best - profile



It all started back in the '60s when Liverpool, what with Beatlemania, the Mersey Beat and Liverpool FC winning the Cup, was a really cool place to be, especially as a student. Rosie and Dick were both doing the same course in veterinary science and at the end of which they qualified, got married and set off to a new life in East Africa.

Dick had been recruited as a government veterinary officer in Kenya, working in a large chunk of Africa where they were the only vets having to deal with a whole range of unfamiliar tropical diseases, running a government department and in a foreign language - Swahili. Their accommodation was a tiny government bungalow, without any electricity, but with a wood-burning stove, a paraffin refrigerator and a healthy population of cockroaches. Despite the few hardships Kenya is a beautiful country with its

magnificent scenery, its climate and its wildlife. Their district spreading from mountain peaks over 15,000 feet to the rolling plains of the Masai Mara.

After Kenya, and now with two children, they were posted to northern Nigeria, a strictly Muslim state on the edge of the Sahara, a complete contrast from the green of the Kenyan "White Highlands". Dick was establishing laboratories to diagnose livestock diseases and Rosie was running her own practice for the expatriate community in Kano, the capital of the north. Not all work was tied to a laboratory bench and Dick was involved with wildlife units, treating wildlife casualties and forging expeditions into the bush – including the darting and moving of elephants away from areas where they were causing crop damage and injuries, sometime fatal, to local tribespeople. Not quite a David Attenborough, but heading that way!



"I KNOW IT'S UNUSUAL, BUT COULDN'T YOU TREAT HIM IN THE PARKING LOT?"

Two Nigerian tours and two Nigerian military coups later Dick and Rosie had their African swan song with some time back in Kenya, back in the town of their first posting. Many things had changed, tourism had overtaken agriculture as the main industry, whereas in the '60s many large farms were owned by white farmers, but in the late '70s many of these farms had been sold and divided into plots to allow local farm workers to own and farm their own "shambas".

So after 10 years, some of them challenging, others pure joy, Dick and Rosie returned to Britain and settled in Portishead, where they "put up their plate" to open their own veterinary practice. To maintain sanity from the pressures of general

practice Rosie took up flying small aircraft and visiting relatives in Australia, whilst Dick followed his obsession with all things feathered, plus holidaying in the Arctic.



Ever since a teenager Steart has been a sort of spiritual home to Dick, so with retirement, and a huge stroke of luck, they moved to Steart - and "the rest is history".

Dick and Rosie are both active in the community. Dick represents the Steart ward on the Otterhampton Parish Council and is heavily involved as a volunteer in WWT Steart Marshes





# Otterhampton Primary School.

Head Teacher, Claire Luce



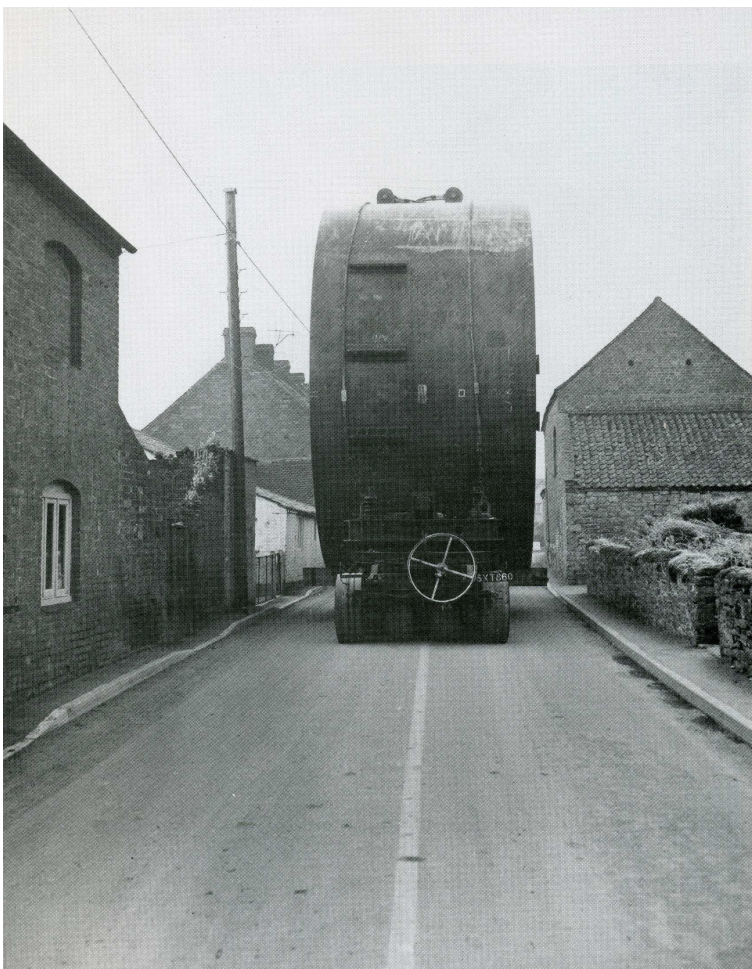
## Highlights from the Spring term.

Another busy term so far. Here are a few of the highlights:

- Swimming lessons at Quantock Lodge
  - Mobile Library visiting monthly
  - Parents evenings
  - Safer internet day
  - Year 3/4 Gymnastics competition
  - Valentines cake sale
  - Cross Country event at Brymore
  - Year 1/2 Gymnastics competition
  - Bikeability Year 5/6
  - NSPCC assemblies and workshops
  - World Book Day - Visit from Chris Staple, local author
  - Celebration assemblies for parents
- After school clubs continue



Dates for the diary - Friday 29th March - Easter Bingo - all welcome!



Boiler Ring on Transporter by No. 9 Brookside Road, Combwich  
Taken on 6 February 1959

We may have traffic problems on the C182 (Hinkley Road) but we don't have these huge vehicles and machinery passing through the village this time. Thanks to the creation of the Haul Road all heavy equipment will by-pass the village as they make their way from the Wharf and along the C182 to the HPC construction site.



Alternator Stator on Transporter by No. 22 Brookside Road, Combwich  
Taken October 1960



## Combwich Car Parking/Traffic Problems

A small cull-de-sac village in rural Somerset is not the obvious place to report serious car parking and traffic problems, but it is nevertheless true. Long before cars were even thought of, houses were built on narrow streets with few or no pavements and no off-road parking.

All traffic into the village has no option but to enter and exit via Brookside Road, which at peak times in the morning and afternoon, when parents bring and collect children from school creates hazardous conditions for cars, cyclists and pedestrians alike. The lack of parking at the school and restricted turning space often creates havoc in School Lane too. Even outside these times indiscriminate parking cause problems.

Children from Otterhampton Primary School have written to the parish council, OPRA and the Somerset County Highways department expressing their concerns; other residents have told of their anxieties about the possibility of the emergency services being unable to access parts of the village.

The lack of affordable homes mean more young people are still living with parents in the village and the lack of public transport requires them to have cars to get to work and to use the leisure facilities in Bridgwater and elsewhere. It is a problem often discussed at the parish council without any real solutions emerging.



On a recent visit to the school parish councillors Rachel Perrett and Barry Leathwood met year 5 & 6 students together with their teacher Mrs Mockridge to discuss traffic and parking issues in the village. The children were full of ideas and concerns which they voiced very eloquently, some of which are expressed below.



Why has the problem become much worse recently? Houses without off road parking often have two or more cars, and even on the more modern developments like Estuary Park and Nursery Close where every home has a garage and drive, there is insufficient space to accommodate all the vehicles that we have these days.

A key additional factor appears to be the number of houses now in multi-occupancy due to contractors seeking lodgings near to their work on the construction of Hinkley

Point C power station. Whilst most people use their cars to get to work, EDF Hinkley C contractors are forbidden from taking their cars to work and leave them in the village whilst they catch company buses at the entrance to the village. Whilst we welcome contractors as temporary members of our community they are adding significantly to the problem.

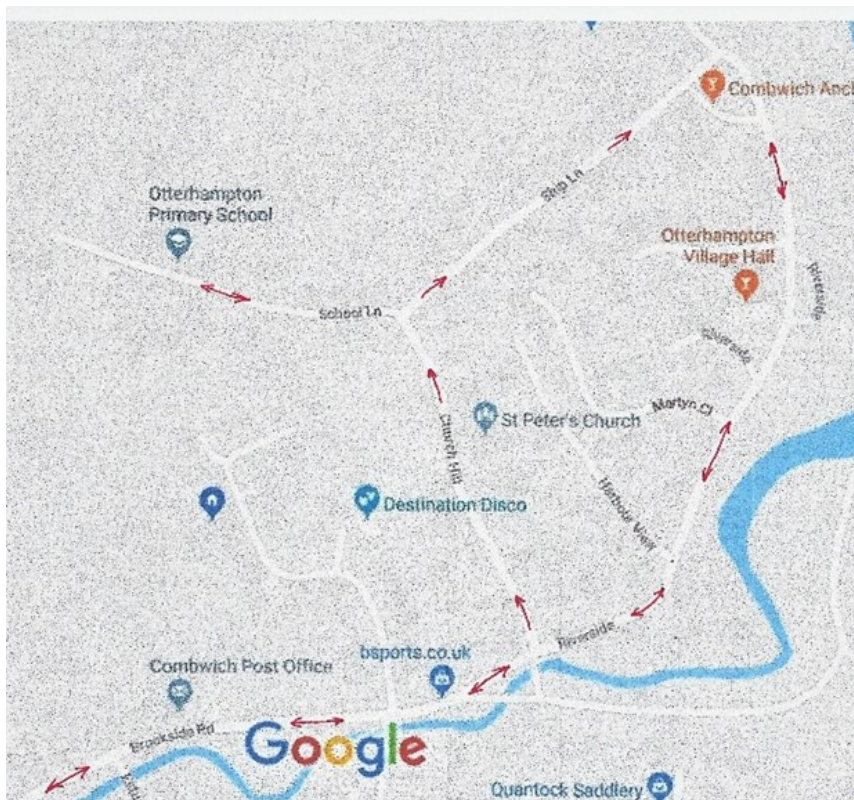
Nursery Close has a problem, presumably because of the number of contractors living there. Even though most houses have parking space for two or more cars, vehicles are left on pavements, sometimes for days on end, forcing pedestrians, children's buggies and mobility scooters on to the road. In the older parts of the village there are narrow streets and no pavements with little off-street parking which is even more difficult to deal with.

**What can be done?** Unfortunately, there is no land available in the village for additional car parks. The common opposite Riverside is covered by a variety of environmental restrictions, including "Site of



## Combwich Car Parking/Traffic Problems continued

Special Scientific Interest" (SSSI) and is also registered as a village green and therefore cannot be used for parking. (These were issues the children understood) There is no other land available in the village. School staff and pupils have been trying to encourage parents to leave their cars at the bottom of the village when delivering and collecting their children. They also advise parents to treat the older part of the village as a voluntary one-way system – up Church Hill and down Ship Lane, which would alleviate some of the problem. Unfortunately, this maybe difficult to enforce, but perhaps it can be encouraged by the judicious use of signage. Maybe it is worth contacting the highways department to look again at the possibility of a compulsory one-way system, but before that happens it would be good to hear the concerns of residents living on the affected roads. Let us know what you think.



Back to EDF Hinkley C contractors; EDF imposes some conditions on contractors about where they park, but does nothing about cars left all day and night in the village which add to the problems particularly at peak times. Perhaps EDF could be asked to ensure that contractors who are living temporarily in the village use the park-and-ride carpark in Cannington. This would seriously reduce the number of cars left in the village during the day.

All of us have a responsibility to behave with care and consideration. This means parking without causing problems for others, allowing space on pavements for buggies and wheel chairs etc. and driving slowly through the village particularly where there are no pavements. Otter Tales has drawn attention to inconsiderate parking several times in the past, maybe it is time to take the advice of a number of residents and ask the police to intervene as obstructing a pavement is an offence.

*(Since writing this article the police have put **FIXED PENALTY** warning notices on cars parked on the pavement in Nursery Close. Apparently the police intend to revisit soon and any offending vehicles will received a fixed penalty. Residents report this has had a near miraculous effect of clearing the pavement for their intended use, for pedestrians)*

## Otterhampton Parish Council - Notable Minutes

1924	Request made for a fire appliance and a new bridge at Bolham	1963	The Street cleaner praised for his diligence
1953	Collection for National Flood and Tempest Disaster (Lynmouth)	1965	Parking in the village becomes a problem
1956	Harbourmaster applied to site buoy-yard in the Pill	1966	Common registered as a village green. Complaints received of power fluctuations
1957	Some allotments disappear as contractors form new road to harbour	1969	Decided to call new road opposite Harbour Garage Harbour View. Mr Messet passes away after 21 years as clerk to the PC
1959	Ships Engineer involved in fatal accident in the Harbour	1972	Problems with tenanted caravans up School Lane
		1973	A life-buoy is sited by the Pill

# OTTERHAMPTON VILLAGE HALL

## News from the Otterhampton Village Hall Committee

Work continues on the planned refurbishment and we hope to have full plans ready for people to see very soon. It is very difficult though trying to include everything we want to provide in the existing hall! And we want to get it right. For example we don't want to lose any of the existing facilities but we do want to include a new lift, wider access to the hall, decent sized kitchen and storage area for tables and chairs. It really is like trying to put a pint in a quart sized pot! But we will do it.

We are liaising with the Community Council for Somerset and are working on a Business Plan. We have also been advised that since a change in the law it would be beneficial for the Committee to alter the existing governance document to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as this will protect the Village Hall Trustees from being personally and financially liable – especially important during the refurbishment when thousands of pounds are at stake. This process will take a few months via the Charity Commission; the essence of the existing governance document will remain the same.

Sedgemoor District Council has agreed the proposed new cladding colour which is called Cobblestone (creamy grey) so external works are all now agreed with the exception of a disability ramp. As the ramp needs to be built on the road we need to seek permission from the Highways Department at Somerset County Council. We understand that permission is not always granted to alter roads **so your help is needed if you agree that a ramp is necessary**. Our fervent belief is that a ramp is required to allow anyone with a disability to independently access the village hall; the existing steps make it very difficult for someone in a wheelchair or with walking problems to enter the hall, and the hall is supposed to provide easy access for everyone. A ramp will also allow easier access to parents with young children and prams and to prevent youngsters running straight out of the hall onto the road.

If you agree it would be very helpful **if you would write a letter in support of installing a disability ramp**. This will help enormously with our request to the Highways Department.

Similarly, it would be very helpful when we apply for grants to have individual letters of support. So if you visit the hall to attend any of the groups please take a few minutes to send a letter or email saying why the hall is important to you.

Please send your letters or emails of support to Village Hall Committee via me, Sue Barton, 10 Nursery Close, or drop your letters in the Hall postbox, or email me at [bartonbs@btinternet.com](mailto:bartonbs@btinternet.com)

If you have any queries about the refurbishment please don't hesitate to contact the village hall committee: write to us at the hall, email me on or phone me on 01278 653531.

Date for your diary: the 2019 Combwich Fun Day will be held on the Common on **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July** so make sure you keep the date free! If you have any ideas for attractions or would like to be involved in running the Fun Day please contact me (details above). *We need all the help we can get to make this a fun event for everyone?!*

*Finally*, very special thanks to Pat Priest, Secretary to the Village Hall Committee. Pat is leaving the Committee at the end of March and we would like to thank her for her hard work keeping the hall records up to date and introducing several new procedures. We will miss her.

If you would like to join the Committee as a Trustee, particularly if you would like to become the Secretary please contact me on 653531.



## HARBOUR VIEW CLUB

The Club is open Fridays and Saturdays from 7pm to midnight, Sundays between 2 and 6pm, and Monday evenings during the winter skittles season 7 til 12pm. Annual membership is only £2.50 and new members are welcome; £1 is charged for visitors so why not come along? The Club has a fully stocked bar including Real Ale (on a handpump); a darts area and skittle alley are available for social events.

Dates for your diary include:

First Saturday of each month brings the monthly quiz with a cash prize for the winner and various prizes for each round. Cost is £1 per person and starts at 8.30pm. Come along and test your brainpower.

It's RED NOSE DAY on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March. The bar will open at 6pm with a Red Nose themed children's fancy dress: prize for the best costume. There will fun and games for all throughout the evening.





# Sedgemoor Walking for Health

Health Walks are designed to attract people of all ages who want to improve their health, meet new people as well as explore their local environment. Walking groups are led by trained Volunteer Walk Leaders who have reached the standard of delivery set by the national Walking for Health initiative.

The Ramblers Society manage the national Walking for Health initiative at a national level, giving people the opportunity to take part in short, free and local health walks in communities across England.



## Sedgemoor Health Walks

Sedgemoor District Council now manages the Health Walks in Sedgemoor programme and aim to have as many local, accessible and well supported Health Walks across the district for residents to join. Sedgemoor's scheme is run by the Housing, Health and Wellbeing team and is accredited with the national Walking for Health Initiative. Our Health Walks are led by trained Health Walk leaders who volunteer their time to plan scenic and accessible routes for all. The scheme caters for complete beginners as well as more intermediate level walkers and last between 30 and 90mins in duration, often with the option of refreshments at the end.

Why not join one of our Health Walks and you could make new friends, relieve stress and improve your physical and mental health and wellbeing. Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more



active, lose weight and become healthier. It is an ideal choice for people of all ages and fitness levels. Regular walking has also been shown to reduce the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, asthma, stroke, some cancers as well as helping to prevent and improve mental health.

Our Health Walk locations include Cheddar, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater and the villages of Nether Stowey, Steart and Stogursey and cater for beginners through to intermediate level

walkers. No walk lasts longer than 90 minutes, with most lasting up to one hour. For those walks attached to GP surgeries, it is important to note that you DO NOT need to be a patient of the surgery to attend. They are open to all.

For a copy of the February programme, please see Related Documents below.

To understand more about the national Walking for Health initiative, please visit: [Walking for Health](http://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk)

## Volunteering

Do you enjoy walking and wish to help others to reap the benefits also? If so, why not attend one of Sedgemoor District Council's free Walk Leader training courses. The training is ideal if you would like to lead a Health Walk in your local community on a voluntary basis. It is a 5 hour course full of practical advice on leading safe and enjoyable walks for all and includes a demonstration walk and tips on how to keep people motivated. The next training course will be held in March 2019. Details are as follows.

[Volunteer Health Walk Leader Training \[1.0MB\]](#)



# WWT Steart Marshes

working in partnership with



Environment  
Agency

## Reserve – CIEEM Visit

On the 25<sup>th</sup> January, we had the pleasure of hosting a guided field visit to 40 members of CIEEM (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management). Reflecting on the ecological changes that the reserve has undergone since the breach in 2014 with a focus on the wintering birds. Alys Laver, the Site Manager provided an introductory talk before they were taken out on site by volunteers to see key areas of the site and enjoy some bird watching at this fantastic time of year.

CIEEM is recognised as the leading professional membership body representing and supporting ecologists and environmental managers across multiple sectors including local authorities, government agencies, NGOs, environmental consultancies, academia and industry.

Making it a fantastic opportunity for WWT to showcase the reserve and the sustainable management of the natural environment as our demonstration working wetland



A crucial element of our vision as an organisation is to make sure wetlands are recognised as part of our natural infrastructure providing space for wildlife and people and vital services to us all. Sharing best practice enables a diverse audience to learn from one another and adopt methods that are working, with a view to furthering the management and enhancement of biodiversity. Already from

this visit we have organised farmers involved with a similar scheme to come and see first-hand how the agricultural model is working for our local farmers. **Written by Alys Laver (WWT Site Manager)**

## Birds on the reserve

The last month has seen some excellent high tides and with it we have been running several walks. A high tide bird watching walk in late January took visitors out to the edge of the river where large numbers of dunlin were seen murmuring. A peregrine seen on the pylon along with the 3 spoonbills on Otterhampton Marsh were amongst other highlights. **Written by Sam Wall (WWT Reserve Warden)**

## Management

### Letting in the light

This year we have opened up a new section on the permit path near Stockland, this old farmers' track had been completely over grown with willow, blackthorn and wild privet.

With the help of our hard working volunteers we cut back the willow blocking the path and removed sections of blackthorn smothering the ditch. In some of the cleared areas we also planted a number of hazel, spindle and elder to add to the tree diversity and create a meandering path.

Our hope is that this work will not only be enjoyed by the public but also encourage a range of hedgrows, woodland and aquatic flora to colonize the area bringing with them their associated fauna.

P.s if you are passing through keep your eyes open for some monstrous dog rose. **Written by Ronan Conn (WWT Reserve Warden)**

### Drainage Ditches

This month our volunteers have been helping us to improve the drainage on the path leading to the Quantock hides. This involves digging a trench alongside the path, lining it with a perforated pipe and filling it with stones to allow the water to soak through.





## WWT Steart Marshes *continued*

Once the path has dried out it will allow us to repair the surface alongside the drainage channels, and should prevent the erosion of the path on the slope leading up to the hides. **Written by Alice Beaney (WWT Reserve Assistant Warden)**

### Engagement

#### **Steart Marshes celebrates 5 years of volunteering!**

This week sees a milestone for us here at Steart Marshes, it will be 5 years since the very first practical volunteer task. Back in February 2014 a handful of brave souls came out on a cold day to help Alys (then Senior Reserve Warden, now Site Manager) plant an orchard next to the office. It was exciting to think that we were playing a part in the development of this new reserve, and that we would be able to return and see the trees as they grew over the



Orchard planting February 2014



Same view February 2019



Orchard planting February 2014



February 2019



Volunteers trampling ruts in the soil to help encourage new plant growth



years. The planting was challenging, not least because of the sticky clay mud which took a few casualties as they slid over, but as for the orchard, well it is thriving as you can see here!

Practical volunteering has continued from that day onwards, and true to that first day, mud is generally involved! This morning the group started the day trampling down vehicle ruts around our bug hotels. The ground had been chewed up by heavy vehicles clearing reeds from the ditches, but this can be a good thing for encouraging new growth of wildflowers. Thanks to one of our newest volunteers James Johnson for the photos below.

Today we have 55 volunteers who carry out a whole range of roles for us. They still do the practical grounds work, but they also help with administration in the office; monitor wildlife, including birds, newts, otters and butterflies; and carry out engagement roles such as talking to the public on site or manning information stands at events. The growth in the volunteer force has resulted in the need for a full-time engagement officer to manage volunteer applications, inductions and reviews. Another vital part of the engagement role involves booking all the walks, talks and events. These have to be coordinated with tides, times of year, daylight hours, minimising disturbance to the wildlife ... and most

importantly working out which volunteers are free to help or lead the events. So that's me, Nicole, I talk from an informed position as volunteer who fell over in that muddy orchard back in 2014, now Engagement Officer, amongst other things managing our 55 volunteers.

We are very grateful for all the time and effort our volunteers put in for the benefit of Steart Marshes. In **2018** our **volunteer hours totalled 931 working days**, this is equivalent to us having an extra 4.1 members of staff, or almost doubling our current staff numbers! **Written by Nicole Turnbull-Wigley (WWT Engagement Officer)**

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at Steart Marshes please contact us at [info.steart@wwt.org.uk](mailto:info.steart@wwt.org.uk) to arrange a taster day, or complete an application form on our website [wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/steart-marshes/visiting/](http://wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/steart-marshes/visiting/).

Please come and talk to me if you have any questions or comments about Steart Marshes. I can be contacted on 01278 651090 / 07717 342061 or email at [nicole.wigley@wwt.org.uk](mailto:nicole.wigley@wwt.org.uk)

Any further queries please don't hesitate to contact the Site Manager, Alys Laver on 01278 651090 / 07717 505966 or email on [alys.laver@wwt.org.uk](mailto:alys.laver@wwt.org.uk)



## Sedgemoor South West Neighbourhood Police Team



Police Community Support Officer  
7413 Nicholas Mizon

07889 655307



Police Community Support Officer  
7628 Jason Wyatt

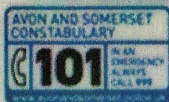
07802 874663

### Contact us

- <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/your-area/sedgemoor-south-west/>
- Bridgwater Police Centre, Express Park, Bristol Road, Bridgwater TA6 4RR

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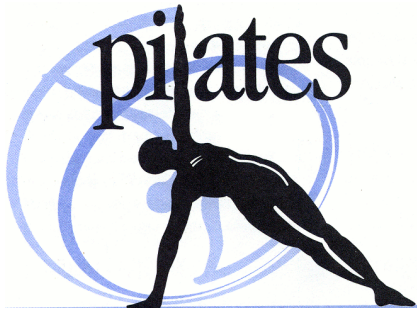


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Otterhampton Village Hall will be holding Pilates classes for all ages and abilities every Tuesday evening from 6.30-7.30pm.

Pilates is a gentle paced class, mainly floor based and helps improve core

stability, muscle tone, strength, posture and balance. All of which we require our bodies to have to stay healthy, whatever our age!

Classes are taught by a qualified and experienced Instructor and cost £5 per session. You are welcome to attend and see if it suits you before you commit and then payment will be required in advance for that term. For anymore information please contact Cally on

Tel: 07555302145/651214

And email: [callystephens18@icloud.com](mailto:callystephens18@icloud.com).



## Cumbwitch Short Mat Bowls Club

(Established 1987)

First floor Otterhampton Village Hall Combwich.

**New members welcome  
why not come and give it a try**

Mon:7.15pm for 7.30 > 9.30

Tel:Brian:01278 652747

# Otter Wheels

Your local car scheme always there for You

**Is lack of transport a problem?**

**Can't get to the dentist, doctor, hospital, shopping, visit a friend?**

**Ring - Otter Wheels on: 07925 154 216 - but please try to give us 48 hours notice**

This not-for-profit car scheme has been running around 3 years, with almost 500 journeys to date. If you haven't tried us why not give us a go? Door to door service with friendly experienced drivers all, DBS checked and happy to help. **Though this is mainly a week day service, we will do our utmost to provide a driver at weekends, especially for hospital visits.**

The rates are reasonable and are per car, not per person and those with a bus pass travel half price.

Typical return journey prices are: -

	With bus pass	Without bus pass
Cannington Health Centre	£1.25	£2.50
Bridgwater Hospital	£4.35	£8.50
Bridgwater Town Centre	£3.50	£7.50

**Please note** when you renew your bus pass you must let us have your new number.

**Ring Otter Wheels 07925 154 216 for more information and to book a journey**

**The success of the scheme means we need additional  
drivers. If you are interested please ring 07925  
154216. Expenses are paid**



## MOBILE LIBRARY

The mobile library visits Combwich and Stockland every four weeks on a Thursday morning at the following times.

Otterhampton School TA5 2QS	10.05 - 10.40
Harbour TA5 2QU	10.55 – 11.15
Combwich Post Office TA5 2QW	11.20 – 11.40
Stockland Bristol Captains TA5 2PY	11.50 – 12.05

Visits on Thursdays - every 4 weeks

2019	2019	2019
17 Jan	9 May	29 Aug
14 Feb	6 Jun	26 Sep
14 Mar	4 Jul	24 Oct
11 Apr	1 Aug	21 Nov
		19 Dec

Please make use of this facility if you can. We have the advantage in Combwich of the school using the mobile library which helps us to retain the service.

If you have an interesting hobby, or interest which you would like to share in these pages, please contact the editor.

And if you would like to receive Otter Tales by email as well as hard copy please email  
barry.leathwood@btinternet.com

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.

## DIARY OF EVENTS

(Otterhampton Village Hall unless otherwise stated)

### REGULAR EVENTS

Monday	Art Club Brownies Short Mat Bowls	2pm – 4pm 5.45pm - 7.30pm 7.30pm - 9.30pm	
Tuesday	Aerobics Pilates  Gentle movement to music	9.30am – 10.30am 10.45 am – 11.45am 6.30pm - 7.30pm 12.15pm - 1pm	
Tuesday (2nd of month)	Police Surgery	10am - 12 noon	
Wednesday	Combwich Crafters Short Mat Bowls	10am - 12 noon 7.30pm - 9.30pm	
Thursday (1 <sup>st</sup> of month)	Parish Council	7pm	Starts with public session
Thursday (2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> of month)	Choir	7pm – 8pm	
Thursday (3 <sup>rd</sup> of month)	Combwich & District WI	7.30pm	Stockland Sports & Social Club
Friday	Coffee morning	10am – 12 noon	
Saturday (2 <sup>nd</sup> of month)	Combwich Market	10am – 12 noon	

### FUTURE EVENTS

Thursday 4th April	Parish Council Meeting	Note 6.30pm start re Combwich Wharf drop-in session by EDF	Village Hall. Public welcome - tea and biscuits provided
Friday 19th April Sunday 21st April	OPRA Children's Easter Egg Hunt Easter Quiz	11am 7.30pm for 8pm	Anchor Inn Anchor Inn
Sunday 28th April	Otterhampton parish shores community meeting	2pm - 4pm	Part of Somerset's Brilliant Coast Project
Thursday 2nd May	Parish & District Council Elections	7am - 10pm	
Thursday 9th May	Annual Parish Council meeting	7pm	Social Club in Village hall
Articles 9th May 2019	Next Otter Tales		Distribution by 17th March

### Otter Tales

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Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information published in Otter Tales, some of the views expressed are those of individuals or organisations.