



Welcome to Combwich

# Otter Tales

Published with the generous support of Otterhampton Parish Council

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General information



**Male Stonechat with fledgling**

by

**Phillip Edwards, Steart**

# Otterhampton Parish Council

Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from your June and July 2021 Parish Council Meetings

## Play Area

We are hoping the work to resurface the play area and the installation of a new seesaw will be taking place during July. We are still awaiting confirmation of the actual date from the contractor. The play area will need to be closed for seven days to undertake the works. We will give you as much notice as possible when the works will take place.

## Wall repairs and verge markers along Riverside

The works to refurbish the wall and the installation of new wooden verge markers were due to commence on 5 July. The work is expected to last for 2-3 weeks.



## Village Sign

Quite a lot of interest was generated on the “All Things Combwich” Facebook page recently about the ‘missing sign’ from the entrance to the village. The sign was damaged in a storm last winter when the post broke and the sign ended up on the floor. It was put into storage and repairs put on hold during the Covid crisis. It is now being refurbished (thanks to Andy Turnbull and Bob Birkenhead for organising) and for safety reasons, will be reinstated at just above ground level in its original location. We appreciate that some of the talk on Facebook mentioned the possibility of a new sign, so perhaps once it is reinstated residents could let the parish council know their views, recognising it was approved by the community some years ago.

## Swimming in the pill

A number of residents contacted us with concerns about young teenagers regularly swimming in the Pill. We contacted the harbour master who advised us that although potentially dangerous it is not illegal, adding that the mud could also be treacherous. EDF as owners of the wharf, from where children are entering the pill has concerns because the steps are unsafe (warning notices have been fixed to the steps). We erected 3 signs along the bank of the pill warning of the dangers, but these were removed within a few days. All we can do is to reinforce the dangers that are present – we have no actual responsibility in this matter, obviously this rests with parents and guardians.

## Otterhampton Wilder Community project

The second family taster event due to be held on 3.7.21 was cancelled due to bad weather and has been rearranged for 24.7.21. Look out for information on notice boards and Facebook.

## Annual Audit

The annual audit for the year ending 31.3.21 has been submitted to the external auditor. We would like to thank Rod Williams who carried out an internal audit check prior to submitting the documents to the external auditor. Accounts and the audit return are on the parish website.

## Dog Bags

As previously advised, once the existing supply of dog bags has been used the dispensers will no longer be replenished and will be removed. The dispensers are rusty and in need of replacement so based on cost considerations (the bags now cost us over £1000 per annum to supply) the service will cease. This is likely to be at the end of July. The dog bins will remain.



## Contact details for the parish council

### PARISH COUNCILLORS

Julie Evans (Chair)	01278 652735
Bob Birkenhead (Vice Chair)	01278 653127
Rachel Perrett	01278 652958
Tina Gardener	01278 652642
Marie Beckley	07748 154395
Lindsey Parsons	07843 604787
Andrew Darch (Stewart)	01278 653495
Mrs Aly Prowse (Clerk)	01278 652426

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

### County and District Ward Members

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

## Parish Council Meetings

We were legally obliged to re-commence 'physical' meetings from 7 May following almost a year of meetings via Zoom. The June and July meetings were held with the kind permission of Claire Luce at the school; our thanks to Claire. We are very much looking forward to holding our next meeting on **Thursday 2 September 2021 at 7pm** at the refurbished Hall. What a fantastic job the Trustees have done; the pictures we have seen look fabulous.



The parish council traditionally does not meet in August, but instead we have a '**village walk**' which **will be on 5.8.21 from 6pm**. If you see the councillors during this walk (or at any time) and have any ideas for enhancement or if you know something needs to be repaired, please do let us know.

*Full details of the decisions taken at the parish council meetings are contained in the minutes which are available on [www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk) or on the village noticeboards.*

Contact for Clerk (Aly Prowse) [otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com) or Tel 01278 652426

**somerset**  
COMMUNITY | FOUNDATION



**Opportunity to make a real difference in  
your community**

Are you passionate about Somerset? Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) is looking for an individual to volunteer on the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund Awards Panel - and applications from people with knowledge of West Somerset are particularly welcome.

The HPC Community Fund - managed by Somerset Community Foundation - awards grants to those seeking support for projects and initiatives that will help to mitigate the impacts and increase the opportunities of the Hinkley Point C build in their community. The Awards Panel, which includes members of the local community, makes the decisions about which local projects will be awarded grants. To date they have helped to award over £4.5 million to local organisations, with grants ranging from £200 to £370,000.

Justin Sargent, Chief Executive at SCF, said: "We'd be really interested to hear from anyone who lives in Somerset and knows it well - particularly the West Somerset area - and who can bring their life experience to support our grant-making. This is a terrific opportunity for anyone who is committed to local communities, and changing the world on their doorstep."

Justin added that applicants do not need experience of serving on a grants committee, as Somerset Community Foundation will provide support and guidance. The successful panel member should be able to commit for at least three years.

To find out more about this exciting voluntary role, visit: [www.somersetcf.org.uk/about-us/vacancies](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/about-us/vacancies) or apply by sending your CV and a covering letter to: [info@somersetcf.org.uk](mailto:info@somersetcf.org.uk) or post to Carolyn Phimister, Somerset Community Foundation, Yeoman House, Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet BA4 6QN, to arrive by noon, Friday 30 July. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

If you run a local community project in Somerset and would like to find out more about grant funding from the HPC Community Fund please visit: [www.hpcfunds.co.uk](http://www.hpcfunds.co.uk) or call Somerset Community Foundation on: 01749 344949.

The HPC Community Fund is part of a wider £20 million commitment of funding, provided by EDF through Section 106 agreements, for communities that are affected by the development of the new nuclear power station, to promote their social, economic and environmental wellbeing and enhance their quality of life.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) is a charity that helps passionate people in Somerset change the world on their doorstep by funding local charities and inspiring local giving and philanthropy. They aim to build stronger communities in Somerset where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. They provide rewarding and impactful ways for donors to give through them, to the causes and places they care about most. Together, they fund amazing organisations and the passionate people that change lives every day.



# Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Registered Charity Number 1124017

Hopefully we are finally approaching the end of lockdown and with that in mind at a recent OPRA meeting the committee started putting together a programme of events for the summer.



We plan to kick off our events with a walk on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July, details will be advertised nearer the time. If you would like to be put on the emailing list for notification of walks, please contact Barry on [barry.leathwood@btinternet.com](mailto:barry.leathwood@btinternet.com) This will be followed by a cream tea walk on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August. The teas will once again be supplied by Aly and Robin at Dowells Farm, with all proceeds going to Steart Church. You do not need to take part in the walk to be able to enjoy a delicious cream tea. Again, details will be advertised nearer the time.



On 21<sup>st</sup> August we will be arranging a cricket match in honour of the late Murray Lister with all proceeds going to SANDS – Stillbirths and Neonatal Deaths. Besides the cricket we will also be organising refreshments including; cream teas, BBQ and beer tent. There will also be a raffle and a ‘kiddies corner’. There is no requisite to be a good cricketer to take part, only enthusiasm to have a good time!

Looking further ahead;

OPRA AGM - 27<sup>th</sup> September

Scarecrow Festival – October date to be agreed

OPRA’s 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary celebrations – 9<sup>th</sup> October

Autumn/winter talks – topics including; Bridgwater Harbour Master, EDF wharf, Steart Marshes and local history

Fireworks – 7<sup>th</sup> November

Senior citizens Christmas dinner – 4<sup>th</sup> December

Photographic competition – date to be agreed



As reported in the last edition we were successful in obtaining a grant from EDF for a new mower. We have now taken delivery of it and it is a most impressive machine and you will notice that Mike is now cutting it more often (boys and their toys!). We also managed to sell the old machine which helped with the purchase cost. Our next project will be looking to replace the pavilion sited on the common.

We are hoping that before long the 100 Club draw can once again take place at the Coffee Morning in the newly refurbished village hall. If you would like to join the 100 Club please contact Ann on 652399.

OPRA is always keen to welcome new committee members and ideas for new activities, please contact Tina on 652642 or any committee member.

**The 100 Club** draw usually takes place every month at the Coffee Morning in Otterhampton Village Hall, but during the last few months the numbers have had to be drawn and witnessed by an independent observer by a video link. The winning numbers are displayed in the Post Office and the parish website [www.combwich.org.uk](http://www.combwich.org.uk)

If you want to join the 100 Club or become involved in OPRA activities please contact Ann on 652399 or Tina on 652642 or any committee member.

## Harbour View Bar

We are looking forward to re-opening as soon as we can after the refurb, dates to be confirmed but it is not likely to be before mid-July. We are hoping to organise some new events from July onwards, we would like to include some for our village seniors maybe bingo/quiz, afternoons or early evenings. If you have any ideas you would like us to consider, or questions please contact me, also for Application/membership forms.

Membership fees will be £5 for July to December 2021, then £5 from 1st January - 31st December 2022.

Steve Lang (Chair) 07875149826 or [bloodstorm\\_20@sky.com](mailto:bloodstorm_20@sky.com)

Bev Lang [beverly64@me.com](mailto:beverly64@me.com)

# OTTERHAMPTON VILLAGE HALL CIO: NEWS



## Village Hall Refurbishment - Grand re-opening coming soon!

It's very exciting to say that after years of planning and focus from members of the OVH committee, the village hall refurbishment is almost completed. Work has progressed to schedule over the past three months and the transformation is clear to see internally and externally.

In the last update, lots of the key works had already been completed including the installation of double glazing, new ceilings in the Bowls Room, Skittle Alley and small meeting room and a new electronic front door.

Since then, the stair lift has been installed to the first floor and we have just received confirmation that planning consent has been granted for an external ramp into the building, which is the final step in making the hall easily accessible for everyone. Two small walls have been removed in the Harbour View Bar making this an open, airy space and new flooring has been laid. The stairs and landing have been carpeted, new lights have been fitted and every room has been decorated.

So over the next few weeks, we will move onto the final stages of getting the hall ready to re-open, putting up blinds and soft furnishings and other touches to make all the rooms comfortable and inviting. We have taken receipt of new tables and chairs for the hall and the Harbour View Bar and most importantly, the weather vane is back in situ"



## New Village Hall Website:

Keep up to date on all of the exciting developments via the new village hall website where you can read all about our progress and view the transformation through photos posted in the gallery. You can access the site via the following links:

Blog: <https://www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk/news>

Gallery: <https://www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk/gallery>

When you log in, please scroll down and sign up for automatic updates via the village hall newsletter where you will also be in with a chance to win two rounds of drinks for four people on the opening night of the village hall!



# Otterhampton Primary School.

## Summer highlights

*Head Teacher, Claire Luce*



### Otterhampton Primary School - Summer 2 highlights!

We have had a very busy second half to the Summer term. We are starting to welcome back visitors to the school and are hoping to be able to take the older children away on a residential to Weymouth at the beginning of July.

### Somerset Coastal Champions

This term we have continued to involve ourselves in the Somerset School Coastal champions initiative. We will be working together with Carymoor Environmental Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust and Litter Free Coast and Sea Somerset to make positive changes to our school and local environment which will have big benefits for local nature, waterways and coastal environments. Every Class visited the Brownie Copse in Combwich and Bay Class took part in a litter pick on Dunster Beach. The Year 6s have actively been coordinating the first level of the award which we hope to secure by the end of term.



### Greatwood

River and Brook Classes spent the day at Greatwood completing team building skills, parachute games, paddling in the stream and generally having a fun packed day away from school! Mrs Everett even organised for the classes to have ice poles delivered at lunchtime. A well-deserved trip out after a challenging year.



### Year 6 Leavers

It is that time of year again when we say goodbye to our Year 6s. We are marking the end of their time at OPS with an activity day at Hill House Centre. They will be completing archery, swimming, cricket and completing a team building challenge. The OPS Friends have once again paid for the smart leavers hoodies which have gone down very well with the children. We wish them every success in their future.



I would like to thank staff, parents and the community for their support as always.

Thanks

Claire

## COMBWICH AND DISTRICT W.I.

Some good news at last, it's been a long time coming but I'm very happy to report that our W.I. will recommence after an 18 month shut-down, on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021. As usual we will be meeting at 7 for 7.30 p.m. at the Stockland Club, which has since been totally refurbished and now offers greatly improved facilities.



Our first meeting will have a party atmosphere, a chance for all of us to meet again, have a catch-up and enjoy some party food provided by your Committee.

Future meetings will follow our normal pattern, with guest speakers to keep you entertained and informed, but this first one is an extra special get together.

Sadly we have lost a couple of our older members since we last met and we will all miss their smiley faces, but we will push forward and welcome any new faces that fancy joining our happy throng. I know that there are several newcomers to all our villages and we look forward to meeting you soon.



Our Monday Craft Club will start again on first Monday in October at 10 a.m. in the Stockland Club so all will be very welcome there, we have lots of ideas for new projects as well as continuing with our wall quilt so lots of creative fun. Our Ladies Lunches will probably not restart until 2022 but that's still up for discussion and how the Covid behaves over the winter – watch this space.

**The Somerset Medal** has been launched by Somerset County Council to say a heartfelt thank-you to the best of the best – for their unstinting contributions during the Covid-19 crisis. We are proud to celebrate three of our local winners.



**Helen Jowett:** The individual effort of Helen, who never looks for praise or thanks, was, and still is, astonishing. She knows practically everyone in the village – those that are in need of care, help and support or are vulnerable or lonely. She would go to, and is still going, to great lengths to visit these residents and give them assistance in any way she can. She runs errands, shopping, walks people's dogs, welfare checks, bakes cakes and biscuits, talks to people in their gardens, even shouting through letter boxes and windows, realising that some human contact most days can lift the spirits of worried, lonely and vulnerable people during this crisis. If ever there was an example of community spirit and human compassion, you would need to look no further than Helen.



**Alison Waters** coordinated with Cannington Health Centre and arranged safe delivery of prescriptions to the shielding patients around Cannington, Comwich and Stockland Bristol. Alison did the lion's share of these deliveries using the opportunity to keep in contact with those isolated individuals. Alison also set up Cannington Volunteers which gathered offers of help and matched them with those who were shielding or housebound.



**Lyn Carter** as reported in the May issue of Otter Tales was awarded the Somerset Medal for her outstanding work in setting up the Otterhampton Scrubs at a time when the NHS was desperately short of PPE.

With her group of volunteer sewers they produced much needed scrubs, hats with ties, caps, headbands and masks.

# *In Search of Equality* a personal view



You may have noticed that the rainbow flag and banners are increasingly displayed in the village and elsewhere, indeed it was just a few short months ago that we were all urged to display a rainbow poster in our windows in support of NHS staff. This prompted us to consider what the rainbow symbol stands for.

Since the late 1970s the rainbow flag has been a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer pride and LGBTQ social movements, which allows people to celebrate their natural sexual characteristics. A modern expression of diversity which has long been suppressed. However, for many this flag has come to symbolise a much wider expression of inclusion and diversity. If you google flags of inclusion and diversity it is the rainbow flag that appears.

Too many inequalities still exist in our society which need to be challenged and although much in equality terms has been achieved in the last century or so, more needs to be done to challenge historic injustices.

At home in the garden

Imagine if the suffragettes never challenged the established order to start the fight for equality for half the population. Even in the 1950s and 60s women were often incarcerated in institutions for having a baby out of wedlock and their babies taken from them. It was not until 1928 that women were allowed the same voting rights as men and despite many improvements women are still disadvantaged in terms of earning capacity and much else. It was the women who led the demand for change, not the men, who often were the main resistance.



Black Lives Matter has focused the mind on racial inequality which tends to ignore the history and contributions people of colour continue to make in our society. The controversial toppling of the Colston Statue was not an attempt to rewrite history, but to make it more inclusive. To recognise that we have always been multi-cultural and multi-racial. African people were part of our population in Roman times and probably long before. Cheddar Man (7000 BC) excavated

from Goughs Cave turns out to likely to have had dark skin according to modern DNA profiling.

Black sports men and women are still racially abused in this country and young black men are overwhelmingly targeted for stop and search by the police in the UK.

Surely every human being should be able to live as an equal to each other and be respected whether they are young or old, whatever their ethnic origin or sexual orientation, religion or belief.

It is also against the law (Equality Act 2010) to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability (*which could happen to anyone at any time*)
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation



These are called ‘protected characteristics’ which are no doubt supported by all in the parish.

These are issues of national and indeed global importance but even a small community such as ours has its part to play. Each individual is part of many communities, and those together build up national and global communities. It is important to acknowledge and support minorities of all kinds as not to leave a vacuum for discrimination and abuse.

It is for these reasons that we felt compelled to pen this article and welcome your comments on inclusion and diversity,.

Barry Leathwood, Julie Evans and Andy Darch (*writing in personal capacities*)



# Fisheries of the River Parrett

“The rivers of this county furnish trout, salmon, roach, dace, perch, eels, pike, gudgeon, carp, tench, and on the seacoast we meet with tublin, flounders, fandabs hakes, pipers, srimps, praws, crabs muscles, foles , herrings, plaice porpoises, fakaits and ftar fith.”

*(From the History and Antiquities of Somerset)*

Bill Johnson is a well known local historian and sailor, he is also quite an expert on the history of fishing in the River Parrett.

Fish used to be an important part of our local diet, a cheap source of protein for the less well off, that is the serfs who did all the work. Many fisheries were known as several fisheries and the fishery rights were let out to local fishermen by the landowners. In 1857 there were 2000 sites for putchers or butts which are fish traps used on the estuary of the River Parrett since before the Magna Carta. These were located between Burnham lighthouse and Pawlet.

Usually made of withy, the putchers are mounted in ranks of fifty with the open end facing upstream to catch the fish as they returned on the ebb tide. The ranks of putchers were secured to the riverbank by stakes driven into the bank with an upside-down maul. The last two people to fish with putchers were Bob Thorne at Stretcholt and Leslie Pople at Pawlet.

The decline in salmon fishing is largely due to the lack of natural stocks as well as the availability of farmed salmon.

Records show just who was involved in this activity in September 1857 with familiar names of those who have lived in Combwich for a long time. For example

R Manchip had 2 sites opposite Pawlet Road with a maximum of 100 putchers

G Parsons 4 sites opposite Cannington clyse with a maximum of 150 putchers.

W Manchip had 3 sites around Combwich Pill with a maximum of 175 putchers.

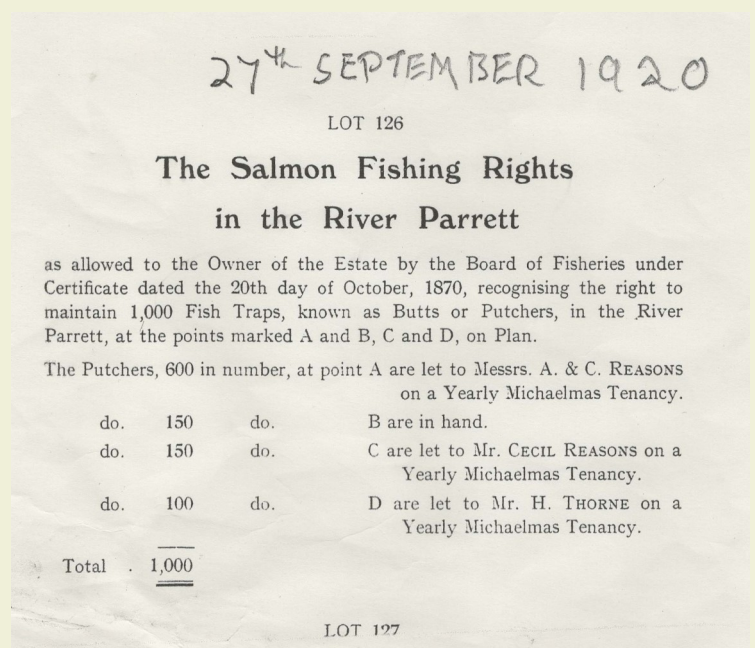
*Right a record of the sale of fishing rights in the River Parret*



Bill Johnson



Above and below putchers on the River Parrett



## Steve Chinn - Profile

Steve Chinn is a well-known figure in the Combwich area often seen exercising his dog from the comfort of his electric bike. He is a local man born in his nan's house in Moorland in 1960, he has a brother and sister the latter also living in the Combwich.

Steve attended Blake School in Bridgwater and although he reached a high standard particularly in maths, he was not particularly interested in education and by his own admission didn't work hard at it. His school reports invariably said, "could do better." I was a bit of a dreamer he said.



*Steve on one of his many European tours*



*Whilst still in school 1974/5 with his friend Sam he set up a mobile disco*

Whilst still at school in 1974/5 together with a friend he setup a mobile disco (Time Disco) and travelled around Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Taunton areas putting on gigs in the evenings. This lasted for 10 happy years or so, ideal for a young single man!

He also setup a small part-time business selling jewellery and moving on to a variety of other products sometimes making a profit and sometimes not. He recalls buying 144 duvets once, not one of his best decisions he says but hey I couldn't resist the challenge.

Steve's main job after leaving school, however, was to work for his father who owned and managed Central Motors in Bridgwater where he learnt his trade as a mechanic and acquired knowledge of

running the business. He recalls that in those days' petrol sales were an important part of the business although in later years sales declined particularly with the opening of the nearby Asda filling station. It is now just workshops although expanded since his father's days.

Wanting to run his own business, he set up the Bridgwater School of Motoring in 1986 and during this period he also taught mechanical engineering at an evening class at Bridgwater College.

When his father decided to retire from the garage and Steve had to decide whether to carry on with his own driving school business or take on the garage. He chose the latter and borrowed money from wherever he could to buy the business from his father. Although finances were tight at first, he has no regrets and has enjoyed running the business ever since.

Steve and Charlene who he married in 1983 moved to Combwich in 1997 and soon got involved in village life mostly associated with the village pubs. He remembers with affection many late-night boozing sessions and "lock-ins" at the Ship and the Anchor.

At the age of 39 he developed a passion for motor bikes and bought himself a 125cc model on which he learnt to ride and pass his motorcycle test. It wasn't long before he wanted something more powerful and set his heart on a 650cc Yamaha, which he promised Charlene he would pay for by giving up his 40 a day cigarette smoking habit, which after a shaky start he managed. Many more big bikes followed!

This was the start of several yearly adventures together with some friends from the village, they would spend a couple of weeks each summer traveling across Europe mostly staying in hotels, and one occasion camping (never to be repeated). On one trip they visited 11 countries in 12 days!!

Arthritis has taken its toll and with much sadness Steve has had to give up motorcycles. Steve and Charlene enjoy cruising and have recently taken delivery of a motorhome and hope to visit many places in this wonderful country.

As for his adopted village he loves it and would never leave; Charlene concurs.

## Photo Corner



*Above four lovely photos taken by Chris Tweedale on Saturday 19th June*

## **BROOKSIDE ROAD HOUSING DEVELOPMENT** *by Tim Jones*

There are fears developers may try again to get outline planning permission for homes to be built off Brookside Road at the entrance to the village.

Earlier this year Sedgemoor planners rejected an application by the Land Promotion Group Ltd who can offer landowners a “no win, no fee” deal to pursue housing developments.

The proposal to build up to 60 dwellings and a community hall attracted dozens of objections from local people and organisations. It was rejected on seven major grounds all relating to insufficient information being provided on issues such as flood risk and need.

But in recent weeks four large trenches have been dug in the field which is the focus of the application. There are concerns they could be trial trenches which are excavated to assess the impact of a development on surrounding heritage assets.

Jonathan Chick of Walsingham Planning Ltd, who acted as agents for the Land Promotion Group, said it could be trial trenching, but he had no knowledge of any work being carried out there. He said he would contact LPG, but Otter News had heard nothing further by the time of going to press.





**Stearth Marshes**

working in partnership with



**Environment  
Agency**

### **Engagement** by Nicole Turnbull

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) has embarked on a series of local projects through the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF). The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in Project Partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

## Green Recovery Challenge Fund



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

The  
National Lottery  
Heritage Fund



Environment  
Agency



Locally the projects are moving at pace now so I thought it was a good time to give you a brief overview of what has been going on:

**Learning:** Bridgwater & Taunton College have begun delivering a series of free online courses funded through the project, the first being an introduction to the basic principles of ecology. This is a good way into the subject before embarking on more specialist courses further down the line e.g. wetland habitats, water quality, life in a ditch, carbon storage.

**Health and wellbeing:** ‘We are working with the Mental Health Foundation and a group of interested parties to produce activity sessions which will take place at Stearth Marshes and The Meads in Bridgwater, as well as online. The aim is to help people who may be experiencing isolation, loneliness, anxiety or depression, to visit the reserve through link workers and other routes, to explore the many benefits of time spent outside in nature. We are also in talks with Somerset Works who have a project to help young people who are struggling as a result of isolation caused by the pandemic. Health walks are high on the agenda too and we are looking at ways of expanding the current sessions.’

**Citizen science:** Senior Research Officer Sarah Davies is working on collating all the past monitoring and research conducted at Stearth by staff, consultants, students and volunteers. *“An incredible breadth of data has been collected since the breach, spanning a wide array of wildlife. I’m hoping that the resulting report will be useful for the reserve in order to inform management and highlight areas where monitoring can assist in answering future scientific questions. This month I will also be trialling a couple of emergence traps on the Stearth ponds. These consist of a net and bottle trap that will float on the water and hopefully capture the adult stages of aquatic insects, to provide an indication of what prey are available to local insectivores such as birds and bats. If they work, my aim is to then use these for a pilot study on farmland ponds in north Somerset.”*

**Blue carbon:** Manchester Metropolitan University are starting preparations for gas flux monitoring on different areas of the reserve to monitor and gain data on the important role of the marshes in carbon storage.



**Natural flood management** (Picture above: WWT has been working with the Environment Agency around the Monksilver and Doniford streams on naturally helping to prevent flooding through the ‘Two Valley’s: Slow the Flow project’. Working with the community and local landowners to identify and implement natural flood management (NFM), which is an approach that uses natural ways such as wetland creation and tree planting to hold back and slow down the flow of water before it reaches and potentially floods properties and businesses.

**As you can see, there is a lot going on, it’s an exciting time for Steart Marshes and we will certainly have a need for volunteers to get involved in many areas including health and wellbeing, surveying and monitoring. Please let us know if you would like more information or to be involved in any of the projects mentioned above.**

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about Steart Marshes.

**Reserve Office:** 01278 651090 [info.steart@wwt.org.uk](mailto:info.steart@wwt.org.uk)

**Site Manager:** Alys Laver 07717 505966 [alys.laver@wwt.org.uk](mailto:alys.laver@wwt.org.uk)

**Engagement Officer:** Nicole Turnbull 07717 342061 [nicole.turnbull@wwt.org.uk](mailto:nicole.turnbull@wwt.org.uk)

## **WWT Parish Natural Flood Management (NFM) project**

Over the last three years WWT has been working around the Monksilver and Doniford streams on naturally helping to prevent flooding through the Two Valley’s: Slow the Flow project. Here WWT, funded by the Environment Agency, has been working with the community and local landowners to identify and implement natural flood management. This approach uses natural ways such as wetland creation and tree planting to hold back and slow the flow of water before it reaches and potentially floods properties and businesses.

As part of the Government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund projects, WWT have put together a series of free, local summer events to get communities more connected to their local green spaces, wildlife, wetlands and waterways.

July 10<sup>th</sup>: Bees – the perfect pollinators, a meadow walk

July 14<sup>th</sup>: NFM community conference (online)

July 27<sup>th</sup>: Riverfly Training - learn how to take a sample from your local river and see what is crawling around in the water. Takes place at Stogumber Village Hall

July 31<sup>st</sup>: Exploring hedgerows and things to forage

All events are local to the Monksilver and Doniford catchments, if you would like to attend or volunteer monitoring stream invertebrates in this area, please get in touch with [Hannah.bailey@wwt.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.bailey@wwt.org.uk)

## Shelducks at Steart - by Phil Edwards

Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve (NNR), like many other nature reserves and beauty spots, has come under considerable recreational pressure since the pandemic began. The beach between the car park on Wall Common and Stert Point has been increasingly disturbed by people over recent years as visitor numbers have increased from additional attractions and tourist information supplied by Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). As a result, the large fence was constructed and completed after Covid-delays in September 2020 to delimit the restricted area. The legislation on this section has been updated to concentrate on protecting its wildlife (Section 26 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) rather than the safety issues of accessing the beach. Last summer, after lockdown rules were lifted, the area saw a surge of visitors and the beach suffered from picnickers, uncontrolled dogs, radio-controlled toys, drones, kite-flying to name but a few. In addition, jet-skis in the Bay, yachts too close to the riverbank, military helicopters on low-flying practice, and paramotorists all caused significant disturbance to shelduck and waders.

However, Natural England, with help from staff from WWT have deployed considerable staff and financial resources to address the issues. The NNR has a summer warden for 2021 (Harry Savage) and he has been engaging with visitors and explaining the value and vulnerability of the reserve to the general public. NE has also liaised with SDC to enforce the no-go areas and licencing rules for jet-skis launching from Burnham; have made representations to the Burnham Sailing Club to stay away from the west bank of the River Parrett; and raised the issue of helicopter low-flying with the Ministry of Defence ecologists. I have reminded members of the Westonzoyland Microlight Flying Club to avoid the area through an article in the monthly newsletter, but the paramotors (who are not club members) are unregulated by law and remain a problem, although the Civil Aviation Authority have investigations current.

These measures appear to have been successful. On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, while birding on an otherwise quiet day, I managed to take these pictures (from some distance hence the poor quality) of a pair of shelducks escorting their brood of seven ducklings (one or two days old, no more) along the coast from the village (Steart) towards Stert Point. They came ashore there briefly but attracted so much interest from other shelducks (the parents had to continually chase others away) that they moved back into the water and proceeded out-of-sight upriver. The significance of the photos? With the possible exception of some ducklings seen towards the west of Wall Common in 2013 and 2014, these are the first brood of shelducks known to have been hatched from this protected area of beach in at least 20 years. It seems the conservation efforts are paying off.



## New Kitchen Team at the Anchor



New head chef Tom with over 20 years experience following training at Yeovil College is looking forward to working with new up and coming chef Brendon from Combwich who has just finished 3 years at college. The pair are looking forward to cooking special dinner evenings and some summer pig roasts and bbqs for the village.

### The kitchen is open from

Wednesday 5pm to 8.30

Thursday 5pm to 8.30

Friday 12 to 2 and 5pm to 8.30

Saturday 12 to 2 and 5 pm to 8.30

Sunday 12 to 3

Tom hopes to meet all the village soon



## Otter Wheels New Drivers Needed

Otter Wheels volunteer car scheme provides the residents of Combwich, Otterhampton, Steart and Stockland Bristol who do not have access to car, the opportunity to get to a medical appointment, shopping or visit a friend at low cost.

Covid restrictions have meant the service has been limited to urgent medical appointments over the last year, but we are planning to fully reopen the service later this summer.

### New drivers needed now!

If you are interested in joining the lively bunch of volunteer drivers operating this scheme and have a 4-door car, please contact Elizabeth on 01278 653308 or email [jorvik@talktalk.net](mailto:jorvik@talktalk.net) for more information.

Expenses are paid in the form of a mileage allowance, full support is provided and there are occasional meetings when we are able to get together socially.

We look forward to welcoming new drivers to this very worthwhile and much appreciated local service.

## MOBILE LIBRARY

The mobile library visits Comwich and Stockland every four weeks on a Thursday morning. The next visit is 29th July..

Comwich Harbour TA5 2QU 10.15 – 10.50

Comwich Post Office TA5 2QW 10.55 – 11.20

Stockland Bristol Captains TA5 2PY 11.30 – 11.55

For information about this service, contact Somerset Direct 0300 1232224 or visit [www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries).

Please support this service - use it or lose it!

Your favourite  
Jam,  
Marmalade  
and chutney  
and also plants are still  
available.



Proceeds to the Bridgwater  
Food Bank

Ring Liz on 01278 652687

## Post Office and Shop

Masks must be worn at all times by all customers until further notice.

Opening hours may vary during these difficult times, and please remember we are a small shop and cannot stock the range of the Supermarkets.

Thank you for your custom

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Established 20 Yrs

To keep up to date with all that is happening in the parish check the village noticeboards, log on to our own website, [www.comwich.org.uk](http://www.comwich.org.uk) or visit "All Things Comwich"

Facebook Group

Otter Tales

Deadline for articles etc for next issue is

Thursday 2nd September 2021

## Otter Wheels



We are sorry we cannot offer the normal service to our passengers due to the Covid 19 restrictions, but as soon as we are able we will resume normal service.

Thank you for your understanding

However

**Essential journeys for medical appointments will be undertaken when no alternative transport is available**

**Ring 07925 154216**

**For more information**

### Otter Tales

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