



Welcome to Combwich

Otter Tales

Published with the generous support of Otterhampton Parish Council

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General information



A Christmas present for all our readers - Combwich Ponds Footpaths to be re-opened.

Way back in 2007 the Combwich Ponds which had been walked by generations of villagers were arbitrarily closed to the public with locked gates by the landowner. A meeting of parish council representatives and the landowners failed to resolve the problem; the council could not even discover why the paths had been closed. So angry was everyone that a packed public meeting (over 90 attending) resolved to set up a campaign for them to be reopened and officially designated as 'rights of way'. See more on page 10.

Merry Christmas

To all our readers and may the next year find you fit and well and free from the curse of the pandemic. Stay safe.

Otterhampton Parish Council

Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from your October and November 2021 Parish Council Meetings

Combwich Ponds

Many of you will know that the long-awaited decision to restore access to the footpaths around the Combwich Ponds may be just a few months away. Somerset County Council has concluded its investigation into the application to modify the Definitive Map by adding a footpath at Combwich Ponds. A modification report was produced based on its findings and recommendations. The final consultation ended on 15.11.21. The decision will rest with the Secretary of State; we hope it will be favourable. We would like to thank Barry Leathwood for all his hard work and tenacity over many years (since 2007) ensuring this issue was not left at the bottom of the pile! Thanks also to the many residents who supplied evidence and responded to the consultation.

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
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County and District Ward Members

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



Combwich buoy refurbishment

Cllr Bob Birkenhead ably assisted by his wife Carol, have volunteered to refurbish the buoy. Quite a few of the panels of wood at the base of the buoy have rotted so need replacement. It is quite a tricky job due to the shape of the buoy. Each of the panels are interlocked, plus of course, the work is being done in-situ. The wood will be specially treated and then the buoy will be repainted. It is such a specialist item, not easily transportable, that it has been very difficult trying to get anyone to take on the work. It is a lovely feature in the village with its rich history that we are very grateful to Bob and Carol for their efforts. Hopefully the weather will be kind to them in the coming months as they begin their task.

Equality and Diversity Policy

We have recently developed and approved the above policy as part of the parish council Governance. It underpins our commitment to ensure that equality and diversity is reflected in everything it does. Employees,

members of the council (whether elected or co-opted), volunteers, partners, residents and customers will be treated fairly and equally.

Combwich Track

The potholes have recently been filled, so hopefully this will be better access for cyclists, walkers and mobility scooters. Maintenance of the track as part of the Village Green, is the responsibility of the parish council.

Ann Leathwood

We started our November meeting with a minute's silence in memory of Ann, who sadly passed away recently. Ann had been a stalwart of the community in her role as Secretary with OPRA for many years and as many of you will know, wife to Barry, our former councillor and Chair. Our condolences are sent to Barry and his family.

Play Area

The play area was recently subject to some vandalism. Fortunately, this is very rare, but we ask residents to keep an 'eye out' and report any incidents (in confidence) to either the Clerk or the Police - particularly if the vandalism is in progress. Photographic evidence is always useful. It is such a lovely facility for the parish that we would not wish to see it incur bouts of vandalism.

New Clerk

We are delighted to announce the appointment of our new Clerk, Mrs Mel Catchpole who will be starting on 1 December. Mel lives in Coultings and has a long association with Combwich as her parents lived here for many years. More in the next Otter Tales.



Precept

Councillors will be meeting in December to prepare the precept (budget) for 2022/23. This will need to be submitted to SDC in January. Our existing Precept, £26000, has been held at this level since 2019/20

Bicycle Stand at Crossways

You may have noticed recently a number of bicycles being left at the bus shelter propped up against the trees – we think belonging to staff catching the Hinkley C buses. It is great to see so many people cycling. Together with ‘Take a Stand’ Life Cycle UK (a community benefit scheme) we are proposing to install bicycle stands in the vicinity of the bus shelter. Permission will need to be sought from Highways as the grassed area at Crossways is owned by them.

Allotments

Whilst the parish council would like to be able to provide allotments for residents, it does all depend on land acquisition/opportunities. We have made a number of enquiries but we have been unable to secure any land thus far. We will keep this item on our action list to ensure it retains our focus. We would welcome ideas from residents, as in this current climate we understand how important and desirable the provision of allotments would be.

And finally...

The past 20 months have been extremely challenging for many people, locally and globally. It has been wonderful to witness how our community has come together to help and support one another. No doubt many challenges lay ahead. It is perhaps a moment to reflect that as we approach Christmas and the New Year just how important we all are to each other, especially to those in our community who have lost partners and loved ones; this is never an easy time for them.

We would though, like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas and our very best wishes for 2022.

Parish Council Meetings

The next parish council meetings will be on Thursday 2 December 2021 and Thursday 6 January 2022 starting at 7.00pm, in Otterhampton Village Hall.

Full details of the decisions taken at parish council meetings are contained within the minutes which are available on the 3 village notice boards (opposite the Post Office, opposite the Anchor Inn by the play area and on the wall of Ferricies Farm, Steart) or the Combwich.org.uk website.

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

The Somerset Medal for ‘Services to Somerset’

has been awarded to **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.



The award which reads ‘For Services to Somerset’ was presented by Tina Gardener on behalf of the parish council who nominated her. Seen here with her medal and apron at the Friday coffee morning.



Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Registered Charity Number 1124017

We are all deeply saddened by the sudden death of our dear friend and committee member Ann Leathwood. Ann was a committee member for 17 years and 14 of those as our secretary, Ann was also our 100 Club secretary, she will be so greatly missed by us all.

The Murray Lister Memorial cricket match took place on 11th September and was very well supported. After a hard-fought game under the watchful eye of umpire Brian Hutchings, the scores were tied (not sure if this was contrived!). The game was decided by a toss of the coin and Ian Newberry's team were triumphant, and trophies were presented to both captains. We raised a total of £600 which will be split between Brain Cancer Research and the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death charities. We would like to thank everyone for their generous support. Special thanks to the Anchor and Post Office for their generous donations, Mike Gardener for preparing the pitch, Ray Bolner on BBQ duties, and all committee members.

In September we held our AGM, our first for over two years. We said farewell and thanks to Jacqui Sparks and Bev Lang who have stood down, they have both made big contributions over a number of years. We were most fortunate to welcome four new committee members; Carol and Paul Bradbury and Connie and Pete Sanders. Carol even volunteered to be our secretary. We look forward to working with them.

OPRA Committee

Tina Gardener (Chair)	652642
Carol Bradbury (Secretary)	652313
Sue Francis (Treasurer)	653663
Barry Leathwood	652399
Di Davie,	652141
Melvyn Fooks,	651323
Felicity Ashworth,	653633
Paul Bradbury,	652313
Connie Sanders,	653307
Pete Sanders,	653307



Harrison Cornish and Ian Newberry



Our firework display took place this year on 7th November and wow! What a turnout, the weather was kind, the crowds were the most we've seen for a long time, your generosity was amazing, over £500 from the collection buckets and the queue for the BBQ never diminished (Ray your reputation is spreading). The firework display was superb as always and special thanks to Adrian Floyd, Paul Cadmore and Simon Briggs for setting them off so magnificently, it's a shame they don't get to see the firework display themselves!

Our Senior's Christmas Dinner is being held on Saturday 4th December and although the deadline for replies has passed, if you didn't receive an invite and would like to go, we might be able to squeeze you in, or failing that we will make sure you

are on our list for next year. It's very difficult keeping our list up to date as we are always wary of asking people if they have reached the magical age of 65 which entitles them to be invited, we don't want to offend anyone. So please make yourselves know to any committee member.

We are keeping up with our monthly walks, usually the third Sunday of the month and always ending up with a roast dinner at the pub. If you would like to be put on the emailing list for notification of walks or any of our events, please contact Barry on barry.leathwood@btinternet.com

The 100 Club draw is once again taking place at the Coffee Morning in the newly refurbished village hall. If you would like to join the 100 Club please contact Tina on 652642 or Sue on 653663

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

If you want to join the 100 Club or become involved in OPRA activities please contact Tina on 652642 or Sue on 653663 or any committee member.

OTTERHAMPTON VILLAGE HALL CIO: NEWS



The Otterhampton Village Hall AGM was held on Friday 15th October and was very well attended by parishioners and public. This forum provided an opportunity to discuss future plans for the village hall alongside stage two of the refurbishment and a sharing of ideas on how the hall can be utilised for more community activities and events.

Following on from the main session, there was a tour of the facilities including the re-modelled bar area, new meeting room/office space, skittle alley and bowls room

and feedback was received on the versatility of the bowls room as an alternative to the main hall for smaller parties or gatherings. The main hall was the venue for the AGM and the new projector and screen were used to display a slide show of the renovation journey and also demonstrated that the screen can be utilised for film screenings or as a backdrop to talks and demonstrations in the future.

The session closed with an informal chat over cheese and wine where further ideas for new events and activities were shared which could build on the various weekly groups which are already running again.

The village market is back on the second Saturday of every month where you can browse the various stalls selling local goods and homemade crafts and then enjoy a bacon butty and a coffee. To keep up to date on all of the activities and groups which are now running, please sign up and visit our website at <https://www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk>.

The trustees look forward to seeing you all soon.

Harbour View Bar

We are looking forward to a busy time leading up to Xmas and the New Year, normal opening times are Friday/Saturday 6 - 11 pm and Sunday 2 - 7 and Monday 7 - 11 (skittles), or if lights are on in the bar area/bar please call in.

Xmas Eve we will be open from 6pm till 11pm. Christmas Day noon till 2pm and boxing Day times TBC.

A big thank you to all our regulars for supporting us since we re-opened and for being patient with all our teething problems, thank you to all our Bar Staff, plus a big thank you to Geoff and Audrey for all their help and hard work.

Merry Christmas from The Harbour View Bar and Happy New Year hopefully see you all in the New Year.

ChairSteve Lang





Otterhampton Primary School.

Summer highlights

Head Teacher, Claire Luce



We have come to the end of a very busy half term!

Highlights:

Harvest Service - we were delighted to hold our Harvest service in Combwich Church this year. Reverend Alison led the service and we were joined by parents, grandparents and members of the community. Donations for the foodbank were collected, songs were sung and poems were read. A really lovely gathering to give thanks.



Wild Beach Days - The Year 3s and 4s in River Class have had glorious weather on their 'Wild Beach' days at Dunster Beach. This opportunity was in conjunction with the Somerset Wildlife Trust. They enjoyed 5 weeks of beach fun and took part in a range of activities to engage in their local coastline. Each day had a different focus. Awareness was raised of the threats to the marine environment and the children learnt what they can do to protect it. All transport was funded by the Wildlife Trust.



Autumn Stay and Play - We were joined by many of our parents for our Autumn Stay and Play at the end of term. Parents worked in partnership with their children to create animals out of fruit and vegetables. There were some amazing creations and everyone had an enjoyable afternoon.



Rich Parker to visit - The half term ended with an inspirational visit from Rich Parker, a GB inline skater, who gave an impressive demonstration of his skills. The children enjoyed an afternoon of fitness activities led by Rich and then he spoke about his journey to get a silver medal at the X Games.



We are all looking forward to a restful half term and then the run up to Christmas!

Mrs Luce

NOTES TO A 'NOT SO SLEEPY' VILLAGE 2

Dear Barry, fellow contributors and villagers,

When did everybody start answering questions with the word 'SO'? Is it just me that finds it annoying?

You hear it all the time, everywhere, TV and radio, the lot! 'How did you win your first medal?' asks the interviewer. 'SO....' begins the Olympian. 'When did you first begin dancing?' asks the TV presenter. 'SO....' answers the professional dancer.

There used to be a time when people were asked a question, they'd all begin the reply by saying 'WELL....' Not 'SO'!

When did 'WELL' go out of fashion and 'SO' come in? When did you first start your embroidery lessons? 'SEW...'

People often ask me when it was I first started writing. 'After I'd learnt to read' is usually the reply.

I mentioned this to our local talented artist Tom Jacobs. 'When did you first start painting landscapes Tom?' Tom replied '*Well...Leonardo said to me - Tom, Tom, pick up thy paintbrush...!*' (Sorry Tom)

I was at infant's school, about six years old. Every Friday for the final lesson the teacher would take a book from the book shelf (where else would you find a book?) and read the class a story. After about four weeks I said to the teacher that *I'd* like to write a story. She immediately set up a little table at the side of the classroom with a chair, gave me a brand new exercise book and pencil and let me get on with writing my story, while she read a book to the rest of the class.

I remember one little girl (funnily enough, we were all little!) asking the teacher; '*Has Christopher been naughty, because you've made him sit at the side of the class on his own facing the wall?*' The teacher replied '*Not at all, he's decided to write his own book, with his own story.*' My fellow class mates all looked suitably impressed. (Though sadly gave me no money)

I remember beaming with pride as I scribbled some rubbish about an old fisherman catching a magical fish...

Countless comedy sketches, many Pantomimes and several plays later (some produced – many not!) and I'm still scribbling rubbish. (And sadly still no money!)

I often wonder what would have happened if that teacher (*Miss Dickinson*) hadn't given me that table, chair, exercise book and pencil...

(I might have become the chairman of MICROSOFT!)

*Chris Ponka
Comwich*

YOUR Community Car Scheme – Otter Wheels

It is a joy to be living in this beautiful area with country walks around the Steart Marshes and the riverside and much more, but for those with limited mobility or without access to a car it is a different story. The parish has no regular bus services other than the very limited (but welcome) EDF bus service and so getting to a much-needed doctor, dental or hospital appointment is mostly impossible by public transport.



For this reason, a volunteer car scheme was set up a few years ago within the parish to take people who do not have access to their own car, either temporarily or permanently, to doctors and hospital appointments and lifts to the railway or bus station for those longer trips AND shopping trips have also been undertaken. This service IS much appreciated by passengers, who are anxious to see it continue.

How does it work? Passengers who must register with the scheme, ring a dedicated number to leave a message giving details of their requirements to a journey ‘coordinator’ who then contacts an available driver to arrange the trip. The trips are not free, but certainly low cost and work out at about 25p per mile. For those with a bus pass the county council will refund half the cost to the scheme allowing those passengers to travel half price.

Of course, it all depends on volunteers to run the scheme (without payment) and particularly drivers who have a 4-door car, and who are prepared to give their time. Drivers are paid .45p per mile for these journeys. None of the drivers are full time and do as many or as few trips as they like with no pressure to do more.

Just as important are the ‘coordinators’ who hold the scheme’s mobile phone, responding to passenger requests left on the answerphone, They email drivers to arrange a journey then forward the trip details, a particularly important job! There are other people involved too, including the highly effective treasurer who makes sure the books balance and the drivers are paid. Convivial meetings are held occasionally to provide updates and well, to enjoy each other’s company in a social atmosphere.

However, the scheme has taken a battering during the pandemic and has lost (not to Covid) some of the drivers and coordinators and now offer a much more limited service, not managing some journey requests due to fewer available drivers. Despite this, Otter Wheels continued to operate and even managed the schemes 1,000th journey during this period.

The team are anxious to expand again, but that depends on more volunteers including drivers and coordinators. If you can help in any capacity to support this worthy and much appreciated car scheme or just want more information, please contact **Elizabeth** on **01278 653308** or email jorvik@talktalk.net.

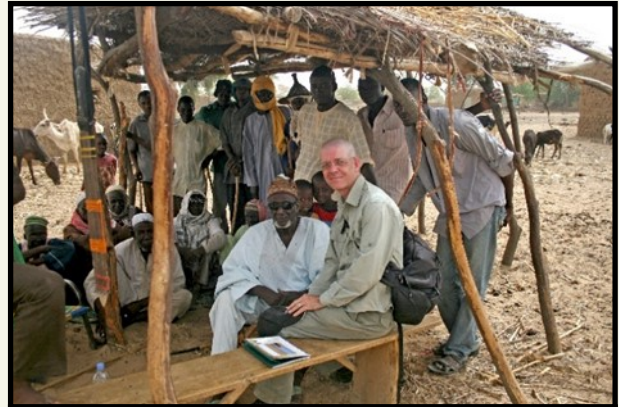
A message from Barry and family

A heartfelt thankyou to all those in our community and elsewhere who sent messages of support and sympathy after the passing of Ann. Thank you also to those who donated online or at the crematorium to SCOPE – Equality for Disabled Charity; a magnificent £1659.75 was raised in memory of Ann. Thank you.

Profile – Phil Edwards

Phil Edwards and Jo Haxby bought their house in Steart in 2000 and, after extensive renovations, moved in 2002. Phil has acted as the Chair of Steart Residents' Group since 2004. He was born in Hertfordshire in 1956 and since the age of five has been obsessed with birds. He graduated from the University of Wales (Swansea) with first class honours in zoology and went on to gain his doctorate from the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Oxford University, for research on blackbirds and other thrushes. During this time, he gained his “*fifteen minutes of fame*” by becoming the first male to cox the Oxford women's rowing eight in the university boat race and appearing on national TV and in the press..

In 1983, he established one of the first ecological consultancies in the UK and seven years later sold it to an engineering firm. Having realized that he would be unable to see the world and its birds through holiday travel alone, he left in 1994 to concentrate on freelance jobs overseas – a decision that has enabled him to have worked in 43 countries (including North Korea, Iran, and Yemen), travelled to 106 (and counting) and all seven continents, and seen just shy of 7,000 species of bird (nearly two-thirds of the world's total). Between then and retirement in 2014, he worked for many organisations including the United Nations, World Bank, and European Union; NGOs such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Wetlands International; and large private and public industrial bodies. Work concerned two main threads – designing multi-million-dollar conservation projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (later moving into evaluation work on similar projects); and impact assessment and mitigation work on development projects, e.g. he designed and supervised the environmental audit system for the Bakun Dam in Sarawak (the world's second largest hydropower dam). Work has taken him to some hugely remote areas and involved him in some “interesting” circumstances, e.g. working behind rebel lines in the Sri Lankan and Cambodian conflicts. Phil has been arrested four times by the military (once for hijacking a train in eastern Mongolia; once for taking photos of the Iranian border from Azerbaijan; and twice in Turkey – once for suspicious activity near an army outpost; and once for being thought to be leading a group of PKK terrorists in the mountains!). He has been lucky enough to have seen some of the most amazing places and sights the world has to offer ... and often been paid to do so.



Phil working in Kokorou, western Niger in April 2011



Phil and Jo at Nordkapp in June 2018

Renault campervan (Scamper) through 29 countries reaching the Black Sea and Nordkapp in Norway (the northernmost point of Europe). Apart from birds and travel, Phil has been a microlight pilot for 30 years and flies out of Westonzoyland. He also takes photographs and writes and has just had his first book published by Whittles Publishing (see page 14).

Combwich Ponds Continued from page one



A small committee was formed and invited villagers who had walked the paths for many years to submit written evidence forms. Fifty three evidence forms were collected and these demonstrated that the paths had been continuously walked since 1929. This evidence together with correspondence from the landowners acknowledging public access and also offering to improve the quality of the paths formed the basis of the application for the footpaths to be reopened was submitted to Somerset County Council on 21st April 2007. Unfortunately, our application was at the back of a very long queue, and we were advised that the matter would not be considered for several years. Even an appeal to the Secretary of State failed to speed things up.

Finally in March 2019 work on our claim commenced, but was disrupted by the Covid pandemic, however some excellent work by the Rights of Way Officer of Somerset County Council analysed our application and conducted further research which included interviewing a whole range of people and checking the legal position. He concluded that we had established without doubt that the paths had been walk continuously since 1929 and therefore should never have been closed to the public.

These conclusions were set out in a public consultation proposing the designation of the footpaths as rights of way and invited the public to comment <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/rights-of-way-proposals/>

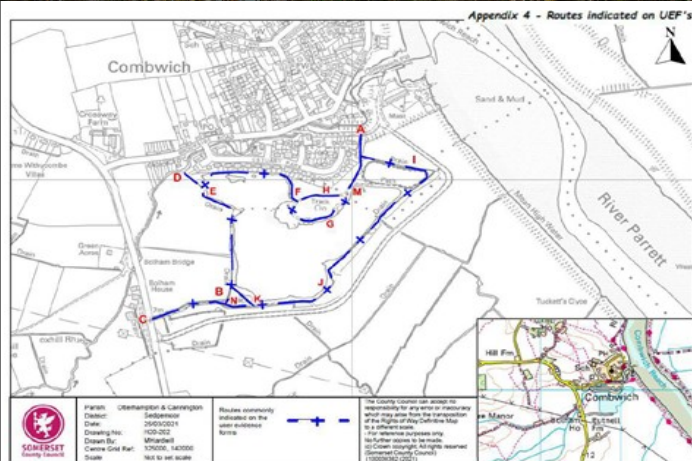
At the conclusion of the consultation 53 responses had been received with 50 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention. It is expected that an order will be issued shortly amending the definitive map.

It is still possible however, that an objection to the proposals could be made delaying implementation.

When the day comes that we can walk these paths it is important that we treat the area with respect, appreciating that fishermen need to fish in peace as we all enjoy this beautiful area on our doorstep.

Photos top - locked gates followed by 2 photos of the ponds taken before the closure in 2007 and finally a map showing the route round the pond and 3 points of access.

Barry Leathwood
Combwich
November 2021



“Thank You” Louise Bailey

Do contributors ever wonder if their articles have been read? Several months ago I read an article by Louise Bailey about having areas of your garden run wild to promote diversity and wildlife. OK, I thought, I will just leave mine and see what happens.

The first visitors were dandelion, nettle, red nettle, yellow rattle and buttercups followed by daisies, thistles and knapweed.

I noticed the difference not only in looks, but also in sound, a familiar buzz of a

huge number of bees who favoured dandelions for an early feed. As the dandelions went to seed, I saw goldfinches for the first time in my garden feeding from the seed heads.

Keen to learn more about our more humble plants and remembering Grandmother's sharp words to leave the dandelions and nettles alone I discovered their many uses. Dandelions of course, are edible, both the leaves and flowers can be added to your salad mix and the dedicated can make dandelion tea infusions. New to me was the information that dandelions are one of nature's soil improvers, when the flowers are gone, the soil they grew in is at peak nutritional level, and for me a lot easier than lugging sacks of compost back from the garden centre.

So What about the nettles? I learnt that a plethora of moths and butterflies lay their eggs on the underside of nettle leaves and I would rather caterpillars ate the nettle leaves than my fruit and vegetables. Nettles also provide for low growing fruits. Strawberries grew together in my garden, and I have never seen so many strawberries. They don't freeze well and I don't eat jam, so some at this end of the road were treated to bowls of fresh strawberries and mini strawberry pavlova.

I took photographs of some spectacular caterpillars which turned out to be Mullein Moths and the usual army of furry caterpillars and some bright green ones. Best of all I could stop looking at all the bottles of liquid plant feed on offer. A bucket of rainwater and chopped nettles produces very high-quality plant food. If you make some you might want to put a lid on it as it stinks to high heaven while it "brews", but once on the soil the smell goes immediately.

High summer, the grass is higher than my knees and full of wildflowers (or weeds if you prefer) and the beautiful scent of meadow sweat in the evenings. I noticed that the many grasshoppers that had taken up residence together with froglets and toadlets (is that a word?). The hedgehogs came back but best of all the Adders returned; I had not seen them for three years.

Did all this natural food explain the heron on my fence as the dawn broke on summer mornings, or the kingfisher on my washing line.

Who needs a T.V. when you have a garden to watch?

Maggie Layton
Comwich





Engagement by Nicole Turnbull

The latest stage of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund projects at Steart Marshes have involved connecting up ditches and working to let water into some of the drier areas in order to improve the habitat for waders and other wildlife. We are now moving up to the saltmarsh to put in samphire beds at slightly different ground levels. This will allow us to trial farming marsh samphire (salicornia) on a rotational basis as it colonises at differing rates in each bed.

The works will be moving on to Stockland Marsh mid-October where we again have a series of habitat improvements planned which include ditch connectivity, creating scrapes, deepening some lagoons and enhancing island areas and shelter. This will benefit a whole host of species including dragonflies and other invertebrates, waders and waterfowl, and maybe we can even tempt back those black-winged stilts!



The volunteers continue their sterling practical work and have been out on the Otterhampton islands. Warden Sam took this picture which captures their dedication to the task in hand!

You may have heard that WWT have launched a campaign called **WetlandsCan!** calling for the creation of 100,000 hectares of healthy wetlands in the UK to help combat climate change. If you want to get involved, here are some ways you can help:

Join WWT's pledge at www.wwt.org.uk/WetlandsCan to urge the UK government to prioritise and invest in more wetlands.

Like and share our social media messages to spread the message more widely.

Create mini-wetlands, such as ponds and drainpipe gardens, in your gardens and community spaces. See the campaign website to see how. <https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetlands-can>

It continues to be an exciting time for Steart Marshes. Please let us know if you would like to volunteer in trading roles, practical work, health & wellbeing, or monitoring.

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

Reserve Office: 01278 651090 info.steart@wwt.org.uk

Site Manager: Alys Laver 07717 505966 alys.laver@wwt.org.uk

Engagement Officer: Nicole Turnbull 07717 342061 nicole.turnbull@wwt.org.uk

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The
National Lottery
Heritage Fund



Environment
Agency



More information about our community

This newsletter is published every 2 months, but if you want more up to date information you can visit www.combwicch.org.uk, or for village hall information go to www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk.

If you are a Facebook user go to 'All Things Combwich' or 'Combwich, Steart & Otterhampton Memories' groups, and of course the tried and tested and ultra reliable parish notice boards.

Forthcoming book from local author

Excerpt from: "*February – Unabashed Vivacity*"

Lonely is the Point, a place raked by biting winter winds, scoured by breaking waves; a blasted surface of sand and stones, pocked with water-filled hollows and broken by miniature cliffs. Fragments of shells fringe the edge where the sea couch-grass starts to grow. Far beyond the very end of the road, this is the very end of land itself, a place of brightness where the light rises into the air from the water all about or shines upwards from the glistening mud left behind by the absent tide. This is land laid down not land uplifted; gentle land formed by sedimentation, not land spewed molten from volcanic fissures nor hewn by glaciers. Although exposed to the external belligerence of wind and tide, these are ordeals that have been smoothed over and forgotten leaving none of the internal scars from igneous trauma. It is horizontal land, edge land, fragile land, far distant from the stolidity of central land where tectonic tremors have compressed it and pressured it, raising it into scarps or jagged mountains. The flatness bequeaths its wildness, the big skies and spectacular cloudscapes, the wide expanse of the river and the mudflats, the lack of vertical lines for nothing breaks the distant blue hills of the horizon and there is no cover here to provide intimacy, nothing to break the wind or absorb the distance of the curlews' liquid calls. When the wind has dropped, or in the sultry warmth of a summer's evening, it is a place of seduction, somewhere to stand and be restful, a place where the stillness allows quiet contemplation, an extraordinary place that sets the soul free giving it space to soar. But today, after overnight snow, it is desolate, inhabited only by the eternal optimism of a great black-backed gull and disdained by a passing snipe displaced by the hardened marsh. The wind, mean and vicious, metallic with debilitating cold, bores into any gaps in plumage or pelage, hollowing out the heat inside. The waders are absent, far, far out across the mudflats beyond even binocular view, leaving just the shrapnel of the tide wrack and a snowdrift in the lee of a sandbar. Behind the shore, the snow has been too light to form a white blanket and the withered tawny stems stand proud from the white tussocks in a sickly dilute skewbald mottling as if the land is diseased. On the white blaze of a footpath through the reedbed, a male reed bunting searches fervently for food, scuffling its fanned wings and tail to extricate itself each time it founders in the snow, sending miniature snowballs skittering across the surface. It opens and closes its beak while it forages as if making silent prayers for food, but with these unanswered it flies up onto one of the dry ochre reed stems rustling in the pernicious wind and away to try elsewhere.

ADVANCE INFORMATION
from Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Caithness, Scotland, UK. KW6 6EG
T: +44(0)1593-731 333; E: info@whittlespublishing.com www.whittlespublishing.com

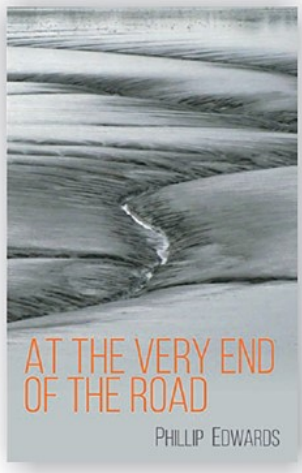
At the Very End of the Road

Phillip Edwards

- ▶ **A deep and carefully crafted book of place that explores intimate moments with the birds, the landscape and the weather, and the sounds and smells and the passing seasons of a dozen fields and the adjacent saltmarsh and mudflats**
- ▶ **Eight vignettes and a poem in each of 12 calendrical chapters render events as purely as possible, delivering an evolving understanding of what this tiny area holds, how it interacts and how it changes across scales of time**

Praise for the author

- ▶ *A glorious reassertion of the importance of place and one of the purest nature books I have ever read.* **Mark Cocker**
- ▶ *He turns simple observations into something timeless and beautiful.* **Stephen Moss**
- ▶ *Only a writer with the closest ties to a landscape and its ecology can observe as he does; this is a hugely admirable piece of work, intelligent, sharp-eyed, individual and honest.* **Richard Smyth**
- ▶ *Extremely beautiful writing; up there with the best. ...brilliant descriptions of nature.* **Geoff Hill**



AT THE VERY END OF THE ROAD
PHILLIP EDWARDS

At the very end of the road is a seven-bar metal gate. It is chained and padlocked and marks the exact line where the tarmac stops. Beyond that is a track, twelve pasture and hay fields, and an area of saltmarsh, bounded on one side by a river and on the other by vast tidal mudflats. Deep in the west of England, this is a place sculpted by the wind and painted by the tides. It is a place full of wildlife. This immersive and carefully crafted book of place explores the impact of season and tides and weather upon this land at the edge through a series of literary pictures crafted through lyrical imaginative language. The author attempts what few, if any, have tried to do, namely to render meticulous observations of the intimate details of wildlife and landscape to depict a place as faithfully and transparently as possible.

This is a bold book, one that tries to capture the elusive soul of a place; a daring examination of both what makes a place and how it is remade daily through the interactions between landscape and observer. It is also radical for its approach challenges the current orthodoxy of nature writing that in order to supply a connection between author, subject, and reader, some sort of narrative framework of human emotion is required to provide it with a rationale. So, although the prose is subjective, the book is framed in such a way as to remove the author's presence almost completely. There is no story save that of the eternal change of the seasons, no narrative connection, no focus on a single species, no discussion or allusion to the environmental issues of our age, no characters. Indeed, there is barely any mention of people at all. Although it rarely tries to explain or educate, it simply places observations at centre stage. Yet in trying to unearth what it is precisely that constructs our relationship with place, the author has, paradoxically, produced one of the most deeply personal and unusual nature books.

Readership: a thought-provoking and highly descriptive book creating literary pictures through lyrical and imaginative language and meticulous observation. It will be of great appeal to everyone with an interest in the natural world, wildlife, nature writing and all those with an interest in landscape and conservation.

ISBN 978-184995-497-6 216 x 138mm 224pp 16 b/w illustrations softback £16.99 November, 2021

Copies may be obtained from https://www.whittlespublishing.com/At_the_Very_End_of_the_Road ; and will be available from bookstores, or online e.g. www.amazon.co.uk from late November.

Kitchen Team at the Anchor



Head chef Tom with over 20 years experience following training at Yeovil College is working with new up and coming chef Brendon from Comwich who has just finished 3 years at college. The pair are looking forward to cooking special dinner evenings and a Christmas menu for the village.

Monday and Tuesday now pizza and pint night for £10.99

Tuesday night is a weekly free quiz 7.30pm with prizes to win

Xmas day menu now out for £45 for 3 courses

Boxing Day: bar open all day for drinks



Otter Wheels New Drivers and Coordinators Needed



Otter Wheels volunteer car scheme provides the residents of Comwich, 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 soon.

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 for more information.** Also see page 9.

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 and non driving volunteers to this very worthwhile and much appreciated local service which has now provided over 1,000 passenger journeys. Our continued existence depends on attracting new volunteer drivers and coordinators.

MOBILE LIBRARY

The mobile library visits Combwich and Stockland every four weeks on a Thursday morning. The next visit is 16th December.

Combwich Harbour TA5 2QU 10.15 – 10.50

Combwich 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.

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

COMBWICH P.O.
& STORES

- Groceries
- Off Licence
- Cards & Stationery
- Post Office

Family Business
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.combwich.org.uk or visit "All Things Combwich"

Facebook Group

Otter Tales

Deadline for articles etc for next issue is

Thursday 6th January 2022

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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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.