



## COMBWICH, OTTERHAMPTON AND STEART NEWSLETTER

# Otter Tales

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### In a Combwich Winter Garden



*Snowdrops*



*Clematis*

*"Freckles"*

*See page 13*

### *Inside this issue: Village Shop Survey*

*Your chance to have your say about the future of the village shop . Please, please complete the survey form inside and return it to one of the addresses indicated*

# Otterhampton Parish Council

Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from our December 2023 - January 2024 meetings

## Village Shop

A questionnaire is included with this copy of Otter Tales. So that we can collate your thoughts on having a community shop, please can you complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope to one of the addresses on the back or complete the online questionnaire, details of which are on the back of the questionnaire.

## Councillor Vacancy

There is still a vacancy for a new councillor to join the parish council, please look out for our posts on the All Things Combwich and Otterhampton Parish Council Facebook pages, Combwich noticeboards or email the clerk.

## Precept

Again, this year we will not be raising our precept. This is the amount you pay in your council tax to the parish council.

## Defibrillator

Due to a current shortage of defibrillators, the defibrillator at the Anchor is going to be moved to Ferrices Farm in Steart as Steart is currently without one. We will replace the one at the Anchor when they are back in stock but we don't know when this will be. There is still a defibrillator in the old phone box on Brookside Road. The Anchor defibrillator will be moved in the next few weeks, an update will be given on the All Things Combwich Facebook group.

## Care when driving through Combwich

Please take care when driving through the village, especially at school drop off and pick up times and give way to pedestrians who are having to walk on the road. When it rains there is a lot of surface water on Brookside Road and a pedestrian was splashed by a car driving at speed through the puddles.

## Gardener

The parish council is looking for an ad-hoc gardener to do different jobs around Combwich. If you are interested, please email the clerk with the type of services that you can offer, an hourly rate and details of your public liability insurance.

## Combwich Post Box

Royal Mail now have permission to move the post box to the corner of Nursery Close and Brookside Road. We do not have a timescale for this being done.

## Road Closure – Church Hill

We have received notification that Church Hill will be closed on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January for six hours (09.30 – 15.30) to enable Openreach to carry out works.

## Contact details for the parish council PARISH COUNCILLORS

Lindsey Parsons (Chair)	01278 653700
Tina Gardener	01278 652642
Mike Haycraft	01278 653264
Connie Sanders (Vice-Chair)	01278 653307

Carol Bradbury	01278 652313
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Dave Dodge

Gina Mear (Clerk)	01278 652499
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[otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com)

## County Ward Members

Mike Caswell	01278 652043
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Brian Bolt	bbolt@hotmail.com
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## Parish Council Meetings

Parish council meetings are open to the public so if you have a subject you would like to discuss please come along or email the clerk in advance so that the matter can be discussed.

Parish Council meetings take place on the second Thursday of the month so the next parish council meetings will be on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 11<sup>th</sup> April 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 three village notice boards (opposite the shop, opposite the Anchor Inn by the play area and on the wall of Ferrices Farm, Steart) or the [Combwich.org.uk](http://Combwich.org.uk) website*

Contact for Clerk (Gina Mear)

[otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com](mailto:otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com) or Tel 01278 652499

## From the Parish Council Archives Notable minutes

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1919 | Proposition for a light railway - taking in Combwich so that this area could be 'opened up' sent to Minister of Transport |
| 1936 | A refuse collection was discussed, and unanimously agreed not necessary   |
| 1963 | Street cleaner was praised for his diligence  |





## Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Registered Charity Number 1124017

Chair Tina Gardener 652642 - Secretary Carol Bradbury 652313

### We hope you all had a good Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year.

The senior's Christmas dinner was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and once again was a huge success. There were 55 people enjoying their three-course meal with wine. It was very nice to see lots of new faces and let's hope they enjoyed themselves enough to come back next year.

We would like to thank the Village Hall committee for decorating the hall and the Christmas tree. As always, a very big thank you to Ray Bollen and Chris Stockham for their sterling work in the kitchen, this event wouldn't happen without their dedication. Thank you to Aly Prowse for once again cooking the turkey, pigs in blankets and superb gravy, all the committee members for the organisation, cooking of vegetables and serving and clearing away, to Bethan and Will Mockridge for volunteering to help on the evening and last but not least thanks to Rob and the Village Shop for ordering the wine and other items for us and for the generous raffle prizes, which were very much appreciated.

Mike excelled with the entertainment this year, the quiz was based on the TV show 'Pointless' and was a bit more time consuming than expected. Representatives of the 4 winning teams, Carol Bradbury, Mike Haycraft, Brian Hutchings and Don Miller competed in an air-guitar competition, with Brian being voted the overall winner in a very tightly-fought contest.

The Christmas trees in Combwich and Steart were excellent as always and thanks to Mike, Mel, Barry, Tom, Brian, Paul, Simon and Robin for all their hard work in putting up the trees and lights. They made an excellent show. A special mention to Solomia Barba who made a superb job of switching on the Christmas tree lights in Combwich. It was a shame that the rain put a halt to the Christmas Carols, so it was a quick dash to the village hall for some welcoming mulled wine and refreshments laid on by the Gardening Club and Social Club.

The 100 Club continues to thrive and paid for all our Christmas activities. The Christmas draw winners this year were; 1<sup>st</sup> prize of £125 to Linda Ingram, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize of £80 to Betty Hansford and 3<sup>rd</sup> prize of £50 to Avril and Mel Fooks.



**The 100 Club** draw usually takes place every month at the Coffee Morning in Otterhampton Village Hall, although on occasions it has been necessary for the numbers 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 Tina on 652642 or Sue 653663 or any committee member.

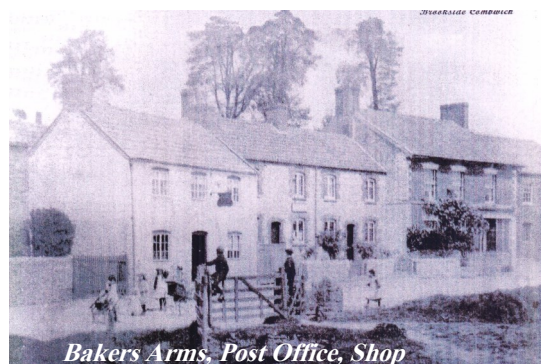
## Otter Tales continues to serialise Florence Chants childhood memories "Roses in December" of living in Combwich at the beginning of the twentieth century

### The Layout of the Parish

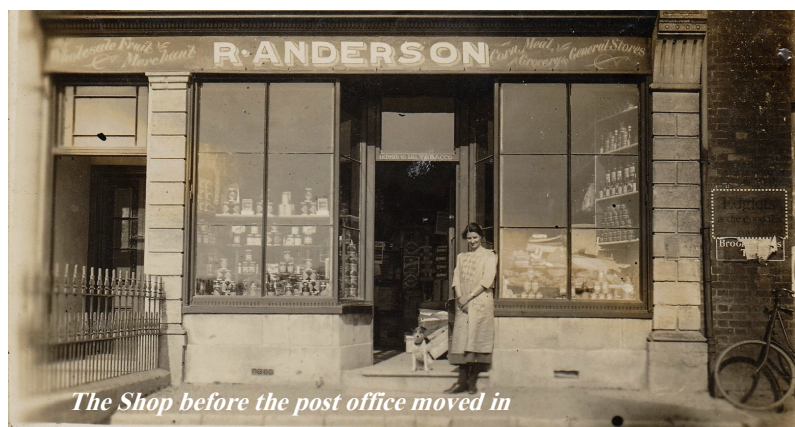
Combwich, was never in my life-time of the olde-worlde variety. There was not a single thatched cottage. Most of the villagers lived in small, well-built houses constructed of locally-made bricks or of stones taken from quarries in the vicinity. The roofs were of tiles made in the village. So many buildings and other features once so familiar in the early years of the century have disappeared completely or have been adapted to other purposes.

In my childhood the question, "Where are you going?" would almost certainly have elicited the reply either "Up Round", "Down Round" or "Over Long". These were the three village streets; there was no need to designate them more precisely for postal purposes since there were then only about sixty houses in the village and the post man who brought letters and parcels on his bicycle from Cannington knew where to find each of the inhabitants.

The road leading from the crossroads into the village passed into Over Long where the first building on the right was Mr. Quick's blacksmith shop. My own home was situated nearby on the opposite side of the road and the merry music of hammer on anvil was one of the familiar sounds of childhood days. Close by was the larger of the two bakeries run by Mr. Clifford Hunt and then came the first of the village inns, the "Baker's Arms" run by Mrs. Johns who was Mr. Hunt's sister. Next door was the tiny post-office presided over by two diminutive but highly efficient ladies, Mrs. and Miss Parsons.



*Bakers Arms, Post Office, Shop*



*The Shop before the post office moved in*

Two doors away in the village shop almost everything necessary to everyday living could be purchased. The shelves were stacked with all kinds of food and there was a stone slab from which lard, butter and bacon were served. Hardly any foods were pre-packaged. One shelf was devoted to cleaning materials including soap, scouring brick, floor and boot polish. The walls were festooned with coloured cards displaying, among other useful articles, headache powders, pills, babies' dummies, clothes-pegs, pomade for destroying undesirable livestock in

the hair, small-tooth combs for the same purpose, boot-laces, needles and pins. One of the two shop-windows was given over to all kinds of sweets, many in large bottles with glass stoppers, duly labelled "Lemon drops", "Aniseed balls", "Gob-stoppers" and so on. Favourite wares among the children were liquorice bootlaces, sherbet dabs and toffee strips which were deemed of good value at a half-penny each. A great deal of thought had to be given to the expenditure of a whole penny. Paraffin oil was dispensed from a store at the back of the shop. My rather austere aunt ran the shop while her husband carried on a small butchery business in the large shed next door.

After this came a row of cottages known as "The Rookery" and on the other side, the second of the village bakeries adjoining the first of the houses in "Fender Row".

At the end of Over Long came a small open space known as "Old Hill" from which all three village streets branched. Here was situated a busy mill where Mr. Roberts supervised the milling of wheat grown by farmers belonging to the Combwich and District Farmers' Association. Wheat was also exported in ships entering the Pill. Across the Brook from the Old Mill was the road leading to the brick-works.

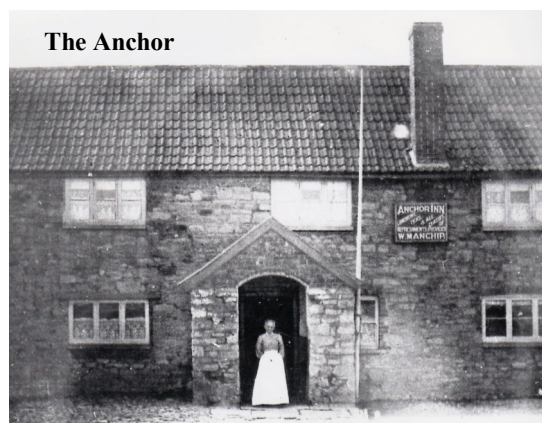


Passing straight on one came to Down Round where there were several cottages and a large house called, "The Towers", occupied by the Leigh family, principals of the firm of Henry Leigh and Son who imported coal from South Wales and the Forest of Dean. The coal was distributed by horse-drawn coal-wagons to all the district lying between the river and the Quantock Hills.



One interesting house in this area overlooking the common and the River Parrett was occupied by a retired sea-captain, Captain Pearce and his family. The captain could often be seen in a bay window especially built on the first floor front of his house as a look-out from which the captain could watch the shipping passing up and down the river at high tide.

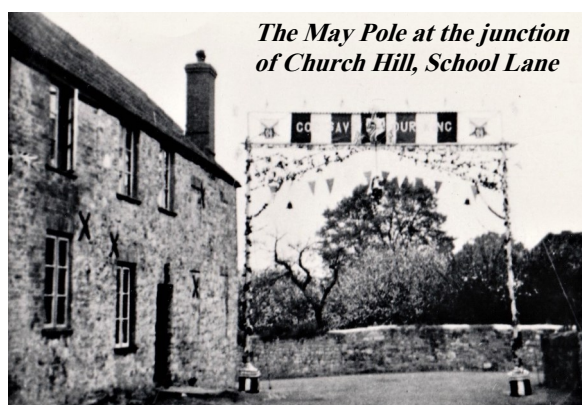
Two of Mr. Oliver Leigh's sisters lived in a pretty house in the "Down Road" area. These ladies were of a retiring disposition and were not often seen abroad in the village. They did much good by stealth and would always be ready to supply a jug of soup or other little delicacies in cases of illness.



Near the common was the "Anchor" inn run by Mr. Manchip and his hard-working and capable wife. The courtyard was bounded on one side by an extremely high brick-wall which was once used as a fives court.

"Up Round" could be reached by taking a left-hand turn at the Old Mill. The main feature of this road was the Church of St. Peter built in Queen Victoria's reign a Chapel-of-Ease, not dedicated for marriages to be solemnised there. Most of the village children were brought to this church to be christened.

Next came cottages on both sides of the road and then the open space known as "Maypole" the scene of May revels. Nearby was the small Methodist chapel and then came the lane leading to the village school. The road at the Maypole took a turn to the right towards the river and here was the third of the village inns, the "Ship" run by my Aunt Jane and Uncle George.



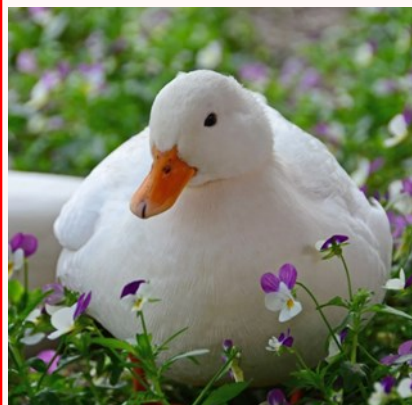
Between the two hamlets of Combe and Otterhampton lay the main part of the estate of the Squire, Captain Andrew Guy Everard. The family name had formerly been Evered. There were two beautiful fields know as "First Park" and "Second Park" divided by a narrow lane leading from the main road to Hill Farm occupied by Mr. Hurniman the Overseer of the Parish and Clerk of the Parish Council. In the Second Park was "Hill House", the lovely late-Georgian residence of the Everard family.

At the end of Second Park was the main road leading to Otterhampton village and the Parish Church. There were only about twenty houses in this part of the parish and probably the only occupation for the men apart from service connected with the Squire's estate was employment on the few small farms in the district.

This, then, was our little parish at the beginning of the twentieth century.

## The Heartless Fawn

*By Katy (11 years)*



Once upon a snowy day, a new baby deer was born in a dark, frosted forest. As the snow kept coming down, a small snowflake landed on the newborn's nose. As soon as he was born, they knew they had to call him Fearless. But something was different about the deer. He had a broken heart shaped birthmark on his forehead. All the other deer stayed away from him thinking he was dangerous. But in reality, he was the sweetest thing ever. At first he didn't mind. He liked being alone. But as he got older he felt quite lonely. He had no friends and was feeling down. So one day he went to find a different forest.

"Maybe some fawns over there would like me!" he thought.

On the way there he got lost and he took a mysterious path and somehow ended up in Comwich! He was a bit confused. Where was he? He saw some trees ahead and was curious so he decided to dash to them. That's when he discovered the marshes. The fawn loved it! He was finally free from the negative forest and felt AMAZING!

He ran around and made friends with a duck called Julia. He was filled with joy! He was out of breath so he stopped and decided to explore the rest of the village. Fearless found out there was a park and slid down the slide, but since it was covered with snow, he went really quick and flew off the slide, causing him to fly over the fence! There was a bunch of snow, so Fearless was gladly ok. He trotted over to the village hall where there was a raffle going on and he found a pound coin on the floor, so he was able to take part! And guess what? HE WON... 30 POUNDS!!! The deer picked it up with his mouth and walked away. He looked around and found the village shop where he decided to buy a bunch of food with his money. Sweets galore. He saw there was a bike advertised, it had a basket and it was for free! He put his food in the basket, got on the bike and rode up to Otterhampton Primary School! He parked up his bike and hopped the gate. He explored the school and met some of the children and helped the kids with their homework and decided to get out of the school before a teacher saw. He rode back down the hill and had the best idea ever. He went around the marshes again and found his duck friend Julia and had a giant picnic with her at sunset. The broken heart birthmark slowly turned back into a full heart again. He was finally happy. The end!



## **A Messy Start**

Arriving to open and set up for the Friday Coffee Morning, I was greeted outside the village hall with three dollops of dog poo. So :-

When walking your dog, please make sure it's in front of you, or to your heel, and you can see when it drops a bundle. Then pick it up!

**On a brighter note.**

The Brownies invited us 'oldies' for a Christmas afternoon. What a great time we had playing Christmas bingo, craft, eating, singing. So well organised. The Brownies really looked after me – I loved it! A lovely atmosphere of caring and friendship – our youngsters are such treasures.

*Helen Jowett*







## John Berry writes (*former Parish Council Chair*)

When Linda and I moved from Combwich to Catalkoy in Northern Cyprus, I promised Barry I'd contribute an occasional article for Otter Tales. That was almost six years ago and this is my first piece. How time flies when you're having fun!

My first thought was to write about the parallels, rather than the differences, between village life here and in Somerset. And, perhaps surprisingly, there are more parallels than one might imagine. Catalkoy is larger than Combwich – in size closer to Cannington. The scale of its mosque is not unlike that of St Mary's and regular attendance is probably similar. Turkish Cypriots are generally pretty relaxed Sunni Moslems. The local authority – in Turkish the Beledyesi – is responsible for waste collection, water supply, Primary education and a range of other functions that in the UK would be carried out at county level. There is an elected mayor and in addition an official called a mukhtar who, as the name implies, occupies an office which dates back through Cyprus' British colonial history to the days when it was part of the Ottoman Empire.



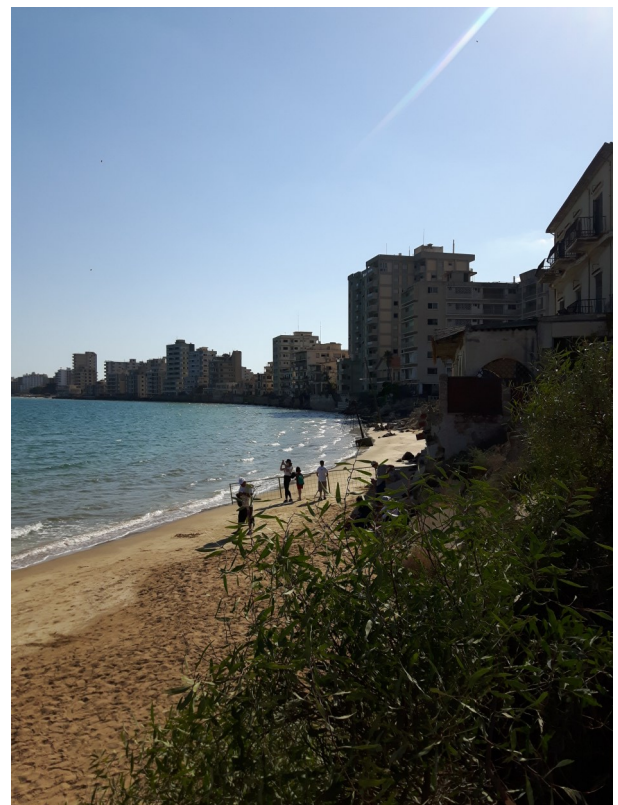
So much for the similarities. The differences begin with the fact that we are part of an expatriate community, comprising primarily Brits, Turks, Russians, Ukrainians, and an increasingly large group of Germans. Linda and I have joined the Anglo-Turkish Association and the Foreign Residents Association, as well as the British Residents Society. Since Brexit, the complications relating to travel have multiplied. Suffice it to say that we can rarely travel to the UK via Larnaca - the most direct route with the most connexions, because South Cyprus is an EU member and therefore rules regarding length of stay apply. So we must fly via Turkey, because there are no direct flights from the TRNC to anywhere else.

This is because this small, but well organised and democratic state is not recognised by any country other than Turkey

And then there's the weather. And the weather is a major component in our decision to live here. As I sit at my laptop in our study, I look out at an increasingly green landscape, as the long, hot summer gives way to autumn. But the sun still shines from a sky blue from horizon to horizon. The outside temperature is 25C – it is 11.30 in the morning. Shortly, we shall take our two dogs for a leisurely stroll in the Kyrenia mountains, followed by a swim in the warm Mediterranean. It's a hard life.

Right now, however, the shadow cast by the tragic events in Palestine and Israel is deeper perhaps than it seems in Somerset because of our proximity to the protagonists, providing a stark reminder that wherever we live we are a part of a global community that has not yet learned to be at peace with itself.

PS Linda asked me to let all you wild flower students know that the autumn 'ladies tresses' are in flower here just as they are presently in Somerset.



## What we've been up to!



At our November meeting Jane Sharp, from Watchet Hedgehogs, gave us a fascinating insight into the life of hedgehogs. She explained how the number of hedgehogs has declined to them now being on the red list and being vulnerable to extinction. We found out how we can help by leaving gaps under fences, having wild areas in our gardens and access to shallow water. More information is available on Watchet Hedgehogs website. Thank you, Jane, for a very informative evening.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> November the Lunch Club visited The Cottage Inn at Keenthorne, where we were made very welcome by the team. A lovely meal was enjoyed by all and we will certainly be visiting again.



Our festive meeting took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> December and what an enjoyable evening it was. After playing 'Santa beetle' and completing quizzes, based around flower names and types of chocolate, members enjoyed a buffet and glass of mulled wine. A lovely start to the festive season.

**theWI**  
INSPIRING WOMEN



## Combwich and District WI

### Dates for your diary!

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January – Ian Williamson 'Vietnam Trip' - competition - a beaded object

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January – Post Christmas meal at Blackmore Manor, Cannington

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February – Kevin Little 'Fishy Tales' – competition – item from a favourite holiday

We welcome new members to join us at our meetings which are held on the third Thursday of each month in Otterhampton village hall, doors open at 7.00 ready for 7.30 start. Why not come along to one of our evenings, you will be warmly welcomed.

*For more information contact Connie on 01278 653307*

## Book Club: 15th February. 7.00p.m. The Anchor

At the next meeting of Book Club we shall be sharing our thoughts on '*Lessons in Chemistry*' by **Bonnie Garmus**. We shall also discuss other books we have enjoyed.

There will also be a Book Exchange. All are welcome to join this informal and friendly group.

Email: [otter.tales@aol.com](mailto:otter.tales@aol.com)

[www.combwich.org.uk/about-otterhampton/otter-ales](http://www.combwich.org.uk/about-otterhampton/otter-ales)



## Harbour View Bar

Happy new year from the bar committee, we trust you all had an enjoyable Christmas despite the continual rain & wind.

The garden club held a very successful wreath making event, the bar lounge was full of Christmas greenery & festive fun, talented villagers produced some amazing wreaths.



Our monthly quiz on the 16th Dec was well attended, and won by Bruce & Sue Barton, Maggie Layton and Bev & Steve Lang, with the £70 winnings they kindly bought a drink for everyone in the club. Next quiz date to be arranged for February.

Harbour Flights dart team resume their matches on 5th, the first 2 weeks being away matches. This brings in revenue for the club when the games are at home, we welcome our neighbouring villages & take it in turns to put on a light supper.

A lovely Christmas Eve with some festivities & food, thank you everyone.

On 28th Dec an afternoon session was arranged to celebrate the passing of Lemmy from Motörhead... what a great afternoon of music, food & dancing, thanking all those involved in arranging & hoping we will see other music events like this in the future.

Our AGM will have already taken place when this edition is published, so look out next time for updates on Harbour View Bar. Signing off from your current committee, it's been a pleasure to help make the social club what it is today, please please continue to support.

Steve Lang...chair, Ian Williams .. Treasurer, Bev Lang ... secretary

## Combwich teen embarks on Naval career

A teenager from Combwich, is heading for a career at sea after successfully completing his basic training in the Royal Navy.

Able Rate (AB) Rhys Bennett joined the Senior Service in September and has completed his 10-weeks Initial Naval Training at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, Cornwall.

The training package is designed to militarise and marinise civilians into sailors, preparing them to serve at sea in an operationally deployed Navy that is Global, Modern and Ready.

The 17 year-old, who had studied at Haygrove School and used to work at Wickes in Bridgwater before joining, said "Training allowed me to develop a wide variety of abilities and I feel fully prepared to continue with my next stage of training and then join the Fleet."

Relishing all the challenges faced during training he reflected that, "You can learn a lot of valuable information in the 10-weeks, and it changes you as a person as you meet some great people and develop skills you wouldn't typically get taught."

Citing that "The body achieves what the mind believes," AB Rhys encourages others to follow his example, "The travelling opportunities are unrivalled and you develop an acute sense of self and team discipline as you undertake new experiences."





## Otterhampton Village Hall

The Christmas raffle was drawn on 17<sup>th</sup> December and a total of £434 was raised which will be shared between the Village Hall and Harbour View Bar. Congratulations to all of the winners whose details have been circulated by email etc. The next raffle will be at Easter so if you are able to donate a prize, please contact any of the hall trustees. The trustees want to extend a special thankyou to Lindsey Parsons and her friends for helping to organise the raffle and donating the majority of the prizes.



Looking to 2024, we are pleased to announce that, 'The Stoggymen' will be back for an evening of fun and singing on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm. The event was a sell out in 2023 so hurry to get your tickets which are £10 per person including a Ploughmans supper!

Tickets are available from Lindsey Parsons on 01278 653700 or from the Harbour View Bar.

Our thanks to the Combwich Crafters for the wonderful wall hanging presented to the village hall, see below: -

## Combwich Crafters

At the end of November Combwich Crafters presented the village hall with The Twelve Days of Christmas. Members have spent the last twelve months working collaboratively on the wall hanging, which contains several different craft skills. Combwich Crafters meet on Wednesday mornings from 10.00 until 12.00 during term time.



**Happy New Year from the OVH trustees and the Combwich Crafters**



**COMBICH, OTTERHAMPTON  
AND  
STEART NEWSLETTER**

# Otter Tales

The deadline for the next edition will be Thursday 14th March, with distribution the weekend before Easter.

Please have your Easter stories and events to submit





# 1st Combwich Brownies

## Christmas Good Turn

At Brownies we always do a communal good turn at Christmas to remind the girls of their law which is to think of other people before themselves. We like to vary this every year and last year we did a big fund raiser for the Bridgwater Food Bank which was very successful. This year we decided to concentrate on our local community and came up with the idea of holding a tea party for some of the older people in the village. The Brownies were very excited by this idea and were each given the name of a person to write an invitation to. They were also very keen to find out if 'their' named guest had replied, and if they were able to come.

When the day came they all made an item of food at home to bring and then arrived early to make sandwiches. The afternoon took the form of all playing Christmas bingo together, then each Brownie helped their guest make a Christmas wreath to take home. Then the highlight of a lovely tea with the Brownies as hostesses, followed by a good sing.



For us Guiders the most satisfying thing was to see the young and old coming together to enjoy this event. Apologies to anyone we were unable to invite – we were restricted by numbers.

Here are some of the comments from the Brownies and guests:

**Layla:** I loved that everyone was kind and thoughtful.

**Solomia:** I loved Isla's

cakes – they were the best food!

**Bethany:** There were lots of yummy things, I even got

full and that's unusual.

**Esme:** I

enjoyed making the wreaths, they were quite easy to make. **Willow:** I enjoyed playing bingo with my guest and making the wreaths with hands.

**Ava:** I enjoyed the bingo game and the amazingly good food.

**Isla:** I really enjoyed the

games and going round serving the food. **Hope:** My favourite thing was eating the food that everyone worked hard to make.

**Autumn:** My favourite thing was the bingo.

**Molly:** The favourite thing

was the creating.

**Melody:** My favourite thing was the scones and cakes.

and Christmas bingo.

And all the Brownies loved having the visitors.

Comment from **Helen Jowett** in her thank you card: Lovely company, lovely food – I even managed the craft under the kind supervision of **Hope and Ava**

**Elizabeth Marriott** wrote

A huge thank you to the Brownies for a wonderful afternoon in December as their guests, we each made a Christmas decoration with a Brownie, mine is right and had pride of place over Christmas, the Brownies also served us with delicious sandwiches and cakes made by them.



*Brownies is open to girls from 7 – 11 and we do have a few spare places. Our programme for this term includes a visit to East Quay trampolining and supper at Mcdonald's. There is also the possibility of a night sleeping with the tigers at the zoo in the summer. For further information contact Liz Brown 652687 or Karen Barton 652673.*



**Mrs Clare Luce**  
Executive Headteacher



### Christmas Nativity - 'The Inn-spectors!'

We were delighted to hold our whole school nativity this year which involved everyone (including Little Otters) in the re-telling of the Christmas story. We were joined by many friends and families of OPS and it was a truly magical performance. The OPS Friends provided refreshments and mince pies.

### Community Coffee morning

On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December we opened up our doors and welcomed the community into school to watch the nativity. Over 40 members of the community attended to watch the Christmas performance and to share a cup of tea and a mince pie. It was such a lovely way to end the term.



### Ocean/Bay/River Theatre Trip

Ocean, Bay and River Class took a coach trip down to the Brewhouse Theatre on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December to see a performance of 'A Christmas Carol'. The children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and enjoyed an ice cream during the interval.



### Christmas lunch

Over 50 Christmas lunches were served on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December. Turkey and all of the trimmings were served. Christmas crackers were kindly donated by the OPS Friends. Thank you for your kindness!



### Christmas jumper day

We raised an amazing £45 for 'Save the Children' on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December in our wear a Christmas jumper Day. Well done everyone!

### Year 6 Remembrance project

The Year 6s worked so hard on the Remembrance Project with Andrew Powell-Thomas. On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November they shared snippets of their work at the Remembrance service at St Peter's. Reverend Alison led the proceedings and we were joined by members of the community. Several of the biographies of fallen soldiers were read along with readings, poems, the last post and a 2-minute silence. A poignant occasion.

After the service, members of community joined us for tea and biscuits back at school so that the children could share more of their work which was displayed in the hall. Thank you to Andrew, Mr Sluman, Mrs Turnbull and the children for really engaging in the project. The books will be published later in the year and will be available for all to purchase.



We are looking forward to a busy Spring term with lots of opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom.



## Garden Club: A Winter Garden

We have past the winter solstice. I'm already behind, the traditional day for sowing onion seed is Boxing Day. It's ok. There's still time. Early spuds are chitting and tomatoes will soon be up.



The days are getting longer, but it's still cold. It is still winter and there is plenty to see in a winter garden.

The Snowdrops are up, as are these. Are they Puschkinias?



The *Lonicera fragrantissima* is in flower. There are a few around the village complete with bumble bees buzzing.

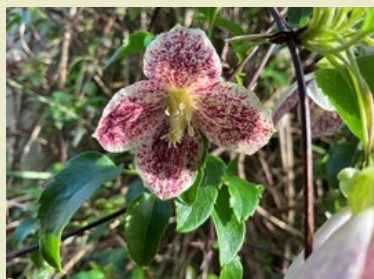
They do have a tendency to get a bit big and overgrown. Cut them back to encourage new growth. After flowering the weaker one year old wood can be removed to open up the shrub and new flowering laterals will grow over the summer ready to flower for Christmas. The smell! No wonder the bees buzz

*Viburnum x 'bodnantense dawn'* is out with its bright pink flowers. If left un-pruned it can become woody lower down, with all the flowers at the top out of sight. Prune to keep the branch structure low and encourage a mass of flower.



*Clematis 'Jingle Bells'* and *Clematis 'Freckles'* are both out.

They will both need to be cut back after flowering as both flower on the growth they make in the summer. If left they could become tangled and overgrown.



Whoosh. The *Cornus* is like fire shooting out of the ground. To encourage more stems for next year they need to be pruned back to almost ground level. Hard pruning prevents the plant from flowering. *Cornus* can be grown as a shrub and left to flower, but it will need to have space to grow.

It will soon be Spring, time to think about what to sow. Winter pruning needs to be completed by the end of February, as the sap begins to rise and the plants come out of their dormancy.



Garden Club ended the year with a very productive and creative wreath making evening. Everyone had fun sharing Christmas Party food and went home with a beautiful wreath.

Over the next year Garden Club will continue to meet once a month with a focus on topical garden issues. If you would like a particular topic covered please contact Garden Club. We are also looking for people to share their expertise, if you, or if you know someone who would like to contribute please contact Garden Club via the website. [www.cosgardenclub.com](http://www.cosgardenclub.com) Each session will start with "Garden Questions". Questions can be

submitted via the web site.

Next Garden Club on Tuesday 13th February: Pruning, Seed Sowing and Planning a Veg Garden.  
Garden Club website: [cosgardenclub.com](http://cosgardenclub.com)



# Stearth Marshes

working in partnership with



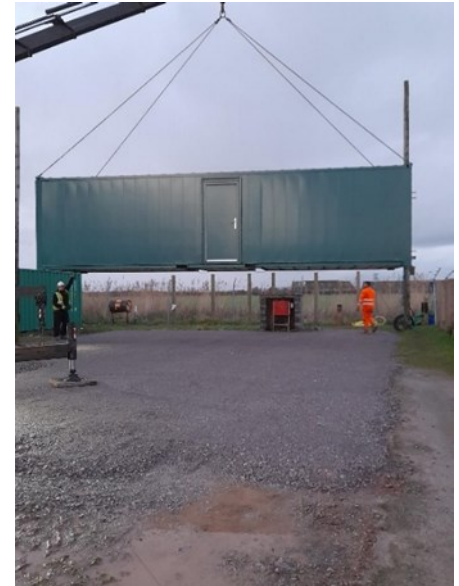
Environment  
Agency

## Welcome to 2024 at Stearth Marshes!

We have had some exciting developments over the past few weeks with the arrival of long awaited new offices on site. The staff were delighted to see the old portacabins craned out in December and we are now setting up to work in a better insulated environment which will be warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer... also doesn't leak when it rains which is always a bonus!



*Wardens Alice, Ronan and Sam celebrate away with the old and in with the new in December.*



**Wetlands are the Way:** Our new strategy to 2030 has recently been released and as part of this we have had a rebrand to make our logo more digital-friendly. This will be the last newsletter with the old logo and in the future, you will see the new single swan. You can find out more about the strategy and bold new messaging: [www.wwt.org.uk/news](http://www.wwt.org.uk/news)  
*WWT are the charity for wetlands and wildlife. We're on a mission to restore wetlands because they are a wondrous solution to the problems our world faces. Together we will unlock their power – and help nature burst back to life. Because when wetlands flourish, all life will flourish.*



**Dates for your diary:** We will be holding two open-door days in 2024 for the local community. Staff will be on site to answer your questions about WWT Stearth Marshes and Bridgwater Bay. Drop-in anytime between 10am and 3pm on **Thursdays 21<sup>st</sup> March and 19<sup>th</sup> September.**

Keep an eye out on Twitter, Facebook, and [www.wwt.org.uk/stearth](http://www.wwt.org.uk/stearth) for news and events.

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

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

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



## FEBRUARY SUNDAY SERVICE ROTA for Quantock Gate Parishes

CHURCH	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2 <sup>nd</sup> before Lent	11 <sup>th</sup> February Next before Lent	18 <sup>th</sup> February Lent 1	25 <sup>th</sup> February Lent 2
Cannington St Mary	8.00 & 9.30am Holy Communion	8.00am Holy Communion 9.30am Family Service	8.00 & 9.30am Holy Communion	8.00 & 9.30am Holy Communion
Combwich St Peter	11.15am Family Service	6.00pm Prayer & Praise	11.15am Holy Communion	
Fiddington St Martin	9.00am Holy Communion	9.00am Holy Communion	9.00am Holy Communion	9.00am Family Service
Stockland St Mary Madalene		11.15am Family Service		11.15am Holy Communion
Stogursey St Andrew	10.30am Holy Communion	10.30am Holy Communion (in Jubilee Rms)	10.30am Holy Communion	10.30am Rise and Shine All Age Worship (in Jubilee Rms)
	Green	Green	Purple	Purple

**Ash Wednesday – 14<sup>th</sup> February****Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes**

10.00am Stolford, St Peter's Church  
7.00pm Cannington, St Mary the Virgin Church

**Regular Weekday Services**

Tuesdays 6.00pm **Holy Communion** Cannington, St Mary the Virgin Church  
Thursdays 9.00am **Prayer Meeting** Combwich, St Peter's Church  
Fridays 9.00am **Holy Communion** Cannington, St Mary the Virgin Church

**Babes and Tots Play Group**

Tuesdays (termtime) 9.00-11.30am Cannington Village Hall

**Coffee Mornings**

Thursdays 10.00am Cannington Church  
Fridays 10.30am Jubilee Rooms, Stogursey

**Bellringing**

Tuesdays 7.30pm Cannington Church  
Wednesdays 7.00pm Stogursey Church (1<sup>st</sup> Wed) / Fiddington Church (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Wed)  
Fridays 7.00pm Combwich Church (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fri)

Do be in touch if you would like to marry in one of the churches, or to arrange a baptism, or if there is anything else we can help with.

Rev'd Alison Waters, Rector & Rev'd Jan Church, Curate  
01278 652953 / [cannington.benefice@gmail.com](mailto:cannington.benefice@gmail.com)



## Otter Wheels

Your volunteer car scheme is here for you.

Is lack of transport a problem? Want to visit a friend or family, or go to the dentist, doctor, hospital, then maybe we can help.

**Ring Otter Wheels on 07925154216— to book a trip, but please give as much notice as you can before you need to travel. You will need to register (if you have not already done so) on this number before you can book a trip**

This not for profit car scheme has been running for several years with well over 1,200 trips completed. If you haven't tried us give us a go. Door to door service with friendly experienced drivers, all DBS checked and happy to help. Typical return journey prices are: -

	With bus pass	Without bus pass
Cannington Health Centre	£1.75	£3.50
Bridgwater Bus Station	£4.00	£8.00
Musgrove Hospital Taunton	£9.75	£19.50

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

## Feedback

Email, comment, feedback, and suggestions to the editor please.

Stories, articles reports, events and other items for publication in the next edition of Otter Tales need to be received by Thursday 14th March.

Email The Editor:  
[otter.tales@aol.com](mailto:otter.tales@aol.com)

## Birthday Bells

If you would like to have 'Happy Birthday' played on the church bells

Email [bell.ringers@aol.com](mailto:bell.ringers@aol.com)

## Defibrillators can save your life.

There are two defibrillators in Combwich. One is in the telephone box, the other at the Anchor/Ship Lane wall.

Stear has one defibrillator. It is on the wall of the old chapel (signposted).

Dial 999 to call for an ambulance then follow the simple instructions. NO TRAINING NEEDED



## Otter Tales:

Editor: Barry Leathwood. Assisted by Steven Parker.

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Articles for publication: email [otter.tales@aol.com](mailto:otter.tales@aol.com)

Published with the generous support of the Parish Council  
 Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information published in Otter Tales, the views expressed are those of individuals or organisations.

Articles for the next issue by **Thursday 14th March**

## Mobile Library: Dates and Times.

**Thursday 25th January, 22nd February 21st March**

Combwich Harbour TA5 2QU 10.15 – 10.50

Combwich Shop TA5 2QW 10.55 – 11.20

Stockland Bristol Club TA5 2PY 11.30– 11.55

To keep up to date with all that is happening in the parish check the various village noticeboards, log onto [www.combwich.org](http://www.combwich.org) or visit the "All Things Combwich" Facebook page. For information about the village hall go to

[www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.otterhamptonvillagehall.co.uk)

For local history visit Combwich, Steart and Otterhampton Memories Facebook Group

To be notified of events and local information by email contact: [barry.leathwood@btinternet.com](mailto:barry.leathwood@btinternet.com).

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

Proceeds from the market will be donated to charity.

Ring Liz on 01278 652687



## Village Shop Open - Shop local - Use it or lose it

### Opening hours

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm till 6.00pm

Saturday 9.00am till 1.00pm

