



COMBWICH, OTTERHAMPTON AND STEART NEWSLETTER

Otter Tales

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General Information



A Community Shop For Combwich?

Community Shop

Thank you to everyone who responded to the Community Shop Questionnaire. A total of 151 responses were returned out of 425 which were distributed in Combswich, Otterhampton, Steart and Stockland Bristol. The results are very encouraging with lots of residents willing to be involved and help to determine the way forward.



What next

Within the next few weeks, all those who volunteered to be part of a steering group will be invited to a meeting. (*if you wish to volunteer to join a steering committee, but didn't leave your contact details, contact the clerk otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com*) It is expected that this group will take the lead in developing the project and may well provide the basis of a management committee. A further consultation in the form of a public meeting will be held at an early stage.

In the meantime, we will contact and join the Plunket Foundation who are the real experts in the development of community assets, including shops. They can provide expert advice on a range of issues relating to our needs, including access to grants and advice on planning and much more. We will also be consulting with the Somerset Community Foundation as they hold the purse strings to our allocation of the EDF mitigation funds.

This will not be a simple project to develop, and many complicated issues will have to be resolved, not least of which will be the location of a community shop by purchasing the Combwich Store or finding an alternative location for a new building.

A sustainable business plan will be needed to access the funds we currently have and to apply for grants to fund the project. This will include finding the right people with the skills and commitment to develop the project and then to manage the shop and organise the volunteers once it has been set up.

Not enough people use the existing shop, and a community shop will only survive if people use it. With a management committee and a shop which meets the needs of people as illustrated by the results of the questionnaire, it should be possible. One idea is to maybe offer shares to members in the local community to build a commitment to the project.

This is not the end of the story, just the beginning, and the project will take many months and even a year or two to bring to fruition, but successful community shops exist in several Somerset villages including, Spaxton, Bicknoller, Brent Knoll and Roadwater. If they can do it so can we!

Responses to the Questionnaire



The responses to the questionnaire are very encouraging with 151 positive returns and a range of interesting information, including how often members of your household are likely to use a community shop (Q1).

Q2. Demonstrated the range of products you would mostly likely buy, many of which are available from the existing Combwich Store, in addition there is a demand for newspapers and magazines, gifts, craft items, vegan produce, basic medicines and flowers etc.

Q3. Asked what services you would most likely use? Top of the list was postal services and

cash withdrawal followed closely by parcel delivery and collection. The next most popular request was for a tearoom/coffee shop and prescription collection.

Q4. Asked what other services would you like to see on offer? The responses include Lottery/scratch cards, Post Office, travel money and a Costa Coffee machine if no café and much more.

Q5. Related to the time of day you would use the shop. The responses indicated a strong desire for the opportunity to use the shop from 8am to 6pm (including lunchtime) and some wanted opening later in the evening.

Q6. How far do you currently travel to do your main shop? A majority said Bridgwater and some use online deliveries. When asked about convenience/top up shopping, the majority said they travel up to a mile (where to?), others use Cannington or Budgens.

Q7. Was about the importance of having a shop in the village? The overwhelming majority thought it was very important.

Q8. Was about the number of people in each age group in your household? Not surprisingly the largest group were the over 65s with the smallest being the 17 – 25-year-olds.

Q9. Tried to ascertain how many would be interested in helping a community shop project. This produced a very encouraging response of 47 people volunteering to run the shop. 15 would be interested in joining a steering group, 20 would help with fundraising and seven would provide professional advice and services, including project management, accountancy, publicity and marketing, maintenance, carpentry/building management, electronics and computing.

For the full analysis go to the parish council section www.combwich.org.uk, or email Otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com.

The questionnaire and the initial response to the closure of the post office and potentially the shop, were drawn up by the parish council and the officers of OPPT (Otterhampton Parish Project Team). Responsibility will be transferred to the steering group in due course.



Support Nicole Turnbull

I am walking 130km throughout March to raise awareness of brain tumour symptoms. There are 130 different types of brain cancer and I am hoping to raise at least £130 for the Brain Tumour Charity. I have a Just Giving page: justgiving.com/page/nicole-turnbull Thank you and please say hello if you see me out walking at Steart Marshes!

Otterhampton Parish Council

Otterhampton Offcuts
Snippets from our February -March 2024 meetings

OTTERHAMPTON OFFCUTS

Community Shop

We received such a positive response to the questionnaire that was sent out. Please see the main article for more information.

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.

Defibrillator

The defibrillator is now in place at Ferrices Farm in Steart and we would like to thank Simon Darch for his assistance with this. We will be replacing the one at the Anchor in the future.

Flooding on Brookside Road

There have been several occasions recently when rainwater running off the field has flooded the properties. Because of this the parish council has purchased a pump which is stored in our garage on Brookside Road. If you need to use the pump for flooding reasons, please contact one of the key holders, contact details can be found in the Emergency Plan on Combwich.org.uk

Common Track

We will be having the potholes repaired on part of the track that runs from Ship Lane to just past the farmhouse/bottom of the slope. We don't have a date yet but when we do, we will advise nearby residents and put various notices up and post on the Facebook page; All Things Combwich.

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 11th April, 9th May (**6.30pm start**), 13th June 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 Post Office, opposite the Anchor Inn by the play area and on the wall of Ferrices Farm, Steart) or the Combwich.org.uk website

Contact for Clerk (Gina Mear) otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com or Tel 01278 652499

Email: otter.tales@aol.com

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THE BEST EASTER OF MY LIFE!!! (sort of)

By Katy (11 years)

I woke up to my alarm going off. BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

"SHUSH!" I exclaimed, whacking my clock, trying to turn off the noise. I decided to get up and see what time it was (since trying to whack my clock was unsuccessful) It was 10 am.

"I'm going to go back to bed, it's way too early-" That's when my phone started exploding with notifications. I switched it on and started reading all the messages.

"Katy, where are you?" Read a message from Ioana. "The party has started!"

"What party?" I responded.

"Evelyn's party!" Ioana replied.

Oh no. I switched off my phone, got dressed and sped down the stairs.

"Remember our Easter egg hunt is later!" cheered mum, handing me Evelyn's gift.

"Ok, thanks!" I called as I was running out the door.

As I checked the news on my device, I saw that Taylor Swift was in the UK for a birthday party.

"Maybe Taylor Swift will be at Evelyn's party!" I laughed.

When I got there, I handed the present to the birthday girl and looked around. The party table was loaded with colourful sweets,

sandwiches and the biggest birthday cake you have seen in your life. Each tier of the dessert was a different colour of the rainbow with edible gold glitter sprinkled all over it. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Ioana looking over at some sunflowers and I ran up to her.

"Hey Ioana!" I said, smiling.

"Hi!" grinned Ioana. "Have you seen that bunny mascot over there?"

I looked behind me to see the mascot playing with the younger kids.

Suddenly, the birthday girl's dad made an announcement.

"Let's all sing Happy Birthday! He shouted, handing everyone a party hat.

After Evelyn blew out the candles, the bunny stood in front of everyone.

"Hey everyone!" exclaimed the mascot. "I have a surprise for all of you!"

They took their mask off and guess who it was? It was Taylor Swift!

All the children started cheering (including me) and dashed over to her.

She gave everyone her new album early and took selfies with all the kids -and parents!-

She sang some songs and waved us goodbye.

"Goodbye y'all!" Taylor Swift called.

"Bye Taylor!" we yelled as her Mercedes sped off.

After a while, everyone left and went home.

"Katy, Katy! KATY!" screamed my mum. "You're going to be late for school!"

"What do you mean?" I yawned, rubbing my eyes.

That's when I realised it was all a dream...



MY FAMILY by Florence Chant (Abridged from Roses in December)

My father was the fourth child of George Norman, a brickyard worker. There were seven children and Grandfather and Grandmother made great sacrifices in order to have them educated. The children had to take money with them on Monday mornings to help pay for their education. All the children did well at school and some decided to leave the village in order to improve their prospects. Two of the girls went to Bristol and became postmistresses. One son had a good position in a brewery in Newport, and the youngest member of the family was employed as a gardener on the Duke of Beaufort's estate at Badminton. One girl was adopted by fairly well-to-do relatives in London and later married a schoolmaster.

My father was tall and always remained very slim, a fact which would not have surprised anyone who could have watched him making hand-made roofing-tiles. It was very heavy work indeed. I was always pleased to be asked in holiday times to take my father a can of hot tea at mid-morning. Fascinated, I watched the making of one tile after another. First he would put a board in position and spray it and the mould with sand. He would then bend to pick up a heavy block of clay from a pile replenished as needed by an odd-job man. The block of clay was slapped onto the mould and the spare clay sliced off with a piece of wire having a small block of wood at each end held in the hand. The spare clay was discarded. Father then took a flat bar of wood from a trough of water and with it he deftly smoothed the top of the tile by moving the bar to and fro a few times. Two holes were pierced in the tile which was then ready to be slid onto the sanded drying rack.

Tile-making was undoubtedly a craft and my father was regarded as a first- class worker but the monetary reward was very small. Frosty weather provided a real hazard to our living conditions since any newly-made tiles would be destroyed by frost. Winters were certainly very severe in those years. At times my father would have no work for weeks together and the only income was a very small amount from a provident club into which all workers paid. It was probably only about five shillings a week and times would be very hard indeed.



Combwich: showing the Brick and Tile works. Map from SW Heritage c 1844-1888

Father had several farmer friends who allowed him to shoot rabbits. Once when things were pretty desperate, Father strayed in search of rabbits onto a field owned by a noble lord who lived on the outskirts of the parish. Unfortunately the gentleman arrived on the scene and a furious quarrel ensued. The lord said he would prosecute if he ever found my father trespassing on his land again and the two parted in high dudgeon. A week later my mother was taken seriously ill. There was a knock on our front door and I went to see who was there. It was the same gentleman who made himself known to me. He asked to see my father. When told he was not at home the lord said, "Well, give him this message, please. Tell him to send to Bridgwater for everything which could possibly be needed for your mother - and get the accounts sent to me." - a noble gentleman indeed. My mother died two days later.

My parents were married in 1893. My father was twenty- eight years old. He had to wait four years for his bride, Eliza Jane Whitting, daughter of John Whitting, the owner-occupier of a small holding with Bolham House on the main road to Cannington. The wedding was delayed because my grandfather did not regard my father a suitable husband for his daughter. He relented, however, sufficiently to allow the young couple to occupy, rent-free, "Main Royal House" which he had purchased on the death of the old sea-captain.

Both of my mother's parents died before I was born. Grandfather left Bolham Farm, Main Royal House, and the four small "Rookery" cottages in trust, for my mother to draw the rents but, on

her death the properties must be sold and the proceeds to be held by Solicitors in Bridgwater to be shared equally among my mother's children who survived her and who attained the age of twenty- one years. He also left £500 to each of my elder brothers whom he had known as small children.

The first child was a girl who died in infancy. Then came two boys, Cyril and John (usually called Jack), and after them I arrived. The two boys were boisterous and a handful for my gentle little Mother to handle and consequently there was a good deal of relief when the next child turned out to be a girl. My brothers who resented my arrival and the welcome accorded to me, kept me, during my childhood days, well and truly in my place.

At intervals of about two years several more babies were born. Wilfred came first after me and he and I were the closest of companions. Much ingenuity was expended in trying to dodge the unwelcome demands of my eldest brother, Cyril. We would be required to stand for hours on end in the back parlour holding a candle while Cyril tinkered with his latest acquisition, a very old, cushion-tired bicycle. We never seemed to be lighting up the required spot and, if things did not go well the bicycle would receive a severe kick and operations would be suspended until the following evening. Needless to say, Wilfred and I would miraculously be missing when required. On returning home we would be treated to a considerable amount of criticism and sarcasm which continued until I burst into tears.

After Wilfred came Elsie Grace. I remember her as a fairy-like child with silky curls. She was everyone's darling. When she was eighteen months old there was a dreadful out break of whooping-cough in the village. Almost every child of school age was affected and my two elder brothers became victims. They were so ill and weak that for about a month they were unable to walk. I was aged five at the time and to ease the burden for my mother a distant cousin who lived at the "Anchor" Inn took charge of me so that I could breathe the fresh air by the river. I was also encouraged to play among the sheep in the orchard as it was believed that it was beneficial under the circumstances to breathe the breath of the sheep. I did not get whooping-cough but sadly little Elsie Grace took the cough and soon she was seriously ill with bronchitis. In spite of all the Doctor's efforts and devoted nursing by my Mother, the little darling died. Though I was so young at the time, I still recall the dreadful sadness and misery of that day. My mother never recovered fully from the blow. She was then expecting another child. The little boy had convulsions and was never able to speak. When he was aged seven my mother died and he had to go to a hospital where he died during the influenza epidemic at the end of the First World War.



Headstone of Eliza Jane Norman. All Saints Church Otterhampton.

My mother was completely devoted to her husband and children. Life was a constant struggle to make ends meet - an almost impossible task. I never knew her to be angry or impatient. She had no thought for herself and I am sure that, in spite of all the hardships she was contented with her lot. She should not have had so many children but unhappily no-one in those days seemed to know anything about family- planning. The reason we were often so poor was that, whenever Mother was ill, or confined, Father always insisted on putting her in the care of the family doctor. All patients were "private" at that time and bills had to be settled at regular intervals. Mother suffered severely from asthma which was a dreadful cross to bear. When she felt an attack approaching she would ask me to go upstairs with her. It was a traumatic experience for me to have to watch, powerless to help, while Mother gasped for breath. She used a kind of powder which was ignited in a saucer and she would inhale the smoke to obtain some relief. The attack would mercifully be over in about twenty minutes. Mother loved me to brush her hair which, fell in a beautiful dark cascade down to her waist. I remember one supremely happy evening as I brushed her hair she taught me to sing the hymn, "At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow".

Otter Wheels - *The story so far*

Combwich because of its size and location has not had a good bus service for many years—one that could get you to work in Bridgwater in the morning and bring you back in the evening, or allow an evening trip to the cinema and a meal out in the town. An expensive taxi was required to get you home if you didn't have access to a car.



Rural bus services have long relied on financial support from the county council, but over the last decade or so this has been reduced and finally eliminated resulting in the loss of our regular bus service completely. The only lifeline for those without a car was the Slinkey Bus which on a Tuesday took people from the village into Bridgwater allowing a couple of hours for shopping before returning them home. There is also the free

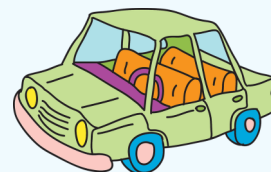
EDF community bus providing a limited time in Bridgwater for the duration of HPC construction, but these do not allow for an early or late appointment.

Back in 2015 the parish council, aware that volunteer car schemes were operating in other parts of the county and in particularly Stogursey, decided to explore the possibility of setting up such a scheme based in Combwich. Fortunately, the then parish council clerk Aly Prowse and Village Agent Yvonne Bulman had been involved in the Stogursey car scheme and brought their knowledge to bear in this village.

A constitution was agreed together with a range of documents including terms of reference, passenger registration forms, driver enrolment forms, guidance for drivers, fare schedule and much more. Drivers had to be DBS checked and insurance cover arranged. Passengers' entitlement to discretionary bus fares established. (50% subsidy for qualifying passengers on most journeys). Administrative arrangements had to be made including the appointment of a treasurer to handle the fare income and liaise with county on all matters financial. Coordinators were appointed to receive the passenger booking line (07925 154216)

phone requests and then arrange for a volunteer driver to undertake that trip. A secretary to administer the scheme and a chairman were appointed.

In the first ever edition of the parish newsletter Otter Tales in July 2015 an advert was placed seeking potential passengers and volunteer drivers, plus volunteers to administer the scheme. At this time, the scheme did not have a name, "Combwich Charabancs" and "Combwich Chariots" were suggested, but eventually "Otter Wheels" was agreed.



By the autumn this door-to-door service was ready to go, starting slowly and gradually building the numbers of passengers and drivers and by January this year 1500 or so journeys have been completed. Over 95% of requests have been met. It hasn't always been plain sailing, the covid pandemic restricted activities and the scheme had to concentrate on essential medical appointments. However, it kept going when some other schemes were unable to do so, and some have not restarted.

Thank you so much for an excellent, caring service. When my husband Vic was living at our home, Otter Wheels were a tremendous support transporting him and myself on various trips.

Vic is now in a residential home in Glastonbury and Otter Wheels wonderful drivers have enabled me to visit him regularly. I want you to know how much we appreciate your service and the kindness and caring of all drivers.

Otter Wheels are a very important link for Vic and myself. We are deeply grateful.

Joan Langlois (Passenger)





As well as medical appointments, visits to the shops, hairdressers, to and from the railway station etc are now possible.

Passengers are delighted with the scheme and often say so. Equally drivers enjoy meeting people and contributing to the life of our lovely community.

Successful though the scheme is, new drivers are always needed, this isn't a big commitment, and they only drive when it is convenient to them. No pressure is applied to do more. Drivers receive details of the trips required for the following week and decide which they want to do. They use their own car and are paid a mileage allowance. For more information contact 07925 154216

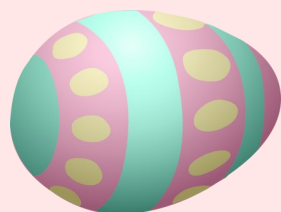
A huge thankyou to all involved in providing this essential door to door service.

I have been a volunteer driver for Otter Wheels for six years. It has been both rewarding and pleasurable, meeting lots of lovely people. Taking them to various appointments, shopping or where ever they need to go. The nice thing about volunteer driving is that you can choose to do as much, or as little as you like.

For the people you take, it gives them a chance to go out and about without having to depend on family or friends, it gives them their independence.

If you enjoy driving and have spare time please give some consideration to becoming a Volunteer Driver. You are able to claim a mileage allowance.

Pete Sanders (Driver)



Childrens' Easter Egg Hunt

Good Friday

11am 29th March

The Anchor

Raffle

All children and grandchildren of the parish welcome

A free Easter Egg to all who complete the course.

A Bumper Egg for the lucky winner

Easter Quiz

With Shaun and Mary

Easter Saturday

7.30 for 8pm 30th March

The Anchor

All Welcome





Mrs Clare Luce
Executive Headteacher



Spring Term 2024

Little Otters Forest School

Little Otters have had great fun playing in the outdoor space. They found 3 bears hiding in Forest School, built a zoo and learnt new songs at welcome time. They also thoroughly enjoy their PE session on a Thursday with Mr Crysell and have been concentrating on balancing and jumping from the equipment.



Year 3/4 Sports hall athletics

Well done to the team of 18 children who represented the school at Robert Blake. They came up against some stiff competition from some other larger schools in Bridgwater but came a respectable 9th out of 14.



Year 5 Mini Police

Year 5 spent the afternoon litter picking around Comwich with the PCSOs as part of their mini police work. They are taking their roles very seriously! They are looking forward to visiting the Police HQ in Portishead at the end of March.



OPS Gymnastics success

A huge well done for our Year 3 & 4 Gymnasts who came first overall in the area competition at St Joseph's. The team performed the routine brilliantly and were a credit to the school.

Stay and Play - We welcomed parents to a Stay and Play on Monday where we shared a picture book with the parents and children and did some fun activities including storytelling.

Other updates

CCTV - We've had CCTV installed at OPS. Unfortunately, we have had to take these measures as we were finding that we were having 'visitors' onsite at the weekend. Fingers crossed this will be a deterrent.

Scooter shelter

We are pleased that the scooter shelter is now complete. Thank you to the parents of OPS who raised the funds to pay for this.

1st COMBWICH BROWNIES

I'm sure that many of you were Brownies when you were younger, and that you remember working for badges such as cook and house orderly. Well sadly the badges have been completely revamped and would now be hardly recognizable to you. To keep up with the times we now have badges like mindfulness, my rights, and zero waste. However, we do still have a painting badge but nothing like what it used to be. It includes things like investigating the differences between abstract and figurative paintings, quite difficult for 'The Owls' to get their heads round, let alone a seven year old. There was only one solution! To ask the Combwich Art Group for their help. They certainly came up trumps, and one Saturday morning in early February four staunch members of the group arrived laden with all the necessary materials for the Brownies to complete their painting badges. By the end of the morning every one of the fifteen Brownies had completed at least three masterpieces without getting covered in too much paint, although the sturdy Brownie aprons needed a thorough clean afterwards. When I first approached Jean about the challenge, the thing that concerned her the most was judging if they had passed at the end. I said that would be no problem as every Brownie would try their best so they would all pass, which was indeed the case. Huge thanks to the four ladies from Combwich Art Group without whom this wouldn't have been possible.

Since then we have had three events away from our usual meeting place which have all been very successful – a trip to the new McDonalds which involved a lot of eating and where two new Brownies made their promise and we also sadly said goodbye to our Ukrainian Brownie who has now moved away; a hugely popular trip to East Quay Trampolining centre and a joint recycling day with Wembdon Brownies, ending with a fashion show.

Future exciting activities for next term include taking part in the Big Bounce at Wellington Flip Out and sleeping with the tigers at the zoo. Of course there will be badges for all these events.

We do have some places for new Brownies (rising seven- nine year olds), please ring Liz Brown 652687 or Karen Barton 652673 for more information or register your daughter on the girlguiding website (girlguiding.org.uk) choosing Combwich Brownies as your option.



What we've been up to!

On the 18th of January Ian Williamson gave a talk on his trek in Vietnam. His photographs showed the beauty of a nature reserve, various wildlife, and houses on stilts. Ian also shared his experience of volunteering at Ba Vi Orphanage/Disability Centre and coping with high humidity levels. Ian is a regular volunteer at St Margaret's Hospice Care and raises funds for them through his talks. Thank you, Ian, for an enjoyable and informative evening.



At the end of January we held our post-Christmas Meal at Blackmoor Farm, we were made welcome by Ian and his team and a lovely meal was enjoyed by all.

In February we had a change to our scheduled programme and had an informative and extremely useful talk from a Devon and Somerset Fire Service Officer. He spoke about the importance of fire safety in the home, particularly highlighting fire safety in the kitchen, and the safe use of electrical appliances throughout the home. He also strongly recommended the installation of various types, and regular checking, of smoke alarms in households as a method of fire detection and prevention. The service hope to resume their free home fire safety checks in the near future.

Combwich and District WI

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



Dates for your diary!

Thursday 21st March – Margaret Lomax 'Meeting Bradley Walsh' – competition – favourites shoes

Thursday 18th April – Brian Wright 'Touch wood' – competition – Something wooden

Thursday 16th May – Kevin Little 'Fishy Tales' – competition – Old board game

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

Harbour View Bar

Greetings, dear villagers! It's been a busy few months down at the village bar, with a flurry of activities keeping us all on our toes. The AGM recently took place, marking a transition as some members stepped down and a fresh committee stepped up to the plate. This is a moment to extend a heartfelt thank you to Bev and Ian for their dedication and the incredible events they've organized and supported. Let's give them a round of applause for their hard work!



Now, as we look ahead, there's an air of excitement brewing with the promise of new and thrilling events on the horizon. Stay tuned, folks, because we've got some surprises in store to keep you entertained.

The atmosphere in the bar during the Six Nations rugby matches has been nothing short of electric, with enthusiastic crowds cheering on their favourite teams and indulging in delicious food. A big shoutout goes to Richard, Dee, Marie, Mike, and Maria for keeping our bellies satisfied with their culinary delights.

Over at the harbour, our local flights are soaring high in the second half of the season, aiming for a remarkable fourth-place finish—a significant improvement from last year. Let's rally behind them as they strive to end the season on a triumphant note.

In other news, don't forget that the bar can be hired out for special occasions, complete with access to the hall, skittles, and bowls. Simply book through the Village Hall website for a memorable event filled with laughter and camaraderie.

We've made some adjustments to memberships and pricing to ensure a successful year

Happy Easter from the OVH trustees.



There is still time to purchase tickets for the OVH Easter raffle.

The draw will take place at 8pm on 29th March at the Harbour View Bar, so be quick to be in with a chance to win some great prizes.

As well as the regular groups and events which form part of the calendar of activities in the hall, we also hosted a jumble sale in March which was well attended and offered a chance to bag a bargain while supporting the hall.

Look out for more events coming up this year but please chat to any trustee if you have an idea for an event you would like to see in the village hall.

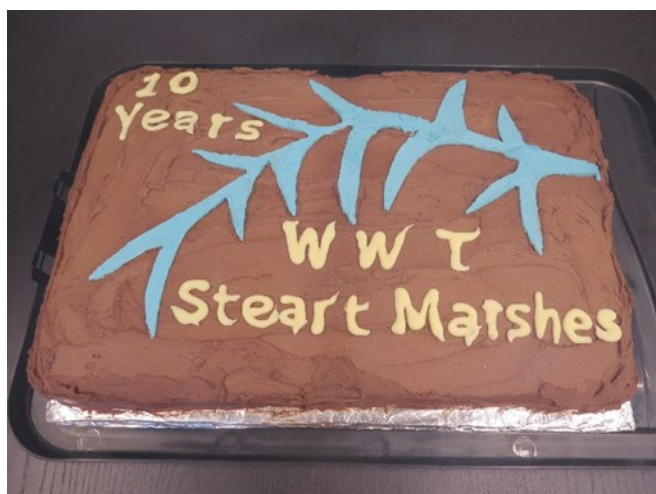


WWT Steart Marshes & Bridgwater Bay NNR



protective screens - and plenty more besides. comprehensive log of tasks over the past 10 years.

February saw the 10th anniversary of volunteering groups at WWT Steart Marshes! The first ever group task was planting the orchard next to the office on 17th February 2014. Since that day we have grown to a dedicated team of over 60 volunteers who support us with practical work, visitor engagement, and monitoring at WWT Steart Marshes and Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve (NNR). Practical management talks over the past 10 years have been many and varied, including: planting, fencing, mulching, raking, hedge-laying, building bug hotels and hibernacula (over-winter shelters for wildlife if you were wondering!), willow planting and weaving to form



This year we celebrated with a big volunteering morning across the site. Activities included: hedge work to help let light into ditches at Bridgwater Bay, cob roundhouse construction (*fun in the mud - do let us know if you would like to come and help!*), and willow weaving to make some repairs to our willow cow family.

After their hard work everyone was treated to lunch in our new office provided by Kay @LiveFreeKitchen, followed by some special Steart Marshes cake made by talented volunteer Caroline.

The Tower Hide at Bridgwater Bay will remain closed until essential repairs have been completed due to extensive rot in the four main legs. It is currently deemed unsafe, and the public footpath has had to be diverted. Natural England have secured funding for the repairs and are hoping to undertake work between 1st August and 30th September. Bridgwater Bay is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and minimising disturbance to breeding, nesting and wintering birds is vital, hence the small window of opportunity for access and works on site. Every effort is being made to get this completed in 2024.

Bridgwater Bay Wildfowlers Partner with WWT to Boost Local Mallard Population (thanks to Jeremy and Sam for images and text). In a joint effort to combat the declining mallard population, the Bridgwater Bay

Wildfowlers Association (BBWA) and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) came together on a recent Saturday morning at Steart marshes.

European mallard numbers have been dropping since the 1980s, partly due to reduced breeding success. Predation, flooding, and disturbance from humans, dogs, and livestock have all been identified as contributing factors. To address this, a Europe-wide initiative is underway to create nesting platforms to provide safe havens for ducks to raise their young.

BBWA members dedicated a day to building and refurbishing over 20 duck nest tubes, 5 of which were installed at the WWT reserve at Steart Marshes with the help of reserve warden Ronan. The location of these tubes were carefully chosen by warden and bird expert Sam and offer potential nesting birds a dry, warm, and protected environment. It is important they are situated over water to reduce the risk of mammalian predation and in close proximity to natural food sources for the ducklings once they hatch.



WWT reserve manager, Alys, expressed her delight. "This partnership demonstrates the power of collaboration in achieving positive outcomes. We're excited to monitor these tubes,

the citizen science information gleaned could play a crucial role in targeting future conservation efforts."

BBWA Chairman, Jeremy Bell, emphasised their commitment to conservation. "Our members care deeply about the environment and the wildfowl that rely on it, not just for hunting purposes, but for the species' overall well-being," he stated. "We now have duck nest tubes spread across the Somerset levels and moors, and alongside our habitat restoration initiatives and litter picks, they are a key part of our long-term conservation plans."

With sightings of mallard pairs amongst various other bird species, the outlook for the breeding season appears promising. Both BBWA and WWT are looking forward to the upcoming breeding season, the question now is will they get used in their first year, our fingers are crossed!

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 Steart Marshes and Bridgwater Bay. Drop-in anytime between **10am and 3pm on Thursdays 21st March and 19th September.**

Keep an eye out on Twitter, Facebook, and www.wwt.org.uk/steart for news and events.

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

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

Engagement and Learning Manager: Nicole Turnbull 07717 342061 nicole.turnbull@wwt.org.uk

Garden Club

When Dan and Steve thought about forming a garden club while in the garden shed they thought it would just be the two of them, with perhaps just a couple of others trying to grow the biggest pumpkin. With the help of Stephanie, Maria, Maggy, Heidi, Connie, Mike, Chris and Jude, along with support from OPRA, Harbour View Bar, the Parish Council, the Village Hall and the members, Garden Club has become something more than could ever be imagined.

Over the past year Garden Club has promoted gardening by enabling people to enjoy their gardens and most importantly have a bit of fun. It has managed to do so with its monthly meetings, social events, market and plant stalls, the competition at the end of last Summer, and the Garden Help Scheme. As well as having fun, we have explored the latest issues in gardening. We have talked about the benefits and pitfalls of using F1 Seeds, discussed issues concerning the use of peat and the affect that some peat free products have on broad leaf plants. We have also talked about 'No Dig', -which is producing amazing results- and the benefits that fungi and mycelium bring to the soil.

Garden Club has recently become affiliated with the Royal Horticultural Society and is also a Member of the Federation of Somerset Garden Clubs. Becoming a part of these larger organisations enables us to access a larger range of resources and develop links with other garden clubs in the area.

At the March meeting we heard a presentation from Penny Richards. Penny has been involved in a number of research projects working with Bristol University and other universities in the South West. She also volunteers for Somerset Wildlife Trust. Penny explained how we can encourage a wide range of animal species into our gardens. From hedgehogs to the smallest insects including hover flies and beetles. She talked about the research evidence that has demonstrated the most effective and beneficial ways. Penny encouraged questions and explained how butterflies are attracted to certain plants by chemicals which they detect through their feet. Once a butterfly locates the plant, it will lay its eggs. Once back in the bar members had a chance to chat about the issues raised.

This year's annual project is the flower beds in St. Peter's Church. The aim is plant up the flower beds with flowering plants which will provide flowers that can be used within the church. We will want to encourage pollinating insects. If you would like to help please get in touch with Garden Club for more details.

If you are a frustrated gardener and wish for a successful veg patch, want to make your outside space wildlife friendly, grow more flowers than weeds or struggle to help plants survive the Garden Club Mentoring Scheme could be just what you have been looking for. A Garden Mentor could help you discover your newfound passion. A passion that is proven to be good for both your mental and physical well-being. Members of the club have years of experience and would like to share this knowledge with those who would like to know more about the amazing hobby of gardening. We will aim to match you to a Mentor who will visit to provide both guidance and advise on a regular basis. Their aim is to help you on your journey and create the outside space you have always dreamt of. Contact Garden Club for more information and register your interest.

Garden Club will be holding a flower show on the 7th September 2024. It will be the first flower show in the parish for over 30 years. The schedule is on the Garden Club website. Entry Forms will be made available nearer the time. There is something for everybody. Get gardening, grow some flowers, grow some veg, be creative and let's have fun.

The next Garden Club will be the Pop up Spring Flower Show. Bring along something Popping Up in your garden.

Garden Club AGM is on the 7th May 2023.

Contact Garden Club at COSGardenclub@gmail.com
Garden Club Web Site: cosgardenclub.com



Hinkley Point C - Monthly Update

A round up of the latest news from Hinkley Point C



Accelerating Progress in Unit 2 Reactor Building

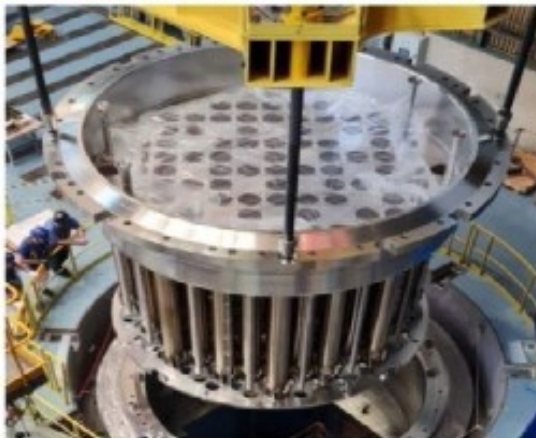
The installation of the 52-tonne equipment hatch in the Unit 2 Reactor Building has been completed six weeks faster than same operation in Unit 1. It was thanks to a more efficient method of fitting the hatch, which involved welding it to Liner Ring 2 on the ground before lifting the whole structure into position in one go. Previously this was fitted at height on the side of the building after the liner had been located.

This approach not only significantly reduced the installation time but also eliminated the need for scaffolding to carry out welding on the hatch in Unit 2. This is important as scaffolding could potentially interfere with other ongoing works.



Safe Day Safe Month initiative supports local charity

Hinkley Point C recently donated £1,700 to local charity Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance. The money will go towards critical care items such as critical care bags for when the crew arrive at an incident.



Reactor Pressure Vessel Internals

The reactor core contains a series of internal components that hold the 241 fuel assemblies, guide the control rods and regulate neutrons around the fuel.

They were delivered safely by ship to Avonmouth on the 19th February.

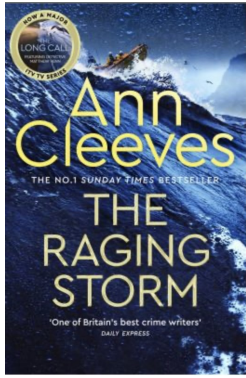
PLUGGED IN OUT NOW

<https://www.edfenergy.com/energy/nuclear-new-build-projects/hinkley-point-c/local-community>

Website: [edfenergy.com/hpc](https://www.edfenergy.com/hpc)

Email: hinkley-enquiries@edf-energy.com

Telephone: 0333 009 7070



Book Club: 11th April. 7.00p.m. The Anchor

In March the Book Club looked at children's literature. We had an opportunity to talk about the books we read as children and young people and current young people's literature.

At next months book club we will be sharing out thoughts on 'The Raging Storm' by Ann Cleeves. A murder mystery set in a remote village on the Devon coast.

Visit to Brick and Tile Museum

In this edition of Otter Tales (page 6) we continue with Florence Chant's account of her childhood in Combswich. She describes her father, John Norman as a brickyard worker who made clay roofing tiles in the Tile and Brickworks in Combswich. To further understand what John Norman and the other workers did in the brickworks, Barry and Steve paid a visit to the Brick and Tile Museum in Bridgwater in East Quay.

The museum has a collection of equipment and molds used to make bricks & roof tiles which match Florence Chant's description of her father making roof tiles. The curator's explanation of how a roof tile was made corresponded with Florence's description. The moulds and all the associated equipment, including the cutting wires and the wooden block that John Norman used to smooth the top of the tile could all be seen.



Double Roman tile mould

The museum collection also includes a range of moulds for plaques, corner pieces, gable ends and roof decorations.



The Combswich brickworks was owned by Colthurst Symons who mainly manufactured Double Roman tiles and these can be seen around the village. The museum has one of the only traditional brick kilns to survive in southern England, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Similar kilns would have been in Combswich. The kilns would be filled with up to 5,000 tiles, loaded with wood and coal and then fired. After a few days the

fires would be extinguished by sealing up the draught and left to cool. The roof tiles would be exported all around the world.

Florence Chant describes how her father would have no work during a harsh winter. The ground would be frozen and the clay could not be excavated. In Bridgwater this led to the building of the workhouse in Northgate. In Combswich John Norman was able to hunt rabbits to feed his family.



Curator explaining the finer points of brick and tile making to Steve

Brick and Tile Museum is open Tuesdays 10am to 4pm.
swheritage.org.uk/our-sites/somerset-brick-and-tile-museum



**Praise and
Worship Service**
St Peter's Church, Combwich
On the
**Second Sunday of the
Month**
@ 6.00pm
EVERYONE IS WELCOME
Coffee and Cake after.



Prayer Group
Please come and join us
every **THURSDAY**
morning at **9.00am**
to
Pray
At
**St Peter's Church
Combwich**
From Rev Jan Church
Contact no: 07733433526



COMBWICH, OTTERHAMPTON
AND
STEART NEWSLETTER

Otter Tales

The deadline for the next edition will be
Thursday **9th May**

We would welcome your stories and events
for publication.



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

Birthday Bells

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

Email 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



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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 9th May**

Mobile Library: Dates and Times.

Thursday 18th April, 16th May, 14th June

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 or visit the "All Things Combwich" Facebook page. For information about the village hall go to

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.

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

