

Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Summer 2018: Issue 28



Habitat restoration project begins

A new habitat restoration project is about to begin in the Vale. The work is funded by the National Grid and aims to improve the landscape around their high-powered electricity lines. Dorset Wildlife Trust and the Dorset

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are working together on the Magical Marshwood Vale Landscape Enhancement Initiative with 25 landowners along the pylon line between Lambert's Castle and Salway Ash.

Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe

Habitat and species conservation endeavours including hedgerow tree planting are planned to enhance a landscape impacted by imposing, industrial pylons. Of course, in the age of electricity, we mostly benefit from this infrastructure, but as conservationists we are also very grateful for these funds made available by the National Grid for the benefit of wildlife.

Hedgerow tree planting is a measure of great value to wildlife and landscape and the idea came from landowners in the Vale where hedgerow trees are an iconic feature of the landscape – an old name for the area is the ‘Vale of the Oaks’.

We consulted many farmers during the application process and we were met with much enthusiasm.

Another intervention we’ve included is a wild daffodil nursery to nurture locally collected seeds of another archetypal Marshwood Vale species.

Our target is to:

- Plant 126 three-metre oak trees in boundaries within sight of the pylons
- Lay 1,800 metres of hedgerow
- Plant 60 new orchard trees
- Re-create 7 Ha of wild flower meadows
- Restore 150m of river habitat
- Take on 7 Ha of scrub clearance on species-rich grassland
- Enhance seven ponds for wildlife
- Establish a wild daffodil nursery in the Vale

Much of the work will be ably undertaken by volunteers, and if you know of anyone who would like to join in, please contact Dorset Wildlife Trust. Dorset Environmental Records Centre will coordinate the monitoring and recording that will flow from all this hard labour.

**Nick Gray, DWT West Dorset
Conservation Officer**



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Beneath the Vale is published four times a year by the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council and posted to homes in the combined parishes of Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe. Our mailing list covers household addresses using information that is in the public domain. We use this list solely to send out copies of *Beneath the Vale* and associated information relating to the parishes. We do not share data with third parties. To unsubscribe from the list, please contact Cllr Ali Cameron, who manages the data: ali.cameron@zen.co.uk Telephone 01297 678 546.

Are police right to close the A35 for so long?

Are the police correct to fill our Vale with ‘their’ traffic?

In June, a car hit an oncoming lorry close to Quarr Lane, east of Chideock. As a result the police closed the A35. Traffic filled our Vale, threatened our animals, caused thousands of missed appointments, and kept even more from their gainful employment.

The now traditional slow clearance of the main road meant that traffic tried to escape by flowing into the Vale from the west, only to come up against eastbound traffic out of Bridport. The Vale became gridlocked, the narrow lanes remaining impassable all day. One local victim took two hours to travel two miles before giving up, turning round with difficulty and returning home to contact the hospital to cancel the appointment. Others

lost a whole day of work; a local farmer parked his tractor in a field and walked home to wait.

So why do police close the A35 for so long? It is a relatively easy job to clear the road by the prompt removal of the vehicles concerned; if injuries are involved that may well involve extra delays, but the ‘golden hour’ for treatment ensures the ambulance services do their work as quickly as possible.

Is it the policy of senior police management to fully – often tediously – investigate the causes of non-serious accidents in order to obtain one or perhaps two minor convictions at the cost of thwarting the legitimate business of thousands of ordinary people? Surely policy needs rebalancing.

Ali Cameron

Marshwood Stores closes after owner's fall and stay in hospital

Marshwood Stores has closed. Family and friends heard of John Walther's accident quickly but the shop remained open and milk, papers and supplies continued to be sold by his able assistant Ryan Whittaker. Clearly the future of Marshwood Stores was under consideration so it was no great surprise to see a notice from John's family appearing in the shop announcing closure of Marshwood Stores within the week.

But the formal announcement on the wider implications came in an email from our district councillor, Jacqui Sewell: 'I have just returned from a meeting in Marshwood with regard to the closure of the shop and Post Office; unfortunately Mr John Walther who is 82 suffered a fall and is now unable to continue.'

Coincidentally, ideas for the shop's future had already been set out by the Neighbourhood Plan team. Negotiation with all the parties concerned are underway.

John's hip

As concerned visitors may have noticed, John has suffered reduced mobility for a fair while, but in the Best-of-British tradition of carrying on, he had carried on behind the counter, often using a stick to increase his stability.

Then in his own words: 'I was taking the mail out to the garage to give to the boys

when I remembered something and turned to get it. I have had dizzy turns for a while now and I did not have my walking stick. The garage "boys" soon realised I had collapsed and were not sure quite what to do next, but Bash suddenly remembered an old chair with castors so he dug it out and sat me in it. It hurt a lot – it really did – so they picked me and the chair up and carried me back to the kitchen to recover.'

He concedes that he was still in a lot of pain but the family does have expertise to hand in the person of Gavin Fitzpatrick, who trains paramedics. Gavin is his daughter, Kate Bartlett-Hall's partner so is the nearest person John has to a son-in-law. Rapidly apprised of the accident, he assessed John as soon as possible and informed him that he was only going to Dorchester since it was almost certain that he had broken his hip.

Gavin did the rest and John was admitted to Dorchester hospital, where he was operated on and later that weekend a replacement hip was fitted. Not really comfortable in busy Dorchester Hospital, a week later he had made sufficient progress to let him move to Bridport Hospital, which John much preferred, enjoying both the food and a more relaxed atmosphere.

Soon he regained enough good humour to discuss raising a flag from the post that carried the shop's notice board to indicate his return to Marshwood. He returned to his house, now fitted with a powered chair and strategically-placed grab rails, on 6 June.



John Walther of Marshwood Stores after his return from hospital.

The Shop

As many know, our district councillor Jacqui Sewell lived in Marshalsea and recalls well the background to the shop: 'In 1975 when I moved into Marshwood, John was running the garage and shop, and he has worked tirelessly there ever since, even in the bad weather Marshwood Stores would always be open. John has served this community for many, many years, delivering newspapers, milk, gas, and groceries, including the prescription collection service.'

John first came to Marshwood over 40 years ago, buying into an existing garage business and acquiring the associated cottages. Consumables for sale were expanded and with the newspaper and milk round these three functions became the three legs of a stable tripartite business. Six days a week, John took in the morning's papers and crates of milk from Hangers Dairy and, aided by a string of local characters, drove round

the Vale and parts of East Devon. On the seventh day he let his readers and drinkers come to him for their supplies.

How did the garage become a shop?

For a number of years, he continued to sell fuel as well as maintaining the Vale's road vehicles. However in the relaxed economies of the time it became ever harder to find the ready cash needed to pay the fuel companies who all demanded cash on delivery. Finally like so many other small garages they decided to give up fuel sales, only to discover that these payments had masked a thriving business mending cars. John decided on a retail future for himself, handing the garage into the capable hands of Sebastian, universally known as Bash. This turned out to be exactly the right decision.

In fact the shop started as a result of combining the Marshwood post office, long-based at the Old Bakery but taken on



by John, and the confectionery and other consumable services associated with John's garage. He had already built a capacious garage capable of accommodating six of his cars and it was a simple job to turn it into a shop with secured space for the post office, so it was logical to expand from what was to become the garage office into the much larger space.

Plans for a new shop

Jacqui Sewell sums up the present position as negotiations commence:

'Now the shop has closed, action needs to begin to find out whether there is enough support to look seriously at getting a Community Shop up and running.

'As part of ongoing work of the Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan, and with the CLT, we are looking to identify potential sites and funding which may result in a community project that could establish a Community Shop and post office for Marshwood.

'There are already two successful Community Shops in Broadwindsor and Thorncombe and I'm sure Marshwood will be able to create and run a successful Community Shop as well.'

Additionally, one highly successful West Dorset shop owner when told of the closure of Marshwood Stores, promptly contacted *BTV* to indicate their interest in expanding towards Marshwood. So, somewhat surprisingly in this day and age, there does seem to be a commercial interest in reviving Marshwood's very own store.

Now the shop has closed here are some alternative local suppliers:

Bottled Milk: Felicity's at Morecombelake.

Milk round: Les Broom 07896 362359

Newspaper delivery, including Sundays: Jason Webb 07734 726056

Prescriptions: Collection is being continued via Marshwood Garage.

Just as *Beneath the Vale* went to press, news broke of a welcome development concerning the 'Dungeon' site in Marshwood. A plan is being considered to create a lightweight, possibly timber-framed community shop along with a medium-sized village meeting room, and possibly a café.

Neighbourhood Plan chair Charles Somers cautions against excessive expectations: 'This is the first step in the path towards a new centre for Marshwood. It could be a complex journey to bring together several ideas and organisations, but the Studley family's decision to offer the site to the community in this way is great news.'

Parish council meeting and Parish Meeting 17 May

This was a poorly attended council meeting with only seven councillors out of 12 present. Which only goes to illustrate just how rural a community Upper Marshwood Vale really is when agricultural duties call as silaging was in full swing.

Parish Meeting

This was a double meeting; before the council meeting, the Parish Meeting was held at which the Chairman's report was read. The good news was the success of superfast broadband. There was one outstanding complaint to report: the state of our roads through the Vale. Cllr John Brown cited the 'appalling' road repairs sprung on Bettiscombe recently without warning or consultation. It would seem to all who drove to the village hall that the 'remedial work' has made worse the experience of driving.

Unitary Dorset Council

The nub of the meeting was Cllr Daryl Turner's presentation on Unitary Dorset, the incoming new council. With 82 new councillors, each representing about 3,600 voters, this has turned out to be highly complex with severe delays in the new 'workstreams'. The new body will sit for two five-year councils, as will town and parish councils, but for a much enlarged Marshwood Vale, just two councillors will become our representatives.

As the council meeting started earlier than

planned, your representatives re-elected the same chairman and vice-chairman, then moved on to allow the public to have their say. Much comment was made on the school bus service with severe delays caused by over-large buses used by the contractors to get through narrow lanes. Cllr Turner pointed out that this was a matter for the bus company to get right. There was criticism for an insensitive official letter sent to parents at one local school.

Plans for the Old Reading Room

Plans for the Old Reading Room in Stoke Abbott were heard by the full planning committee in Dorchester and approved. Cllr Bob Wyatt was mandated to address the committee in order to lay to rest the planning officer's misunderstanding as to the motives of the owner. Cllr Wyatt made clear that the change of use requested is to restore the balance of owners and those offering holiday lets, an attitude shared by the whole Stoke Abbott community and the council.

Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council dates

Parish council meetings for 2018 are as follows: 19 July, 20 September, 15 November, 13 December. Meetings start at 7.30pm in Bettiscombe Village Hall. All welcome to attend.

Addressing the problem - or not!

Beneath the Vale has always sought a friendly approach, addressing readers by name. As communities, Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Bettiscombe and Pilsdon have all proven good neighbours and the magazine has usually been able to get a reasonably accurate list of your names as well as your addresses. But as people have moved away or left the area and new people join our villages it has often been hard work to make the changes and keep the list up to date in order to post this publication out to you.

As recently as the last issue we asked readers who had been addressed as 'The Occupier' to get in touch and tell us who you are so to help us to maintain our gesture of friendliness. Now however we are subject to a steamroller of legislation that would make our nice approach a crime punishable by a fine of 4% of our turnover.

So rather than fighting to remain nice and friendly, your editorial team has decided to bow to the inevitable and is dropping your name from the name and address.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are a good thing if they do what they are meant to do: protect the vast amount of data so avidly harvested from social media and other dubious sources from exploitation by huge companies and those paid by them.

But we feel it is a shame that in addressing problems caused by the big guys, our little piece of neighbourliness has to suffer. So apologies from the *BTV* team for being less friendly; it is not our choice.

You are welcome to read our revised and updated privacy notice on the website: www.uppermarshwoodvale.org



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Parish council meeting 15 March

Thursday evening of 15 March was still wet after a day of rain as most of your councillors gathered together in the warmth of Bettiscombe Village Hall for what seemed like a long meeting judging by the 19 items on the agenda.

As usual, proceedings were started by Chairman Matthew Bowditch welcoming a member of the public and just one of our senior councillors. County Cllr Daryl Turner gave news of higher council actions leading off with the new unitary authority to be called Dorset Council. Comprising of 82 councillors, he listed the 'workstreams' their efforts would cover.

Good news on finance

Then came finance. Since John Vanderwolfe our Clerk had previously warned of possible problems with the timing of expected payments, it was a relief to hear that payments had been received and more would be expected. There were some cautionary words for the work of our lengthsman which is running at a higher level than expected due to the extended inclement weather.

A proposal from the chair to Cllr Bob Wyatt for them both to meet with Steve Lee on a regular basis was warmly welcomed as was an invitation to the lengthsman to come to the Parish Meeting subject to his availability to better appreciate the effect of overcommitment.

Four listed building applications of a minor nature were all supported by councillors after a brief hiatus caused by the computer

used by the clerk to show applications. A late application achieved approval for Cowdea Farm, which will undergo a complete rebuild albeit in a traditional form.

Planning application refused

Four previous applications had received approval from WDDC councillors but only one at the Old Bakery in Marshwood was turned down.

The council heard that *Beneath the Vale* continues to thrive with improving finances, while for the Neighbourhood Plan a helpful offer of co-operation with Tiverton's trained map officer was made via the clerk. Other NP progress is listed elsewhere as are the comments by Sir Oliver Letwin on the Chideock bypass so demanded by local activists contrary to the wishes of both other local authorities and it seems many Chideock residents not directly benefiting from such a change.

Marshwood Speedwatch

Our final important item was on Marshwood's Speedwatch. This developed into a general discussion on parking at the school where most councillors accepted that little could be done to regularise parking by parents desperate to drop off their youngsters safely. Suggestions for extra signage have been produced and further work on a possible footpath and parking scheme will take place.



What makes the Upper Marshwood Vale so special?

The Marshwood Vale is famed for Lamberts Castle and Pilsdon Pen but the whole Vale is real history. In a new feature we will set out some of the history, great and small.

We start with the magnificent view from the parking area at Pilsdon Pen (top), Stoke Abbott's 12th-century font and the Norman remnants of Marshwood Castle (below).



Recipe: Pimms jelly

Pimms Jelly – serves 6.

A delightful summer jelly recipe provided by BTV contributor Joy McClellan

1 tsp sunflower oil

4 sheets leaf gelatine

400ml lemonade

4 tbs Pimms

Juice of ½ lime

400g strawberries, hulled and sliced

5cm cucumber thinly sliced

10 small mint leaves

Method:

Lightly oil a jelly mould.

Soak gelatine in cold water until soft.

Gently heat lemonade.

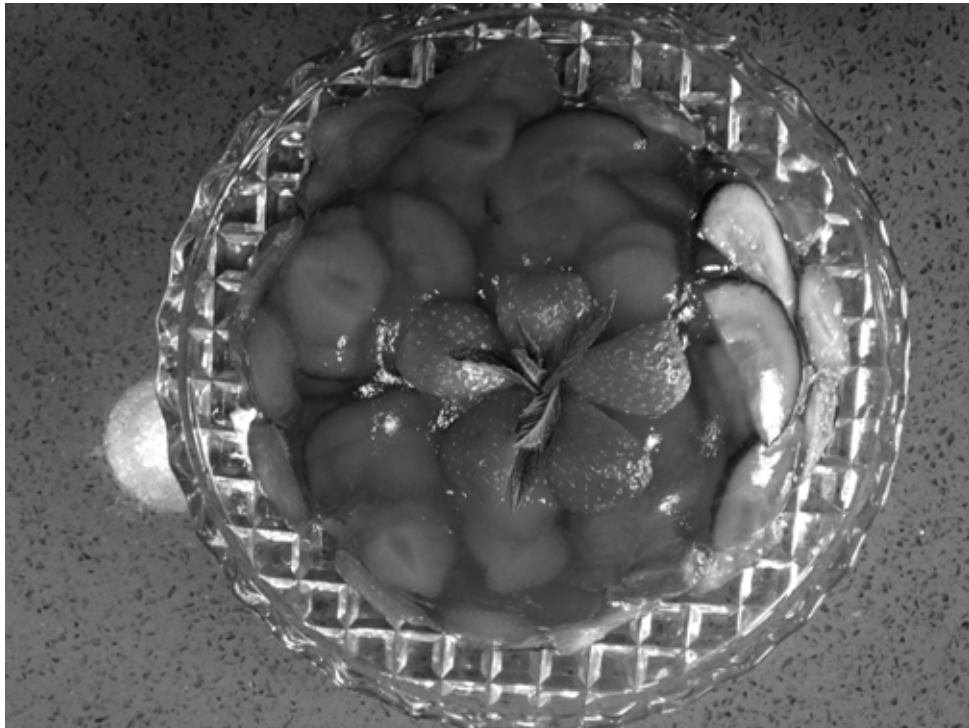
Remove from heat and add Pimms and lime.

Lift gelatine from water and add to lemonade.

Reserve some fruit for decoration and add rest to mould.

Pour the liquid over the fruit and set in fridge for about 4 hours.

Remove from mould and put decorations on top.



Broadband project completed

At last we can announce the completion of all of Marshwood Vale Superfast Broadband investments. BT Openreach has activated the last pieces of the Fibre-To-The-Premises (FTTP) network for Marshwood and so properties at Bramblehay and at Birdsmoorgate can now be connected to a very fast service. In addition a new FTTC cabinet installed at the centre of Whitchurch has now been activated and so many of the premises nearby can obtain much better broadband speeds, mostly in Whitchurch but also a few in the UMV parish.

In total 345 premises in the UMV parishes have benefited from the possibility of accessing really high-speed broadband via FTTP, typically 75 Mbps. At mid-June only 110 of these premises had been connected (32% take-up) with those connected to the Broadwindsor exchange (Bettiscombe, Pilsdon, Mutton Street down to Shave Cross plus some to the west of Stoke Abbott) at about 40% take-up and those connected to the Hawkchurch exchange (mostly Marshwood but also Fishpond) at 26% take-up. Presently the overall take-up for all of Dorset is approaching 50% so we still have a way to go here, especially in Marshwood, although we did start rather late; our goal is 'at least 50%' take-up.

So, for those of you not yet connected to these much higher broadband speeds, please do check out the much better service available (see <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/business-consumers-licences/>

[superfast-dorset/what-is-fibre-broadband/fibre-to-the-premises-ftp.aspx](https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/business-consumers-licences/superfast-dorset/what-is-fibre-broadband/fibre-to-the-premises-ftp.aspx)) and you will see that it doesn't cost much more than your presently very poor broadband speeds.

A lot of effort went into obtaining the extra £1 million from Government which has made possible much better broadband speeds here so please, everyone who hasn't taken the service yet, take a look at how good it is and 'get connected'!

Also, the more people who connect the more money BT will be obliged to pay back under their contract and those additional 'claw-back' funds can be used to help provide better broadband solutions for the small number of premises (e.g. those on the outer edge of the Whitchurch FTTC area) yet to benefit.

Charles Somers

As BTV went to press, Editor Sara Hudston was investigating ways to bring FTTP to small businesses and farms near Whitchurch on the Chideock exchange. She has spoken to BT Openreach about applying for grant funding and is contacting those eligible.

'Really good broadband upload speeds is a must for businesses,' she said.

'I hope we can connect small enterprises along Prime Lane and Watery Lane so that they have the same advantages as those in the rest of the UMV parishes.'

Neighbourhood Plan Site Options Consultation meetings

The NP steering committee has conducted visits to sites put forward for possible future development and is now ready to present the results of those together with drafts of a Housing Needs Review document and a Site Options Assessment report.

Your input at these consultations is really important to us as it will shape the proposals that we will take forward for the draft plan.

We are holding two public meetings and will be presenting a questionnaire for you to complete to gain your views on the potential use for the sites offered.

This will allow us then to draw up a detailed draft Neighbourhood Plan which will be presented for your further comments at the next public meetings in the autumn.

Saturday 21 July at Bettiscombe Village Hall 2-5pm

Sunday 22 July at Stoke Abbott Village Hall 2-5 pm

We look forward to seeing as many as possible at these important meetings

Marshwood Community Land Trust: Officers

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Community Land Trust website: www.marshwoodclt.org.uk

Facebook Page: Marshwood CLT

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‘Have local connection required to qualify for CLT housing’

These houses are for those in our community. Please register, even if Dorset Home Choice would normally regard you as adequately housed.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee: Members

Chairman	Charles Somers somers984@btinternet.com	01297 678178
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Members	Jacqui Sewell, WDDC councillor Ali Cameron, UMV parish councillor Ali Edwards, UMV parish councillor Rob England, Marshwood CLT chairman David French, Stoke Abbott resident John Piper, Marshwood resident Sara Hudston, Editor, <i>Beneath the Vale</i>	

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Shave Cross Mini Marathon

5pm, 4 Aug 2018 at Kittys
Farm, DT6 6HW

Also:

Coffee morning, Sunday 29 July,
Broad Orchard House, 11am

Car Treasure hunt and barbeque
Friday 3 Aug at Kittys Farm, 6pm

Dog Show, Sunday 5 Aug at
Kittys Farm from 3pm

To the Occupiers - keep us up to date at *Beneath The Vale*

Everyone who lives in the parishes of
Marshwood, Bettiscombe, Pilsdon and
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There are always those who move away,
move in, and sadly, people who die. We
cannot keep our address lists fully up to
date **without your help**.

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