



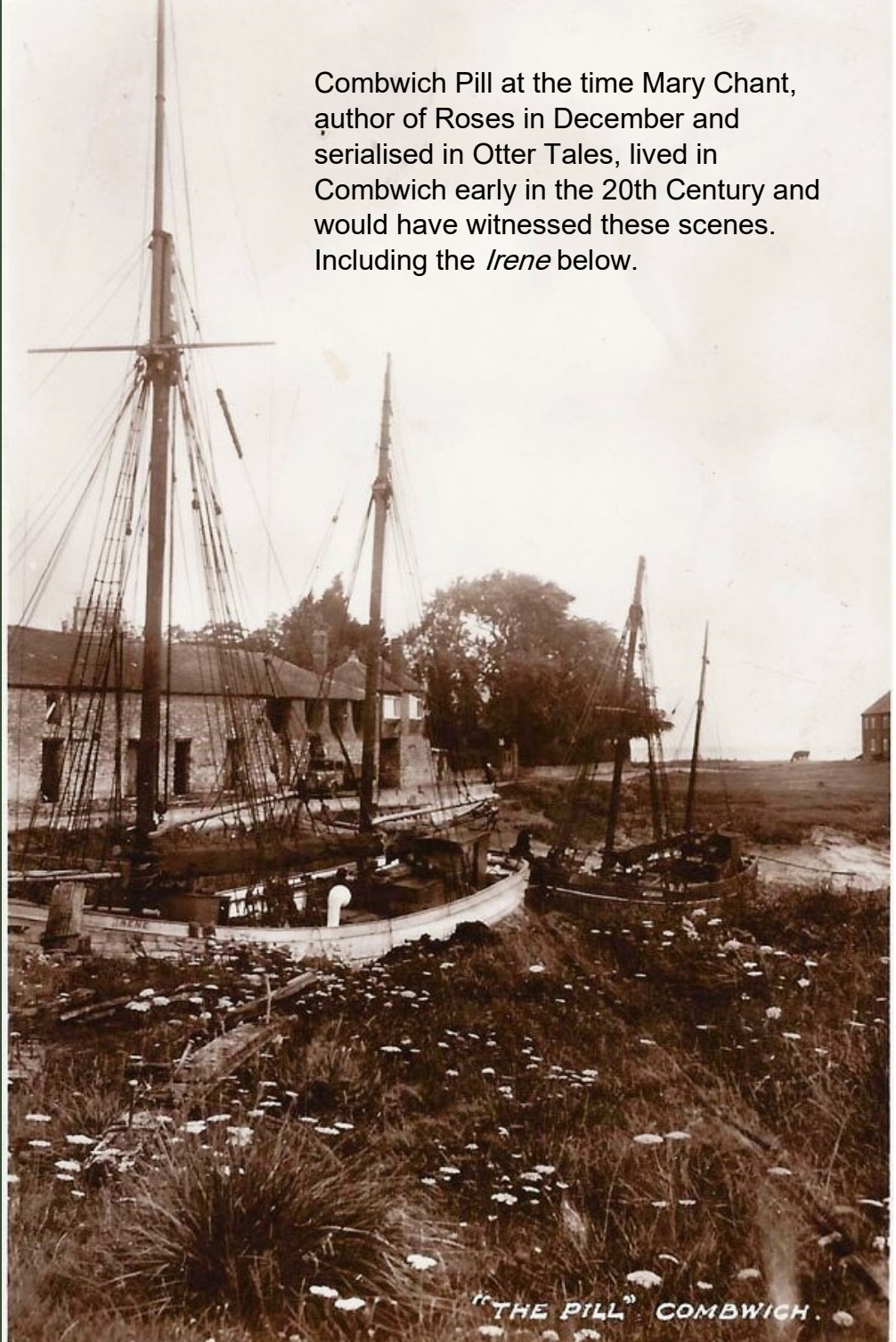
COMBWICH, OTTERHAMPTON AND STEART NEWSLETTER

Otter Tales

Inside this issue

- Page 2**
Parish Council
- Page 3**
OPRA
- Page 4**
Roses in December
- Page 5**
Roses in December
- Page 6**
Otterhampton Primary School
- Page 7**
Harbour View Bar
Saturday Afternoon Fever
Community Shop
- Page 8**
Combwich & District WI
- Page 9**
Pesticides
- Page 10**
Bill Johnson - Profile
- Page 11**
Bill Johnson - Profile
- Page 12**
Garden Club
- Page 13**
Repair Café & Sunday
Services
- Page 14**
WWT Steart Marshes
- Page 15**
Combwich Market
Otter Wheels
Church Notices
- Page 16**
Mobile Library &
General Information

Combwich Pill at the time Mary Chant, author of *Roses in December* and serialised in *Otter Tales*, lived in Combwich early in the 20th Century and would have witnessed these scenes. Including the *Irene* below.



"THE PILL" COMBWICH.

Otterhampton Parish Council

Otterhampton Offcuts

Snippets from your parish council December 2024 to January 2025 meetings

20 mph Speed limit

Concerns have been raised constantly about the speed of vehicles within Combwich. The Parish Council will make enquiries with Somerset Highways to see if we are eligible to be considered for a 20mph scheme.

Precept 2025/26

We are very mindful of the current financial situation and the Parish Council has once again decided to keep the Parish Precept the same as last year.

Flooding Issues

Once again, this winter, flooding is an issue for some of our residents in both Combwich and Steart. Following flooding last year, the Parish Council purchased a pump which was stored in our garage off Brookside Road. In the early hours of 24th November, with the water levels rising in the gardens in Brookside Road from run-off from the field, we tried to get the pump from the garage only to find the door wouldn't open, after trying various keys to no avail we had to break in only to find to our horror that the pump wasn't there! Fortunately, Robin Prowse and Simon Darch came to the rescue with some pumps, we can't thank them enough. In the light of day we realised other items were missing from the garage including grit bags, a wheelbarrow and shovels. After contacting Homes in Sedgemoor, we discovered they had changed the locks and cleared the garage as they didn't have any record of the Parish Council renting it. Homes in Sedgemoor have agreed to replace the contents of the garage. In the meantime, we have purchased another pump, and we will be getting a further pump for Combwich and one for Steart. The contacts for these pumps will be in the Emergency Plan.

There is also an issue with flooding at Crossways, as water is coming off the highway and fields onto the drive. The Parish Council is hoping to use CCTV to inspect the drains and culvert and will work closely with Somerset Highways and landowners to find a solution to this growing problem.

The brook running alongside Brookside Road has not been cleared for a few years but we have received notification from the Environment Agency that their Field Team will make all attempts to carry out the vegetation management to the Combwich Brook between Withycombe Hill and the Pill before the end of January 2025.

Welcome Pack

If you are new to the village and would like a welcome pack with useful contact numbers, please contact the Clerk.

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 13th February, 13th March and 10th 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 Post Office, opposite the Anchor Inn by the play area and on the wall of Ferricies Farm, Steart) or the Combwich.org.uk website

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

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
Steve Parker	01278 653045
Dave Dodge	david.dodge@gmx.co.uk

Gina Mear (Clerk)	01278 652499
	otterhamptonpcclerk@gmail.com

County Ward Members

Mike Caswell	01278 652043
Brian Bolt	079708 55990



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 on 7th December turned out to be a great success once again, with 56 attendees enjoying a three-course meal with wine. The feedback is very positive with lots of nice comments expressed.

This free event depends on lots of volunteers, including the OPRA committee, coming together to make this event possible.

A big thank you to Ray Bollen and Chris Stockham for their exceptional work in the kitchen, and to Aly Prowse for cooking the turkey, pigs in blanket, all the committee members for the organisation, cooking of vegetables and serving and clearing away, to Bethan and Will Mockridge for helping during the evening and last, but not least, thanks to Rob and the Village Shop for ordering the wine and other items for us.

Mike Gardener was master of ceremonies as usual and organised the quiz which went down well. Thanks to the technology available in the village hall, those present were treated of an on screen display of past OPRA events. The evening ended with a sing song.

The Christmas trees in Combwich and Steart were excellent as always and thanks to Mike, Mel, Barry, Tom, Simon and Robin for all their hard work in putting up the trees and lights. They made an excellent show despite the high winds which scattered the baubles all over the place. Thanks also for the kind folk in Combwich who collected and put them back on the tree or adjacent to it. A particular thank you to Molly Doyle for switching on the lights

The 100 Club Xmas winners were, 1st Joan Langlois £128,
2nd Linder Weaver £77,
3rd Alison Williams £50.



Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association operates a parish emailing service providing information about local events and other information about **the local area.**

If you wish to be included, email
barry.leathwood@btinternet.com

The 100 Club draw usually takes place every month at the Coffee Morning in Otterhampton Village Hall. The winning numbers are displayed in the Post Office and the parish website www.combwich.org.uk

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

THE BROOK, THE PILL AND THE RIVER

In Spring, following periods of melting snow and heavy rain, the brook often became full of turbulent fast-flowing currents. There was one dreadful night when, in the darkness on leaving the bright lamplight of the "Baker's Arms" Inn, a completely sober man must have missed his direction and fallen into the raging brook. He was not very strong, his cries for help which he must have uttered being drowned by the noise of the howling gale raging at the time. The next morning his poor body was found held by the sluice-gates near the entrance to the brickyard and the whole village mourned his loss.

On a happier note, it was always a great joy when in Spring the brook was invaded by millions of young, wriggling eels known as elvers. The amazing thing is that these elvers had crossed the great Atlantic Ocean from the Sargasso Sea where they had been spawned. They had entered the Bristol Channel, carried by the tide into the estuary of the River Parrett. On reaching the secondary estuary known as the Pill they had swarmed up the brook later to spread, often travelling overland, to lakes and ponds where they would grow to maturity. Later they returned to the sea.

We children always welcomed the arrival of the small, squiggling elvers so many in number that the brook water was black with them. We liked to get hold of jam-jars and having attached string to provide hand-hold, attempt to catch some of the elvers. Once my brother Wilfred over-reached and plunged head first into the brook. With my help he soon scrambled out and with Wilfred drenched to the skin, and both of us whimpering and sniffing miserably, we set off for home.

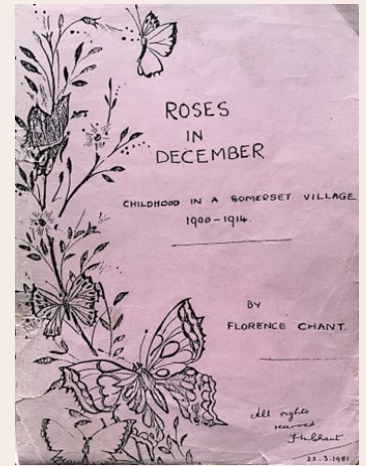
In Summer we children sat on the banks of the brook and cooled our feet in the fresh running water. Quietly we sat and watched the flat-fish, as brown as the mud itself, moving stealthily at the bottom of the stream where they lived their lives. Some of the elvers had remained behind in the brook to develop into quite big eels. My elder brothers enjoyed the sport of trying to catch eels and flatfish by various means. When the use of rod and line proved unproductive the boys resorted to stabbing the poor fish with large forks. Our pity for the victims did not prevent our enjoying a welcome addition to our diet.



We children were very interested in the plants growing in, and on the banks of, the brook. Under the clear water soft green ribbons of water-weed pulsed to the movements of the currents. There were various reeds and rushes and yellow irises to be admired and I was particularly interested in the figwort plant which had reddish-purple flowers and stems with flat sides. Sometimes we saw a water-rat making its way from a hole in one bank to that on the other side of the brook. Mayflies and dragonflies hovered in the vicinity on a Summer evening.

The brook became very important indeed to the economy of the district when it passed into the Pill, a mere trickle of water at low tide but at high tide quite an imposing estuary. Into this stretch of water came wooden sailing-ships trading between the district surrounding Comwich and ports in South-west England, South Wales and coastal towns in Ireland.

At the turn of the century there were two firms involved in the trade centred on the Comwich Pill; they were Messrs. Colthurst, Symons and Company for whom my father worked, and Comwich and District Farmers' Association, Ltd. The former firm was engaged in the manufacture and exporting of building bricks, tiles, paving-squares and drainage pipes while the latter imported coal



which was discharged at Combwich. The ships I can remember as entering the Pill from time to time were, the "Florrie", the "New Design" which was sunk by enemy action during the First World War, the "Sarah Jane", the "Irene" and the "Emily". The last-named, commanded by Captain Aldridge, survived to trade at Combwich longer than any of the others but sadly was lost in a storm off Steep Holm in 1934.

We spent many hours watching the loading and unloading of coal-ships which involved the labour of five men, three of these being members of the crew and the other two being employed to carry the baskets of coal to the stores across the road. One man in the hold filled the baskets, another winched them up to the deck while the third controlled the guiding of the baskets to the backs of the carriers. There was the monotonous repetition of the orders "Lower! Go on!" as the crewman unhitched the chains from the handles of the baskets and let the carriers know that they could walk away with the heavy load, weighing more than one hundred-weight. These processes proceeded with unchanging rhythm, hour after hour, broken only by short intervals for meals.



The Ketch 'Irene' Beached entering Combwich Pill

Later came the process of loading the ships with whatever cargoes were available at the time. When loading was completed the ships were guided out of the Pill and into the river by the same hobbler who had earlier drawn them into the little creek. This had to be done at high tide and consequently it was necessary to carry out unloading and re-loading at all possible speed. Most of the ships engaged in this coastal trade were ketches, each of which had two masts, the high foremast and a lower mizzen-mast. Each ship carried a Captain and three men as crew. Living conditions were extremely rough. The sailors risked their lives on every voyage since they sailed at the mercy of all kinds of weather. Their skills had been handed down from generation to generation of seamen.

Combwich had become such an important centre of trade partly because of the difficulties of navigating between sand and mud-banks in higher reaches of the river and partly because exporters found the small port convenient for sending out cargoes of goods produced in the immediate vicinity. These included flour, wheat, hides and malting-barley.

Sometimes we children standing on the banks of the river would spot the fin of a salmon proceeding upstream on the tide towards Bridgwater. My elder brothers would then dash off through the brickyard fields and proceed along the bank of the river tracking the course of the salmon. If the boys were lucky the fish was left stranded on a mud-bank and the prize would be theirs.

On the left bank of the river between Combwich and the sea was a strange building known as the "Powder House". It seemed in our time to serve no useful purpose whatever. Inside the entrance the full width was taken up by a ramp of logs leading up to an upper platform. When ships carried armaments they were not allowed to take gunpowder into the river ports but must dump it in a convenient spot en route and pick it up on setting out again for the sea. The "Powder House" was probably the building in which ships bound for Bridgwater temporarily stored their gunpowder in accordance with regulations.

The Brook, The Pill and The River certainly all played their parts in many aspects of the life of the villagers of Combwich and district, particularly in providing a livelihood directly and indirectly for the majority of the people forming our little community.



Otterhampton Primary School - December highlights

Claire Luce - Executive Headteacher

At the end of term we held our Christmas singalong performance. The whole school performed a Christmas Nativity singalong on two occasions to the parents/guardians of the School and again to the Community on the last day of term for a Coffee morning at the school. The community event was such a great way to end the term and the children gave out homemade cards as gifts.



The Friends of Otterhampton School organised a Christmas Disco with hot dogs and dancing on the last week of term. Father Christmas also made a surprise visit to OPS! The Friends also organised lots of other events including a Christmas Raffle which had some brilliant prizes, Elfridges- where children wrapped a present for a family member and created tea towels with art from the children. These all raised an amazing £1500 for the school!

We also raised £55 for Save the Children for Christmas Jumper Day and had a delicious Christmas lunch served up by our new provider, IFG Innovate.



Christmas Movie night was a hit and the children wore their Pyjamas or onesies and watched a film with a hot chocolate and popcorn.

River Class and Bay Class took a visit to the Brewhouse in Taunton to see a performance of Pinocchio. They thoroughly enjoyed this.



We said goodbye to Mr Sluman who starts his exciting new opportunity in January. Mr Sluman will continue to work in the Trust and will be setting up a new provision in Cannington called Apex Meadows. The Year 6 children read a poem and gave him a card and good send off.

Everyone has had a good rest and now we are ready to face the Spring term. Fingers crossed for some warmer weather ahead!

Harbour View Bar News

The Harbour View Bar committee would like to wish you all a happy New Year and would like to thank our members and visitors for their support over the previous year. We always welcome new members and their families to the Bar.



We have been able to host a variety of events this past year, which included a race night, a family skittles evening, Oktoberfest, our annual paella day and a Christmas disco. The bar is also a great place to watch some sporting events which we have opened for, particularly the rugby.

If you have any ideas of events that you would like to see take place, then please feel free to mention this when visiting the Bar or you can email us at

harbour.view.bar@gmail.com

Forthcoming quizzes and events will be publicised in due course. Details will be visible in the Harbour View Bar windows and noticeboard and on the Facebook page, All Things Comwich.

Urgent shout for new committee members.

We have had 4 committee members leave last year and really need to find some volunteers to replace them.

If you are interested in supporting this community group, please feel free to contact us at harbour.view.bar@gmail.com

Stockland Shed Sounds
with guest DJ
Dr Phil

presenting
Saturday Afternoon Fever
Saturday 22nd February
2-5pm
at
Stockland Club

FREE all-ages disco
Dance your socks off!
60s, 70's, 80's hits and more
Requests played
Bar open + refreshments

In aid of: **Having a good time!**

Comwich Community Shop Project Steering Group Update January 2025



The steering group continues to have monthly meetings. We are now doing lots of research with help from the Plunkett foundation and gathering the necessary information to go forward.

We are planning to hold a drop in session in the next few months at the village market to inform the public of our progress.

What we've been up to!

Our speaker in November was Nigel Phillips who gave a fascinating and informative talk about wildlife on the Somerset Coastline. His photographs of the wildlife were beautiful and a big thank you goes to Nigel.

At the beginning of December, we visited The Cottage Inn at Keenthorne, where our members had a very enjoyable Christmas meal in a festive environment. Our thanks to the Chef and all the staff.



It was time to celebrate at our December meeting, with a 'Santa Drive' game and quiz. Food and mulled wine were provided by our members and a pleasant evening was enjoyed by all.

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



Combwich and District WI

Dates for your diaries

Thursday 16th Jan – Claire Bounds 'Fraud' – Competition – Favourite holiday snap

Thursday 20th Feb – R S P C A / Quiz – Competition – Poem, least favourite subject at school

Thursday 20th March – John Hardy 'Dementia Alliance' – Competition – Foreign object

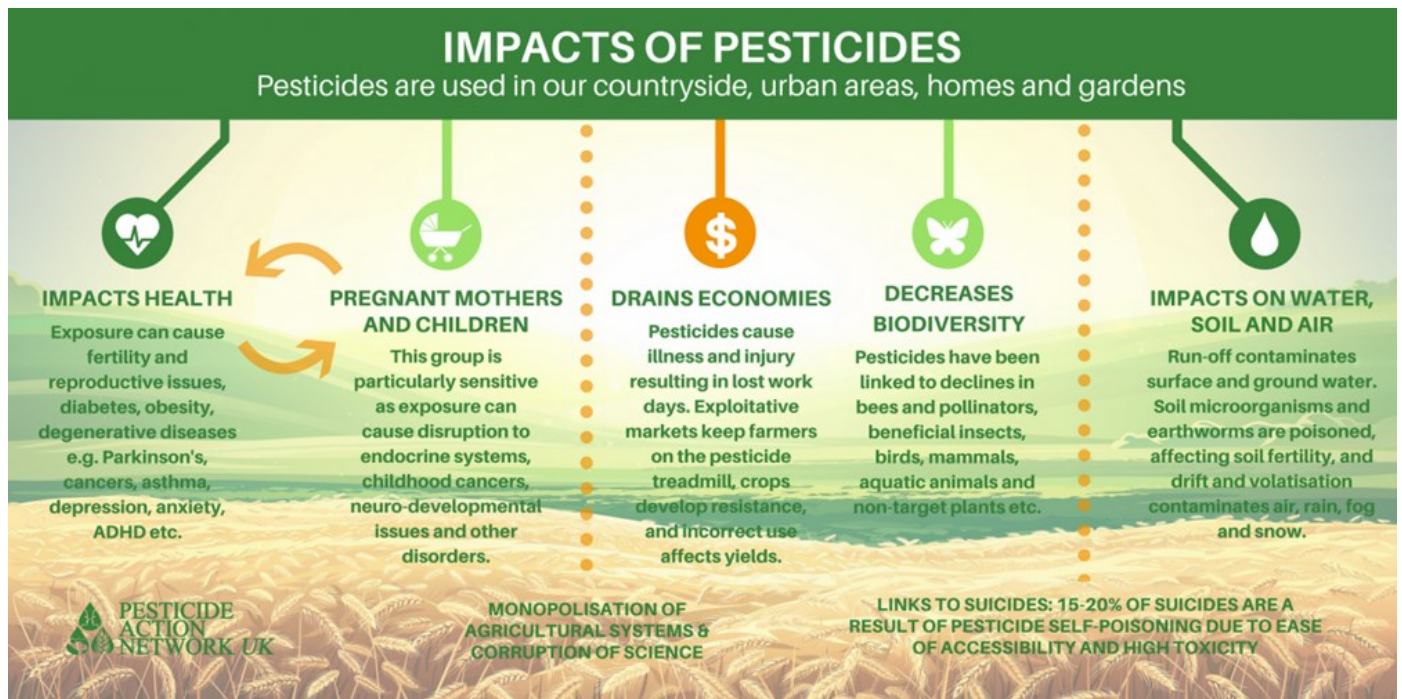
Why not come along to one of our evenings and see what happens.

We welcome visitors and 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.

For more information contact Connie on 01278 653307

Pesticides

Are you interested in your health? Or your family's? Or the environment around you? Your Parish Council is considering alternatives to the herbicide glyphosate, which the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) lists as a probable cause of cancer in humans



Foamstream is proven to be as effective as glyphosate. Plants have developed resistance to glyphosate, requiring stronger and more frequent applications, but are unable to develop resistance to *Foamstream* which uses hot water insulated in foam maintaining the temperature to kill or effectively damage the root system of weeds. The foam is biodegradable, made from starch from crops such as maize, wheat, potatoes, rape seed oil, all safe around people, animals, water courses and sensitive environments.

Foamstream is an expensive piece of equipment. At our most recent meeting all Councillors reconfirmed a preference to reduce glyphosate use, however concern was raised over the cost (and rightly so), when glyphosate use on behalf of the Parish Council is confined to the children's play area in Combwich. Child safety and development is, and remains, paramount in our decisions as Parish Councillors, though it can be difficult to put a price on it. A new *Foamstream* system costs around £21,000 and requires a dedicated trailer. I recently identified a used system for sale at £8000, though the Parish Council potentially has access to fund the purchase of a new system. Can we justify the cost?

Based in Steart, my family and I are unlikely to benefit from this initiative; however I feel strongly that known carcinogenic treatments should not be used in public spaces and hope that we can set an example for other organisations. I should declare that I am a beekeeper, though my bees are unlikely to forage as far afield as Combwich, I am perhaps acutely aware of the environmental damage caused by glyphosate, potentially harming people, pets, insects and the birds and small mammals that feed on them.

There are a few other factors that need addressing, such as housing of the equipment (I do have a preliminary agreement), maintenance, booking system and arrangements for a rental process to help increase use and return on investment, etc. I would personally welcome any comments and suggestions you may have, let me know what you think.

David Dodge. david.dodge@gmx.co.uk

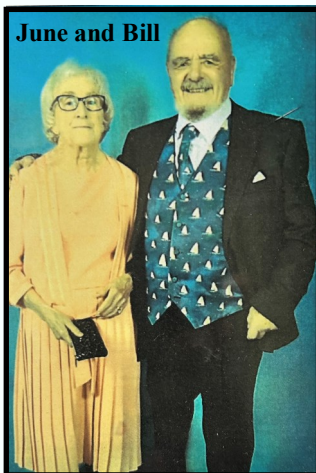
Bill Johnson - Profile

The pleasure of producing these profiles is discovering the wonderful histories of the people in our community. People we see about the village are often at or beyond retirement age, but it is easy to forget that they were once young and sometimes did amazing things. One such person is Bill Johnson, seen these days dressed in a yellow waterproof jacket traversing the village and the river track on his electric tricycle, or at village events such as the Friday coffee mornings in the village hall. Bill was born in Bridgwater in 1931, his mother a nurse from Abertillery in Wales and his father from Sheffield who trained as a newspaper reporter and worked for the Bristol Evening World in Bristol and posted to Bridgwater. During his childhood they lived in various places around Bridgwater and Taunton. His life has been marked by many significant events, school, war, polio.



In many ways it was an idyllic childhood, fishing, swimming, building canoes and later sailing boats with his father. He was a Boy Scout and had a shirt full of proficiency badges earned for practical skills which were to serve him well throughout his life. He was a clever boy and earned a scholarship to Huish Grammar School in Taunton. After a less demanding time in primary school, this was a shock, as hours of homework were required every evening and weekends.

On 28th November 1945 he came home from school feeling unwell with really bad flu-like symptoms and went to bed. Five days later he felt a little better until after getting out of bed he collapsed on the floor. He had the dreaded infantile paralysis (Polio) and was taken to Cheddon Road isolation hospital. A week later he was transferred to the unheated Bath Children's Orthopaedic Hospital where he was to spend the next 9 months. The treatment was mainly physiotherapy involving massage, exercise, and swimming in the murky green water of the Roman Baths.



At night to prevent his body from distorting due to the tightening of muscles and ligaments, he was strapped into a metal frame at his chest, knees, and ankles, which took some getting used to. Despite this he felt lucky, as only one leg was seriously affected. Some other patients were much worse off with no hope of ever being able to walk again. His father was conscripted into the Army's Royal Engineers during the war and stationed in India, but because of Bill's illness managed to get a compassionate home posting.

After nine months in Bath hospital, he was discharged with a leg calliper to help him walk. The school did all it could to support him as he had missed a year of schooling and had to repeat that year. A stretcher was provided for him to rest on which was a major source of fun as his classmates vied with each other to carry him from class to class. This was not a clever idea because he just wanted to return to normal. Although he was not able to do many of the sports, he was a good swimmer and was able to prove it in the pool.

Not long after returning home from the hospital he realised that he could not ride his bike with the calliper on as it would not bend at the knee, so he took it off. Never to be used again. The jet engine had been invented, but not a calliper that could bend at the knee!

With his father he built several canvas canoes, and in 1948 they borrowed a book from the library which had the instructions to build a 'Sharpie Hard Chine 15ft Sailing Boat'. This was the start of many years of sailing for pleasure and competition in a number of different sailing boats which he constructed.

After school he started work at County Hall and secured what turned out to be a boring job at the Treasurers department. However, he was more than adequately compensated as he met his wife June. Together they travelled all over the southwest on his motorcycles. They married at St Georges Church, Wilton, Taunton on 14th June 1958.

Bill changed jobs to work in the Magistrates Court in Taunton. He then successfully applied for a more senior job at Basingstoke and then on to Aldershot Magistrates Court. In 1964 he was appointed "Chief Clerk to the Clerk to the Justices at Bridgwater Magistrates Court" (*complicated title*) and moved back to Somerset with June and daughter Ann, having bought a house in Martyn Close, Comwich. Rachel was born in 1966. In 1972 they moved to their current home.

In 1968 he was one of twenty-eight persons (nationally) to attend a two-year course at Manchester Polytechnic and was awarded a Diploma in Magisterial Law. This enabled him to successfully apply for the post of Deputy Clerk to the Justices in Bridgwater where he stayed until retirement from full time work at 55 in 1986. This gave him more time to indulge his various interests, which in addition to sailing and boat building, included membership of the parish council. It was in that latter capacity that he produced "Otterhampton Parish 2000" a millennium project describing our parish. It remains the most complete description of the parish and people.



As the future seemed fairly settled, he embarked on his next project which was to build Ishani a Yachting Monthly's Eventide 26ft sailing cruiser, when in Martyn Close and finished her in the back garden of his current home. In the meantime, he continued to sail his smaller boat.



Ishani - built in the village & finished in
Bill's back garden

Sailing has been a lifelong passion and Bill sailed extensively with friends. He was serious about his sailing and took courses in VHF radio transmission, passed the RYA Yacht Master Navigation Theory Course and qualified as a Royal Yachting Association (R.Y.A.) coastal skipper. One of his many trips with his friend Bill Sergeant was a 7-week cruise to Spain and the Atlantic coast of France. Other trips were to Ireland and the Scillies and the Isle of Man for the TT Races

Later he was instrumental in persuading the Comwich Boat Club to introduce pilot gig rowing to Comwich. This has proved to be a popular sport and has attracted many new members to the village boating club.

In 1984 he was elected to the parish council and the village hall committee and organised the village Fete.

In 1988 he enrolled at Cannington College to study agricultural engineering and passed the City and Guilds examination in welding and diesel engineering which stood him in good stead with his boat building activities. That same year he was appointed staff member to the Hinkley Point Enquiry into the building of a new nuclear power station.

Bill has lived in the village since 1964 and enjoys the support of his family and many friends in Comwich.

Garden Club



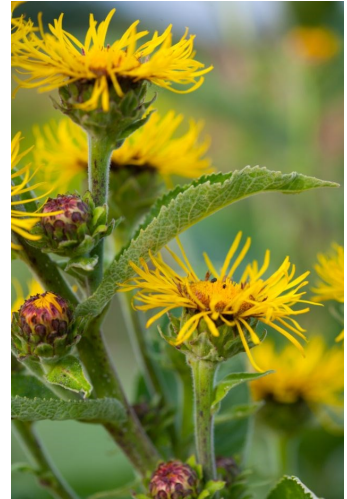
Perennial Planting in Rough Grass

There is a growing movement of planting perennials in rough grass.

Sage, St. John's Wort and Phlomis Russeliana are suitable for areas of virtually unmanaged rough grass. Geranium 'Claridge Druce', Elecampane Inula Racemosa (right) and varieties of Hemerocallis are good as they compete with the rough grass to form a clump of flowers.

A year of flowering perennials in the rough grass. Daffodils can provide colour and flowers in early spring. Different varieties of Symphytum, better known as Comfrey can provide various shades of blue, pink and white later in the spring and into early summer.

The choice of plants widen for the summer months, including a range of Geraniums providing colours of blue, pink, mauve and white. Soapwort - Saponaria officinalis, (below left) will provide upright stems of pink or white flowers.



Other useful plants are Inulas that form clumps of tall clusters of yellow daisy like flowers, Golden Rod, Asters and varieties of Eupatorium. (Above right) Aquilegias and Alchemilla Mollis also do well. Other plants to consider are Day Lillies - Hemerocallis, Campanula Lactifolia and Coreopsis.

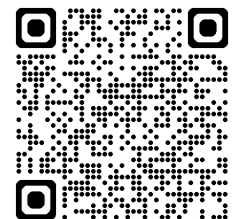
Planting in Grass

Cut out and remove a circle of turf about 12 to 16 inches across, and dig a hole big enough to plant the perennial in the centre. Keep it well watered until it gets established. Mulch around the plant with organic matter such as compost or dead leaves. At the end of the first and second year some maintenance may be required to remove any approaching grass. After this the plant should be well established to cope with any competition from the grass. Perennials can be grown from seed, or split and planted out in the autumn or spring.

Dates for your Diary:

Seed Swap: Garden Club will be holding a seed swap on Tuesday 11th February.

Made By Bees: David Dodge from Made By Bees at Cox's Farm in Steart will be at Garden Club Tuesday 11th March. David featured in the May 2024 Issue 55 of Otter Tales. More about planting for bees and Made by Bees can be found by scanning the QR code





Bridgwater Repair Café is open on the last Saturday of the month. It is next open on 25th January and 22nd February between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm. It is located in 'The Engine Room' 50-52 High Street Bridgwater.

Bin it? No Way!!!

Repair Cafés are a worldwide movement that enable people to pass on their repair skills and help others to repair their broken products.

At Bridgwater Repair Café there are volunteers with skills and knowledge along with tools and materials to help you make the repairs you need. The volunteers can fix electrical appliances such as kettles, toasters, vacuum cleaners and repair clothing, curtains and furniture. The expert volunteers have repair skills in all kinds of areas. The repairs are free, though there may be a cost for certain parts. Occasionally though, despite the best efforts and skills, some things simply can not be put back together.

Bridgwater Repair Café enables things to be used for longer instead of simply being thrown away. It is part of creating a more sustainable society and is about promoting the use of repairable products.

If you like repairing things, and have repair skills that you would like to share, join the repair team, become a volunteer with The Repair Café and pass on your skills.

Contact Bridgwater Repair Café on 01278 433187.

Or email: repaircafebridgwater@gmail.com
cafe@somersetfilm.com

More information can be found on www.repaircafe.org

FEBRUARY SUNDAY SERVICES

CHURCH	2 nd February Candlemas	9 th February 4 th before Lent	16 th February 3 rd before Lent	23 rd February 2 nd before Lent
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	
Stockland St Mary Madalene		11.15am Family Service		11.15am Holy Communion

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

Bellringing Fridays 7.00pm Combwich Church (Friday before the 1st and 3rd Sunday)

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.

Revd Alison Waters, Rector & Revd Jan Church, Associate Priest
 01278 652953 / cannington.benefice@gmail.com



WWT Steart Marshes & Bridgwater Bay NNR



The start of the new year has seen the site very busy with birds. There has been good numbers of our usual winter visitors including teal, wigeon, golden plover and lapwing. A least sandpiper was spotted out on Otterhampton Marsh on the 2.1.25. These are very rare in the UK and is a first for Somerset, with only around 50 records in the UK ever. They are the world's smallest shorebird and are resident to North/Central America. A glossy ibis has also taken a liking to the freshwater pools around the wetland walkway and has been spotted regularly by visitors.

Glossy ibis - Sam Wall, WWT

The site has also been good for owls and bids of prey. A male hen harrier, merlin and short-eared owl are often being seen out on the saltmarsh near the breach. There are at least 2 barn owls that have been spotted hunting out on the reserve early morning and late afternoon. They often hunt at these times when the weather has been too poor for them to hunt overnight.



Barn owl – Sam Wall, WWT

Find our latest updates on Facebook, Instagram, X and www.wwt.org.uk/steart

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

Duty Manager Mobile: 07717 505966

Site Manager: Alys Laver 07743 502525 alys.laver@wwt.org.uk

Village Hall

The November issue of Otter Tales published a crisis statement by the village hall committee on the front page. We understand the crisis was averted when a number of volunteers stepped forward.





COMBWITH VILLAGE MARKET
 Every 2nd Saturday of the month
 10am - 12noon
 Otterhampton Village Hall

Enjoy a freshly brewed cuppa & a bacon butty

Browse and buy from all the lovingly crafted handmade delights

OVH Otterhampton Village Hall

HAND MADE

Registered Charity No. 1186747



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

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 1,600 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
Blackbrook Business Park	£8.25	£16.50
<i>Plus booking fee</i>	50p	£1.00

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 13th March.

Email The Editor:
otter.tales@aol.com

Birthday Bells

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

combwichbells@outlook.com

Defibrillators can save your life.

The Combwich defibrillator is positioned in the telephone box.

The Steart defibrillator is positioned at Ferrices Farm. Dial 999 to call for an ambulance then follow the simple instructions. **NO TRAINING NEEDED**



Otter Tales:

Editor: Barry Leathwood. Assisted by Steven Parker.

Distribution: Bob Birkenhead email:
Birkenhead.bob@gmail.com

Articles for publication: email 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 13th March.

Mobile Library: Dates and Times.

Thursday 6th February, 6th March, 3rd April

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

