



COMBWICH, OTTERHAMPTON AND STEART NEWSLETTER

Otter Tales

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**THE ANCHOR**

Two much loved and needed businesses in the village have closed their doors recently; is it temporary, or is this the end? The parish council is urgently looking at these and the other challenges facing the village.

The planning permission for the building of the accommodation block at the Anchor was conditional upon the pub remaining open.

The shop and post office closed last year and a Steering Committee was set up to consider the possibility of establishing a community shop in the village. All their efforts were put into buying the existing shop which we now learned has failed.

We have a wonderful community in this village with lots of helpful organisations and people, who help to mitigate the impact of closure of these two businesses which are crucial to wellbeing of residents. If you are concerned attend the parish council meetings and get involved.

**THE SHOP**



Otterhampton Parish Council

COMBWICH • OTTERHAMPTON • STEART

Parish Council Brief March 2026

Anchor Inn

Councillors are very concerned about the loss of another Community facility within the village, namely the Anchor Inn on Riverside. This matter has been discussed at several Parish Council meetings. A breach of Planning Enforcement Notice has been lodged to Somerset Council on the grounds of the property being used for stand-alone accommodation against current planning conditions. We await a response from them.

Further discussions have taken place to consider applying to Somerset Council to include the pub on the Asset of Community Value Register (ACV) which gives the community the opportunity to take more control of assets considered to be of value to them. These works are in progress.

The Council has furthermore engaged with the current owner who has advised that they are seeking new tenant landlords. We strive to assist them where we can.

Flooding along Brookside

At the beginning of the year, there was significant flooding along Brookside Road causing great distress to the residents. The Councillors are working very closely with the Coastal Flood and Rivers Protection Team, Somerset Council and the landowner to find a solution. A meeting between the major stakeholders, Councillors and the local MP, Sir Ashley Fox has been arranged for after Easter. In the meantime, the existing drains have been surveyed and cleared. Our thanks are extended to the volunteers at the Emergency Volunteer Action Group for providing flood protection equipment to these premises.

Budget 2026-27

After considering the current financial position the Councillors agreed to set the precept for 2026/27. The precept has not changed since 2019-20; clearly prices have significantly increased during this time. Councillors agreed unanimously at the Full Council meeting held on 8th January 2026 to increase the precept by 18.5%. This equates affectively to a £15.76 per year on a Band D property.

Riparian Responsibilities

Do you have Riparian Responsibility? Do you understand what this is?

If your property is adjacent to the Brook which runs through the village the likelihood is that you do.

Please check you property covenants. Want to find out more?

The Council are looking to arrange a Riparian Workshop, please contact the Clerk if you are interested to find out exactly what this means.

Contact details for parish councillors

Lindsey Parsons (Chair)	lindsey.parsons@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	01278 653700
Connie Sanders (Vice-Chair)	connie.sanders@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	01278 653307
Tina Gardener	tina.gardener@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	01278 652642
Mike Haycraft	mike.haycraft@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	01278 653264
Carol Bradbury	carol.bradbury@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	01278 652313
Steven Parker	steven.parker@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	07895 239878
Dave Dodge	dave.dodge@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk	07306 243368

Clerk to the parish council

Stephanie Juniper clerk@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk 07395 008455

(Stephanie works part-time and flexible hours)

County Ward Members

Mike Caswell 01278 652043. Brian Bolt 079708 55990

Food Vans in the village

In recognition of the loss of the shop and the pub, the Council are delighted to advise that they have successfully arranged for a fish and chip van plus a pizza van to visit the village regularly, alternating every fortnight. This has been greatly supported. Dates will be posted on the village noticeboard.

20mph and C182

The Councillors are seeking further advice and guidance regarding the 20mph speed limit in the village and will be consulting with the villagers in due course. They also continue to lobby for improvements to the C182 outside the village after a number of recent accidents.

Abandoned boats on the Pill

EDF have advised that official notices have been displayed to advise current boat owners that the abandoned boats on their land will be removed after 60 days of the posters being displayed unless contacted by the owners and advised otherwise. So hopefully these will be gone in the coming months.

Annual Parish Meeting

The 2026 annual Parish meeting is arranged for the 28th May 2026. This is an opportunity for all local groups and organisations to come along and show case their group and hopefully increase their membership. Please email the Clerk to register your interest.

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council will also take place on that evening.

All parishioners are invited to attend - it's not as sleepy village as you think! Please join us for refreshments and the meeting of new friends or the start of a new hobby.

Want to find out what the Parish Council is doing?

Parish council meetings are open to the public, so if you have a bug-bear you would like to discuss please come along. These take place on the 2nd Thursday of each month at Otterhampton Village Hall starting at 1900. The next meeting is on the 9th April, further dates will be displayed on the Noticeboards.

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 old Post Office, opposite the Anchor Inn and on the wall of Ferrices Farm, Steart) or the www.otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk website, with regular updates on the Facebook page. Regular posts are also made on Facebook.

Contact for Clerk (Stephanie Juniper) clerk@otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk or Tel 07395 008455. Please note that the Clerk works flexible part-time hours.



20's Plenty

where people are

20's Plenty for Us campaigns for 20mph as the default speed limit for urban and village streets where people live, work, shop, play and learn.
www.20splenty.org

Combwich Community Shop Steering Group Report

In the previous edition of Otter Tales we stated that we were progressing towards the purchase of the existing shop having completed a detailed evaluation (approved by the Plunkett Foundation), a full structural survey and a design review study. Unfortunately the owners of the shop have decided not to continue with the sale. The steering group were extremely disappointed with this decision after working hard towards the completion of a sale. The group is now looking at other options.

Easter at St. Peter's.

Easter is the most important religious festival for the Church.

The Easter story begins forty days before Holy Week with Lent. Lent commemorates when Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray. That's when people might stop eating chocolate until they get an Easter egg at the end of Holy Week.

For Christians, Holy Week is extra special as it is the week leading up to the resurrection. It is believed that on Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and the people waved palm branches to show their love for him. At church services palm crosses are given out to mark this special occasion. Maunday Thursday is when Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples and was later arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. This becomes a time for reflection. Good Friday was the day of Jesus' crucifixion and death.



Church services are held close to the time of day when Jesus died. Easter Sunday was the day of Jesus' resurrection and is the start of fifty days of celebration. The final ten days start with Ascension day where Jesus ascends into heaven. At the end of fifty days, Pentecost or Whitsun is when the disciples receive the Holy Spirit.



If you want to know more about the Life of Jesus and the Easter story St. Peter's Church has a display illustrating the life of Jesus

Prayer Tree

The values of equality, love, caring, challenging injustice and oppression underpin Christianity. These values are just as relevant today than that at other time in history as the world faces difficult times. For Easter there is a prayer tree in St. Peter's Church where you can hang your prayers, wishes and hopes for the future.

The Church as a Community Space.

Combwich choir have restarted after their winter break. The choir is a sing for fun group. They meet together in the church on the second and fourth Thursday of the month. The church has great acoustics and brilliant for singing or band practice. If you would like to use the church as a space please contact Rev. Jan Church.

Restoration of the War Memorial Lychgate.

St. Peter's Church and Otterhampton Parish Council will be working together in the restoration of the village war memorial. This will involve applying for a grant from the War Memorials Trust. The decision to have a village war memorial was taken by the Parish Council in January 1919. At the time the Parish was 'greatly indebted' to those who took part in the war and deeply sympathized with those who have been wounded and with the relatives of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. The Lychgate is an important part of the cultural heritage of the Parish.



Harbour View Bar

Thank you for your continued support, it's been a busy couple of months. We thoroughly enjoyed the 6 Nations rugby tournament, showcasing all the games and savouring a variety of food provided by the HVB committee and members. We hope you had a great time.



Look out for dates & times showing the women's rugby.



Harbour flights, our club darts team have been playing really well lately and have recruited a few new players. The club hosted the Brian Ayley darts competition recently, Harbour flights Paul Tanner was victorious in the singles competition and won the first club trophy. Congratulations Paul!! HVB have also bought 2 new match dart boards for league games and competitions, maybe that's why they have been playing so well.



The arrival of the fish and chip van was a big hit, the bar opened early so villagers could enjoy a drink with their food, it was a great social evening. We will endeavour to support this and happy to announce a pizza van will be arriving on Friday 10th April and will be parked outside HVB from 6pm. On the 3rd Saturday of each month we have Richs quiz, always a fun evening, starts at 8pm.

Harbour View bar have submitted a grant to have the bar area refurbished. This wasn't touched in the 2021 village hall works. The electrics, plumbing and general layout need updating & to make it a more functional safe area. We have been successful with the first part of our application, and await the finalisation. We will keep you updated.

Easter Sunday we are open from 7-11pm. Our AGM is on Tuesday 5th May at 7pm in the village hall, everyone is welcome. Harbour View bBr committee are volunteers and are always looking for enthusiastic new members to join us, we meet once a month. Happy Easter to you all from the HVB committee

Print Workshop

Judith Brown, a printer and artist, will be delivering a Print Workshop on Saturday 25th April in the Village Hall.

The workshop will start at 10.00 am until 1.00pm and is open to all.

Make your own printing block pictures using easy to use materials as an alternative to Lino Print making.

Under sixteen year olds will need to be accompanied by an adult.

All materials will be provided. Entrance is by donation. Participants will leave the workshop with colourful makes and creations as well as the skills to make more prints at home.

Spaces are limited so you will need to book your space by messaging / texting Steven Parker on 07895 239878



Otterhampton Primary School - Autumn 2 Update

Claire Luce - Executive Head Teacher

Another busy term at OPS!

Battle of Sedgemoor - River Class had some visitors from the Battle of Sedgemoor visitor centre who gave an interesting talk about the Battle and the children asked lots of questions. The class were lucky enough to see and handle some artefacts - pistols, pitchfork, scythe, swords, a gun powder carrier and a musket.



Rodway Farm - All classes went down to Rodway Farm to see the lambs and learn about them. Little Otters even got to bottle feed them.

Anglo-Saxon Day - Bay class went on a trip to Carymoor to enjoy a variety of Anglo Saxon themed activities. They had fun on an orienteering quiz, grinding grain to make flour using a quern stone, a rune treasure hunt, weaving willow plates and solving riddles.



We acknowledged **Children's Mental Health** week in February and we had a whole school assembly on this year's theme "This is my place". The children spent time on activities each day focusing on mental health.

Safer Internet Day - In class they discussed the use of the internet and the online issues such as cyberbullying, social networking, digital identity and more. They also explored the safe and responsible use of AI.

Y5 Mini Police - The Y5s had an amazing trip to Portishead, to Avon and Somerset's police headquarters. They listened to a presentation on the work the police do in our county. They visited the museum and explored a training area. They then finished up with a guided walk around the call centre and had the chance to listen in to a live 999 call.



Stear Marshes - at the end of February the whole school had a trip to Steart Marshes. First the children cut the ribbon to open the new Saltmarsh Boardwalk and were the first people to walk across it! Then they spent some time on arts and crafts activities. Well done to all the children who walked there and back!



Book Fair - We had lots of interest in the Scholastic Book fair and raised an amazing £174 for us to spend on books for the School Library.



Chicken eggs - We were excited to receive the rare breed chicken eggs from Dani at Farmlink. She spoke to the children about the life cycle of the chicken and the different stages the eggs will go through. They have been in an incubator for 21 days and have now hatched! We now have 9 fluffy chicks! The children have given suggestions for names and we are going to do a ballot to name them.



World Book Day - We celebrated World Book day by dressing up as characters from Wind in the Willows. All the classes took part in dance workshops around this theme too and put on a performance at the end of the day. The children really enjoyed it.

Brook and River Class also joined in a **live online draw-along** with the author Cressida Cowell of "How to train your dragon" books. The children learnt how she got the ideas for her books and drew Hiccup alongside her.

Science Farm live - we have taken part in the National Farmers Union online lessons for Science Farm live. River Class have had a lesson about where food comes from. This included a tour of a goat farm and what produce is gathered from goats and also a city farm in London with a mix of vegetables and small livestock. Brook Class joined in to answer several farming questions.

Theatre Trip - Some children from Bay and River class went to the McMillan Theatre to see the production of Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat. They all were well behaved and had a lovely time.



Garden Club

Combwich Open Gardens 2026

Following the success of last year's event, we are starting to plan for the 2026 Open Gardens on the 20th June. We would like to include a variety of gardens big or small, front or back, courtyard or even a window box.



The aim of this event is to encourage conversations about our gardens and to share any advice or ideas - it is not a competition.

If you were involved last year and would like to do it all again, or if you would like your garden to be included this year please contact

Maria Narraway asap. Phone: 07880 547625 email: maria.narraway@yahoo.co.uk

This is a community event and not restricted to members of Garden Club.

Any ideas to help or improve last year's event would be very welcome - although the weather is beyond our control.

2026/27 Dates for your Diary

Monthly Garden Club held at Otterhampton Village Hall. 7.00 pm for a 7.30 start on the second Tuesday of the month
Other events as detailed below.

Date	Event
11 th April	Propagation Day at the Village Market
14 th April	Annual General Meeting Pop Up Spring Flower Show
7 th May	Bishop of Bath & Wells Palace and Gardens Leave Combwich 9.30 am
12 th May	Alpines in Troughs Richard Horswood Alpine Garden Society
6 th June	Plant Sale and Stall St. Peter's Church Fete
9 th June	Late Spring Social
20 th June	Combwich Open Gardens Afternoon Cream Tea in the Village Hall
14 th July	Water, Water Everywhere Bex Flintham Devon Wildwood Trust
17 th July	Launch of Flower, Art and Craft Show. ManoAmano on the Village Common
25 th July	Garden Club Barbecue
11 th August	Late Summer Social

Date	Event
5 th September	Flower, Art and Craft Show
8 th September	Early Autumn Meeting Flower Show Review and Feedback
13 th October	Garden Design Sally Leaney Award Winning Garden Designer
10 th November	Houseplants Micheal Smith
8 th December	Christmas Decorations and Wreath Making
15 th December	Christmas Social
12 th January	New Year Quiz
9 th February	Rare Plants of Combwich and the Severn Estuary Stephen Parker Somerset Rare Plants Society
9 th March	Seed Swap
13 th March	Propagation Day at the Village Market

Email: barry.leathwood@btinternet.com

www.otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk



Otterhampton Parish Recreation Association (OPRA)

Registered Charity Number 1124017

Chair Tina Gardener 652642 - Secretary Carol Bradbury 652313

It looks like Spring has finally arrived (but will it stay?) It is lovely to be able to get out in the garden and clear away the winter debris. The common has had its first trim, but it is still too wet for a short cut, but it's already looking much better.

Children's Easter Egg Hunt

There will be a change of venue for our Easter activities this year, which will be taking place in the village hall. The Easter egg hunt will commence at **11.00am on Good Friday 3rd April**. This is a free event for all children of the Parish and if you have your grandchildren visiting you are welcome to bring them. Every child completing the quiz will be rewarded with an Easter egg.



QUIZ

The quiz for adults will be on **Sunday 5th April, opening at 7.30pm** for an 8.00pm start. Our ever-popular quiz master, Shaun, along with his wife Mary will be running the quiz. There will be a small charge to enter. We try and have teams of four, we can make up teams on the night.



There will be a raffle on both events so please remember to bring some cash with you. The bar will be open so come and have a fun night out

Dog Show

Trying to find something different to do this summer, we have opted for a fun dog show to be held on the small common on **Saturday 27th June**. We are still in the early stages of planning but is hoped to include a BBQ, tea, coffee, and cake, raffle and some stalls. Please make a note in your diary.

From our Occasional Northern Cyprus Correspondent! *(by John Berry, former long term resident of Combwich and chair of the parish council)*

It has been an unusual spring here in the TRNC and that's just the weather! We've had more rain in the last month or so than in the whole of last winter. The little stream that runs through our development became a raging torrent that burst its banks, sweeping boulders, uprooted trees and three cars down the narrow road. We were fortunate not to have suffered directly. In addition, a wall built of stone and around four metres high, collapsed, destroying most of the garden belonging to the house behind it. Fortunately, no-one was hurt. The wall has now been restored with steel girders supporting the stone.



All this and Donald Trump! We are of course geographically, fairly close to the events in Iran and Gaza, precipitated by a couple of megalomaniacs who should be prosecuted and imprisoned. The only direct consequence so far has been an Iranian drone which exploded on the perimeter of the Akrotiri Sovereign Base Area in Greek Cyprus. Akrotiri is an RAF base that the 'Donald' would dearly love to use to bombard Iran. British civilians living in the western SBA have been relocated, away from the potential target zone. The eastern SBA is a few miles from Famagusta, itself the only city of any size which is occupied by Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but since its primary role is a listening post it is probably unlikely to be a target for drone strikes. The proximity of these horrendous events is of course unnerving. Cyprus, Greek and Turkish, has been a peaceful place since 1974 and long may that continue.

It is a beautiful island, rich in wild flowers among which are many varieties of orchids. Linda has become something of a locally celebrated expert and spends many happy hours locating and photographing. Cyprus is also a haven for turtles and has benefitted from the activities of SPOT - the Society for the Protection of Turtles, which draws support from Exeter University. And of course it abounds in birds - some of which are unique to Cyprus.

Otterhampton Village Hall



Unfortunately, we have to start off this update on a negative note.

As a committee we are trying our hardest to keep the community assets viable and accessible, this is proving to be more and more onerous, times are hard and we are now seeking the support of the Village.

We have lost two things in our Village, namely the Village shop and the Anchor Inn, both valuable assets to a vibrant Village atmosphere.

The Village Hall Committee have lost, due to other commitments, our Treasurer.

This means we are currently seeking an individual who is willing to give up a small amount of time (due to the fact that the current Treasurer has invested time, effort and software to ensure whoever takes over has an easy time of it, and is willing to spend time in a handover process) to contact us with the intention to take over those duties.

Without a Treasurer we cannot have a committee, it's as simple as that, what does that mean?

Without a committee, we don't have a Village Hall. That means we lose access to a place where we don't have Village Market, Pilates Classes, Bowls, Aerobics, Brownies, WI, Art Class, Garden Club, Paella Day, Murder Mystery, Bingo, Stoggy Men, Xmas Dinner, do you want me to list it all?

Without the Village Hall does the Harbour View Bar continue? NO.

We are asking as a matter of urgency please support our Village, without your help it no longer becomes a Village.

Email: enquiries@otterhamptonvh.org

Community Engagement - How we can improve our Village

Otterhampton Parish Council recognises the need to engage with the community over a number of challenges and developments facing the parish and village.

This includes the closure of the loss of the village shop and the Anchor Inn, flooding along Brookside Road and the '20 is Plenty' campaign. There are also county wide initiatives concerning the use of Open Spaces and Sports Facilities for the benefit of the community.

Somerset Association of Local Councils will be delivering a presentation before the next Parish Council meeting at 6.30 pm on the 9th April about Community Engagement. The Public are encouraged to attend and participate.

Community Engagement is about how the Parish Council enables everyone to take an active role in reviewing and influencing the decisions of the parish council.

The Parish Council is also holding the Annual Parish Meeting on 28th May where all village groups and organisations are invited to attend

What we've been up to!

Unfortunately, our speaker in January, who was to talk about improving bus travel, failed to turn up (some members thought the buses had let her down). However, thanks to our lovely member Sue, who produced a pub quiz, an enjoyable evening was had by all.

In February we were entertained by Mickey Little who gave an interesting talk on selecting and planting bulbs. Mickey shared his years of experience in horticulture, from his early training at Cannington College through to his work with the National Trust at Killerton and Castle Drogo and his time at Hestercombe as Head Gardener and then working at Avon Bulbs. He explained how to choose bulbs by considering scent, length of flowering, colour, vigour, and size of flower. Mickey also explained that the deeper the bulb is planted there are usually less problems with them. For the best display he recommends buying the biggest bulbs you can get, planting in groups and restricting the colour palette. There should be some lovely displays in our members gardens this year!



theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



Combwich and District WI

Dates for your diaries

Thursday 16th April – Richard Navoy 'First Aid' – Competition – Make up a 2 line motto

Thursday 21st May – Andy Rowden – 'Simple Will and Power of Attorney' – Competition – Old keepsake tin or box

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



Pippi's Ponderings

Somehow we have made it through waterpark winter. Fears that babies born in 2026 will be born with gills have been dispelled as saturated land starts to dry thanks to the appearance of a strange bright object in the sky.

Most of Britain's roads now resemble Leerdammer cheese with local councils promising to fix the never ending potholes by the end of spring, ironically just as the fuel shortages start to hit the petrol stations. Talking of which Dave from down the road has started to panic buy fuel, his shed is now storing more barrels than Saudi Arabia. His neighbour Mike has heard on the news that petrol and travel could soon be rationed, Mike is elated at this news as it's a solid excuse not to see his Mother -in-Law every Saturday.

Easter is upon us and inside every Easter egg this year are your council tax bills which have gone up more than a politicians blood pressure awaiting the release of more incriminating Epstein files.

The world is absolutely bonkers yet we continue on in its absurdity.

Homity Pie

Time to use up your winter leeks and potatoes in this homely dish!

You will need a flan ring suitable for the quantity you intend cooking for. I'm basing this recipe on a 25cm dish.

Ingredients

2 medium size leeks, washed and chopped into ½ inch slices

3 large potatoes, peeled and chopped into 1 inch chunks.
(Maris Piper or King Edwards are good for this dish)

1 onion, peeled and chopped.

1 sprig of Thyme

150ml Double Cream

125gm Grated mature Cheddar or Red Leicester
(I like a little blue cheese like stilton in the mix as well!)

400gm short crust pastry

Salt & pepper

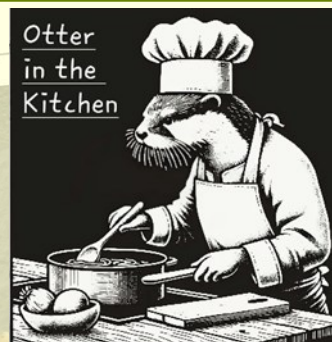
Grease and line your flan dish with the short crust pastry and chill until the filling is ready.

In a medium sized saucepan melt a knob of butter and add the chopped onion, leek and thyme leaves. Sweat until soft and then add the chopped potato. Cover with a lid and cook slowly until the potatoes are soft but not mushy. Season and stir in the cream and a third of the grated cheese.

Pour the filling into the pastry case and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.

Bake for 40/45minutes @ 180 deg C and the pastry golden brown and the filling gently bubbling.

Serve and eat whilst hot or save as a cold snack with salad.



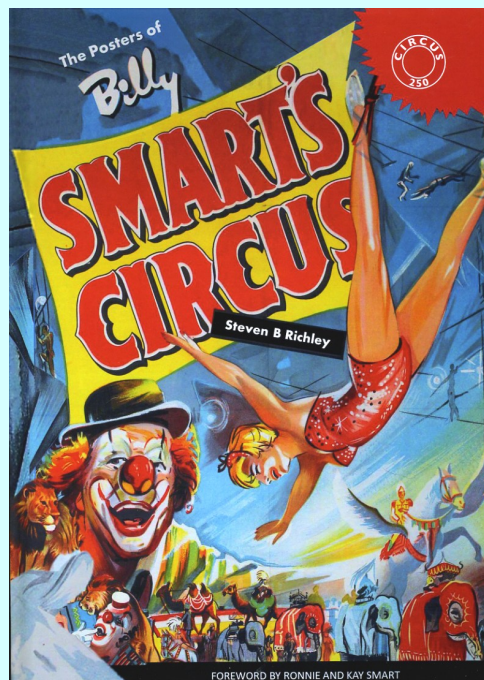
When the Circus came to town.. By Chris Ponka.

Some of the more senior readers may remember when the circus came to town. Billy Smart's Circus. Famous in its day, every Christmas on TV there would be a live broadcast from Billy Smart's Circus. The Big Top...

I remember as a small boy the excitement when the 'Circus' train would pull into the station. Crowds of people gathered to watch the Circus performers parade through the town, Acrobats, Jugglers, Clowns (Long before they became 'scary') Then the big attraction – the ELEPHANTS! Yes, performing elephants would parade through the town, ridden by scantily clad ladies wearing shiny tights and sparkly leotards. *(At that age I was more interested in the Elephants!)*



Trucks would pass by with cages containing real lions, tigers, bears. I never liked seeing the animals in cages, although I never remember objecting when these magnificent beasts were performing in the circus ring... too young to understand I suppose. To me it always seemed like these dangerous animals were always in charge anyway... 'Grrr - One wrong move and the Ringmasters a gonner!'



But one memory sticks firmly in my mind. It was just an ordinary day at school, until the headmaster walked into class and said there was a new boy starting. Standing just behind him was a small, blond-haired boy with a fresh complexion. 'This is Jean-Pierre' said Mr Lee, 'He'll be with us for the next few weeks.' My friend Mark happened that day to be off ill, so this new boy was seated at the desk next to me *(When we had desks and not tables... 'Who's idea was that?'...)*

It turned out that Jean-Pierre was with the CIRCUS! A *real* Circus Boy (Some of you may remember the TV series?). Jean-Pierre's mother and father were a roller-skating act with a difference. They skated on a tiny circular platform suspended twenty odd feet up in the air. As for Jean Pierre, he worked with the performing horses as a small clown, leaping up in the air and running around, pretending to be getting in the way etc. 'You must come and see the show' he said and handed me a pass for four free tickets! (We usually went anyway)

In the playground we had what we called 'Monkey bars'. An arrangement of scaffolding poles that we were able to exercise on during P.E. These were strictly out of bounds during playtime, but Jean-Pierre swung on these, doing handstands and numerous acrobatic tricks he'd been taught.

One kid piped up 'Oy! You're not allowed on those!' I shouted, 'Leave him alone – HE knows what he's doing!' In the short time he was in our class we became firm friends. His ambition was to work with the horses, train them, ride them, perform with them.

I was so excited to see the show, I had a new friend actually in it! His parent's act was terrifying, spinning at speed high in the air, without any net or harness *(Health & safety? Pah!)*



Continued over the page

The clowns came on with the horses at the end and there he was – Jean-Pierre, huge red boots, baggy trousers and waistcoat, orange wig and a red nose, tumbling and falling about, back flips, cartwheels, the lot! He'd told me his ambition was to work in an act with the horses when he was older.

Years later I saw on TV the Christmas Circus, and there he was, now twenty something, working with a team of white horses, riding 'bare back', leaping off one horse to the next, performing acrobatic tricks while riding at speed. The 'Circus Boy' had grown up.

While scrawling this memory, I thought I'd do a bit research. It turned out that Jean-Pierre was actually the great grandson of Billy Smart himself. Legend! The circus now long gone, he still performed but in a roller-skating act with his wife, just as his parents had done. Now as a knock-about comedy act, he performed at the Edinburgh Festival and even appeared on The Royal Variety Show in 2005.

Jean-Pierre Poissonnet, an old school mate who sat next to me when the Circus came to town.

Drivers Urgently Needed

Otter Wheels volunteer car scheme has been in operation for over 10 years and provides a much-needed service to those who do not have access to a car to enable them to travel to medical and dental appointments, but also, when possible, for shopping and hairdressing trips etc.

Unfortunately, our dedicated group of volunteer drivers is currently a little depleted because of illness and is struggling to meet all the requests for transportation. Therefore, we need more drivers.

Can you help? Mileage is paid and full support is given and there are occasional meetings of the whole team. Drivers choose when and if they want to undertake a particular trip – no pressure! If you have a little time to spare and own a 4-door car, please consider volunteering with us. For more information email Aly alyrobp@gmail.com or Elizabeth jorvik@talktalk.net or come along to the Comwich Village Market in the village hall between 10am and 12 noon on the 2nd Saturday of the month

Not a driver but still want to help. We are also looking for someone to join our team of coordinators. This role involves on a rota+ basis, receiving the calls from passengers and liaising with the drivers. Details as above.

To request a journey see page 15





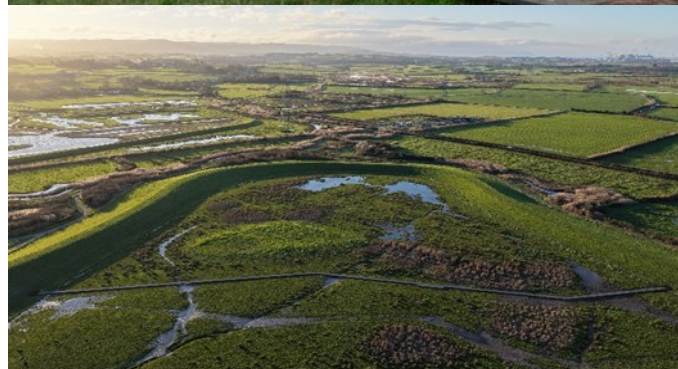
WWT Steart Marshes & Bridgwater Bay NNR

You may have noticed our **new boardwalk** across the saltmarsh. This is open to visitors and can be accessed from the paths close to both the Mendip hide and Polden screen. Otterhampton Primary School recently visited to cut the ribbon and officially open it!

The boardwalk and information signs have been funded through our Species Survival Fund project Wetter for Waders, which sadly came to an end last month.

Please note the boardwalk will very occasionally be submerged on the highest tides marked yellow on our tide tables (on the 'Visiting' page of our website and around site). Wellies are advised while we wait for some coir matting to be added at either end of the boardwalk.

Many thanks to Joe Beaney for the drone photography.



Another project which has been completed this week is our **new dragonfly hotspot bridge** just past the roundhouse. This was funded, designed and built in 3 days by engineering students from Mount Union University, Ohio, USA. Two groups of students visited last year, and they asked if they could return and complete a project for us. It was a great success all round with the students learning throughout the process and we have ended up with a fantastic new bridge!



And finally, as part of the **NLHF Connecting Coastal Communities Project** we are busy booking in a **Summer of Saltmarsh art workshops** including willow, walk & draw, painting, clay, and print. You will be able to book these via our website and social media pages soon.

As part of the project we are also creating new **saltmarsh courses with the Field Studies Council**. There will be a 1-day course covering an introduction to saltmarsh, and a 2-day course covering specialist plant identification skills. These will be bookable for free in June and July for local residents. You can register an interest by emailing

info.steart@wwt.org.uk

Dates for your diary: Dragonfly Day Sunday 7th June, Saltmarsh Day Thu 11th June – more details next time!

See our latest updates on **@WWTSteartMarshes** on Facebook and Instagram, or our website www.wwt.org.uk/Steart

Contacts - Reserve Office: 01278 651090 info.steart@wwt.org.uk **Duty Manager:** 07717 505966

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

Engagement & Learning/CCC Project Manager: Nicole Turnbull 07717 342061 nicole.turnbull@wwt.org.uk

Easter Services at St. Peter's Church

Good Friday: 3rd April at 9.00 am

A service of Prayer and reflection.

Easter Sunday: 5th April at 11.15 am

Easter Day Family Communion Service

Sunday 12th April at 6.00 pm

Encountering the Father's Love: A Praise and Worship service with live music and modern worship songs.

REGULAR SERVICES AT COMBWICH CHURCH

Each month

1st Sunday at 11.15am

CAFÉ CHURCH

Space to talk, sing, pray and learn together over a cuppa and cake

2nd Sunday at 6.00pm

PRAYER & PRAISE

Informal worship and prayer

3rd Sunday at 11.15am

HOLY COMMUNION

4th Sunday at 4.00pm

FAMILY SERVICE

For the young and young at heart

Prayer time every Thursday at 9am. All very welcome.

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



Otter Wheels

Your volunteer car scheme is here for you.

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

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

This not for profit car scheme has been running for several years with well over 1,600 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 21st May 2026

Email The Editor:
barry.leathwood@btinternet.com

Church Bellringers

Contact bellringers for Birthday Bells, or if you would like a go at bell ringing.

combwichbells@outlook.com

Defibrillators can save your life.

The 2 Combwich defibrillators are positioned in the telephone box and on the corner of the Anchor in Ship Lane

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:

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Articles for publication: email

barry.leathwood@btinternet.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 Thurs 21st May 2026

Mobile Library: Dates and Times.

Thursday . 16th April, 14th May , 11th 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

For more information about this service contact Somerset Direct 0300 123224 or visit www.somerset.gov.uk/libraries

To keep up to date with all that is happening in the parish check the various village noticeboards, log onto www.otterhamptonparishcouncil.gov.uk 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 access the parish council website scan the QR code.



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



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