

Summer  
2013

# Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of Upper Marshwood Vale  
Parish Council

Marshwood votes  
for homes - and  
we get the  
funding!



## At the invitation of Marshwood's Community

**Land Trust** residents from all parts of greater Marshwood once again gathered at Blackdown village hall to reject or approve the kind of affordable houses to be built on the Thane Farm site this autumn.

Drawings and plans had been on display before the meeting, with people from the housing association, Hastoe, available to discuss details and take suggestions.

As the chairman had made clear from the start of meeting, approval being sought was for the housing - what sort, how many and what it would look like. Finance in the form of a subsidy of about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> from government's Homes and Community Agency (HCA) is expected, and

would go to the housing association to help build our homes.

London businessman Mark Van de Weyer had criticised both CLT and parish council for failing to support a medical centre which he proposed, but had not actually been suggested to either. He further condemned BTV for not reporting an event that never happened. At the council meeting in March it had been pointed out that, as these ideas had not been put to councillors, they could neither approve nor reject them, and that he had spurned an invitation to address the council.

Many residents were unaware of this, yet with his arrival bearing files and notes, he offered the prospect of a debate on his ideas rather than agreeing the sort of housing the village wants or needs.

To avoid this, trust chairman David Hitchcock promised to allow questions on the medical centre after dealing with

Your vale News  
Issue 9

affordable homes. Having raised the matter he started his comments by dealing in detail with the new ideas for a medical centre, their strengths and weaknesses before setting out the CLT vision of the new houses for our approval.

the elderly, hopefully not at the same time.

As agreements were reached, the results were summarised in the drawings now on display; at last a firm and detailed plan had been put to the village.



No councillors, CLT members or residents had heard of Mark's ideas even though he claims widespread community support for them; he also mentions the co-operation of the health authorities, Virgin Care who run the Lyme Regis centre, and a landowner's remarkable generosity. David dealt carefully with these details, finding them of little or no substance, certainly not enough to warrant delaying the homes while new negotiations could take place as demanded.

Moving onto to the homes, David set out details of negotiations with the contradictory layers of council officials and showed how the CLT team gradually imposed their wishes, especially the provision of 1-bedroom units for both young singletons and

To help matters David had marked out the Thane Farm field to indicate size and position of road and homes.

As usual the selection of those who would occupy these homes troubled some villagers. A procedure to ensure priority for local applicants is to be part of the conditions for planning consent that will be considered by West Dorset planning councillors.

As much of the planning officers' demands had been met by the design on show, it would seem that we could get planning consent by early autumn and work could start soon after that.

**Update..**  
**CLT and District Councillor attacked in damning letter to Homes and Communities Agency**  
**See pages 7, 8 & 9-**

So we voted on 7 homes + one provided by the land owner. Those present seemed satisfied with what they had been told as all but three raised their hands in approval, one resident was against with two high profile abstentions.

With the business of the day conducted, David Hitchcock announced Any Other Business. Those who had seen Mark's proposals baited their breath and waited.

The Hastoe team was Rob Aspray, Peter Friend, Jo Flint and Matt Richardson the architect; West Dorset District Council was represented by housing officers Paul Derrien and Karina Walker and Cllr Mike Robinson.

After the open public consultation and meeting, further suggestions by those who viewed the plans came forward. In some of the houses a chimney for a fire will now be built and more parking spaces will be allowed where possible.



To the meeting in general, David tried again:

"Don't you have any questions?"  
"Come on .... No? Don't be shy!"

No reply. So no medical centre alongside our affordable homes, then.

The village had met, decided and was looking forward to a nice cup of tea.

And scones.

But no-one had a chance to ask why the opportunity to persuade the village had been cast lightly aside.

The landowner's single storey dwelling, which he will finance entirely without any public funds, is to be parted from the adjacent house as was shown on the drawing and a 1 metre path will divide the two and his plot will be fenced off. It was further noticed by someone that a few of the houses on the drawings were to be rendered and painted and they felt it would look odd so now following that suggestion these properties will now be built of brick to blend in with the rest.

Over all, the exercise was well worth while and we look forward to the result.

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## Council News

*Marshwood has a Quality Council - and that's official.*

At the end of March word filtered west from Dorchester that the accreditation panel had approved of our Council's application for Quality Council status. We have watched the slow progress toward this goal with more than a little interest since Beneath the Vale has been part of that application. One of the communication criteria asked of a Quality Council includes a regular newsletter or magazine from council to residents.

*"Local Councils are vital to re-energizing local democracy.*

*The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme has played an important role in improving the quality of management and administration of parish and town councils".*

Such claims are to be expected from those who set up the scheme, but what is the reality, does this status confer real benefits to the residents, to the councillors, to

officials, or is it a cardboard medal of no real value?

A major survey by Bruce Poole a council clerk to three councils asked the key question: has the QC status produced quality councils?

It concluded that the very process in reaching the standards asked had indeed improved the councils, not exactly a surprising conclusion for someone in his role.

*Well they would say that wouldn't they.*

What do those who have already got QC status think?

Another even more detailed academic survey tells us what those who have that accolade felt - in order of importance:

*1 Increased professionalism of council procedures*

- as our parish clerk was already widely experienced it is unlikely that we would act improperly even if done so by accident. On the other hand it is widely felt that communication within the council has improved.



## *2 Stronger vision from council*

- certainly ideas are now coming from a variety of sources especially CLT members and BTV readers; could this be the start of a new vision for Upper Marshwood Vale?

## *3 Increased interest by local electorate in council affairs.*

- Er no, not really; but does this demonstrate the need for a Neighbourhood Plan or perhaps wider communications with residents? Perhaps quality councillors should tell their voters what they want for UMW.

## *4 Increased sense of capacity to act amongst councillors*

- Is this just a posh way of saying "getting things done"? If true, fine; if not councillors should seize the opportunity provided by the new status.

## *5 Stronger local leadership exercised by council*

- Marshwood now has a CLT that covers 3 of the four parishes, so who is now making the running, the council or the CLT? Certainly their recent steady progress on their affordable homes has established proper leadership in that area but that is only a single infrastructure project, the parish council has a much wider brief.

Even so perhaps it is time for councillors to generate ideas for our community as well as reacting to events and input from other councils.

## *6 Increased success with grant applications*

- None applied for. But our CLT is getting finances together for the affordable homes. QC cannot hinder this process.

## *7 Increased public participation at council meetings,*

- recent council meetings have seen more members of the public joining in and having their say. At the March meeting a non-councillor, David Hitchcock chair of the CLT, addressed councillors to set out the CLT's careful and considered reaction to the latest attack from Mr Van de Weyer.

## *8 Increased engagement with other bodies*

- Does this mean pick on someone our own size - no chance!

## *9 Increased consultation over service delivery by principal local authority*

- here we could well claim that UMW is showing WDDC and DCC the way with our successful lengthsmen operation. As other local not-yet quality councils seek to benefit from our proper operation of that scheme, those who misused their scheme now want ours cancelled 'to save money'. 'Save face' would be more accurate.

But one other conclusion comes to light: the smaller the council, the more important is the change to QC status.

Few councils who have achieved QC are as small as UMWPC, so the impact on both our council and our residents should be considerable.

Lets hope so.

## DCC backs our bid for DEFRA broadband funds

*Charles Somers who chairs our broadband team updates progress*

“Superfast Broadband is coming to most of rural Dorset **but probably not to us - - unless we do something extra to make it happen.**

**Spread the Word!!”**

That was the message of a recent flyer sent to residents and businesses in the seven parishes of the Upper Marshwood Vale and Char Valley. The Upper Marshwood Vale (UMV) broadband group is working with members of the Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) to apply for additional funds available from DEFRA to get a true superfast broadband (24 Mbps) upgrade and not one to just the standard broadband (2Mbps) envisaged for rural areas under the Superfast Dorset programme being run by Dorset County Council (DCC).

DCC has very recently agreed to back directly a DEFRA funds application on behalf of the seven parishes of the UMV and CVPC and to include a superfast broadband network upgrade in our area within the scope of their soon-to-be-signed Superfast Dorset contract. Details of network roll-out should be known by the end of this year and it is hoped that by then DEFRA funding approval will have been achieved.

Vital to this funds application is a demonstration to DEFRA of strong local demand. As a first step in that direction, residents and local organisations and businesses are being asked to register their interest on DCC’s superfast webs-site:

[www.dorsetforyou.com/superfast-dorset/register-interest](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/superfast-dorset/register-interest) (or by phone at 01305 221048) and, in addition, to provide letters of support to Charles Somers in UMV [somers984@btinternet.com](mailto:somers984@btinternet.com) or to Chris Everidge in Char Valley [chriseveridge@ymail.com](mailto:chriseveridge@ymail.com): sample letters for signature are available to be picked up and left at John’s shop in Marshwood.

Local schools, organisations and businesses will also be approached directly to gain their support. Many people and businesses have already provided letters of support for which we are very grateful, **but more would be very welcome !**

DCC’s web-site registrations today stand at 17% - not too bad, but we have a way to go yet to reach our eventual goal of 40% or higher.

**So, if you haven’t registered yet, please help us by doing so.**

The plan is to achieve a take-up level of 40% or more once the new service becomes activated in our area and monthly charges are not expected to be much different from what we are paying today for the very poor service some of us are experiencing.

**Keep up the good work in helping us to help you!**

## Open letters to Mark van de Weyer

After the public meeting where the proposed designs were agreed, Mark Van de Weyer wrote to the HCA. We cannot show this letter for legal reasons.

David Hitchcock, chairman of Marshwood Community Land Trust writes:

I received a copy of a letter dated 2-May 2013 sent by Mark Van de Weyer, addressed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) the government body who will give the go ahead for our 30% grant that has already been approved at local South West area level.

I do not propose to publish the two-page letter in full, which was sent to me as Chairman, for a CLT response but I have to say I was deeply saddened by what I read. His conclusion was to tell the HCA that it would be wrong to sanction our grant.

### **Mark**

As much of what you say is defamatory to both the individuals and the CLT and this is an open letter, I cannot repeat your assertions, many of which we have corrected in previous correspondence.

Your claim that the scheme has been handled dishonestly for some time is clearly ridiculous as the CLT is not in receipt of any public funds nor are these expected. By referring to the small group controlling the CLT putting pressure on landowners, you are fully aware that it is not the CLT that negotiates the deals, nor sets the policy that has caused other sites to fail. I have met with these land owners to assure myself and determine the facts to set aside your previous allegations. If they or other residents feel pressurised, surely they know who from the village community can help redress their concerns. I have pressured no one indeed I have gone out of my way to assist where ever possible.

You falsely allege that inducements have been made to CLT representatives by alluding to rumours, I really find this is a disgraceful suggestion and will shock many good honest people in this village. If many villagers are, as you allege so concerned, why did they vote so convincingly to support the CLT in the housing project? Indeed, why did you not raise the issues and concerns you have when I invited comments and questions at the public meeting and yet within days write to HCA without offering any evidence whatsoever?

In the past you have spoken against unnecessary delays so as Chairman of the Community Land Trust and on behalf of the community who want these houses as soon as possible I appeal to you publicly to stop trying to delay and disrupt the building of 7 houses for those in need and an 8<sup>th</sup> to be built by the landowner, totally at his own expense, that in time will house yet another family on the housing register.

At the present time there are 17 families within our catchment area looking for a home. Please allow the CLT team and its members to do what the community has asked them to do. Please stop these allegations; they damage both your integrity and cause distress to those who give their time free to help their fellow man.

Yours sincerely

David Hitchcock  
Chairman,  
Marshwood Community Land Trust.

**Update, Update... Democracy prevails.**  
**As we go to print rumours from Bristol are confirmed: the grant has been approved by the HCA board.**  
**Funding for the homes is now in place!**  
**Thanks to all concerned.**

## Affordable Housing - Oh Dear!

*In that letter hurtful and defamatory statements regarding District Councillor Mike Robinson were made so we cannot reproduce them. Cllr. Robinson fights back.*

~~I never imagined that trying to get affordable houses built for those in need was going to be so stressful and difficult, when I campaigned for them back in 2010. What I have found is that it brings out the best and the worst in people.~~

I was accused of impropriety, by Mr Van de Weyer back in 2012 (no evidence was ever supplied), and now he has again raised allegations to the Homes and Community Agency, albeit using unsubstantiated rumours, that I have received inducements from the landowner. This is an outrageous and malicious attempt to damage my reputation and indirectly he is trying to influence the Homes and Community Agency in their decision to grant funding to Hastoe as the Housing Agency.

I have asked him to retract these statements and apologise, but he uses the excuse that he did not make the allegations, as he was just reporting the rumours of others. In law this is not an excuse, as the statement made by him is libellous and he is also saying that he does not know whether the third party allegations are true. This is no defence, if I was to take him to court. He knows that it would be expensive and stressful to take this course of action and judges that he will get away with it.

My view is that a full transparent exposure of his actions is the best way to address this issue. I have already made a full statement to the Parish Meeting/Council. If anyone has the evidence that he claims to exist, let them report me to the Council's Monitoring Officer at West Dorset District Council – Mr Roger Greene.

Mike Robinson,  
District Councillor, Marshwood Vale

*Also mentioned in Van de Weyer's dispatches is Ross Dickinson, the landowner of the Thane Farn site recommended by council officials and chosen by the CLT and villagers. He rebuts these allegations as groundless.*

Racedown Farm  
Marshwood

Dear Readers,

It is with some regret that I find myself in a position in which I feel that I need to write an open letter to the community. Had I known in 2009 when I was first approached about putting forward some of my land for an affordable housing scheme how things would turn out I would certainly have declined.

In Mr. Van de Weyer's letter to the Homes and Communities Agency of the 2nd of May he says that there are rumours in the village that I, by implication, have been offering inducements to members of the CLT to presumably favour my site over other potential sites. He claims that there is one very specific allegation. If this allegation exists I would urge the person making it to declare it in public so that it could be tested. I categorically deny that I have offered any inducements to anybody.

The decision as to where affordable homes are to be built is in effect taken by Hastoe and the planning authorities.

My property would be entirely built using my own funds under the same planning conditions as the other houses.

I have always believed that we needed some affordable homes, which was why I allowed my site to be considered. There is a fine line for me between the pros and cons of this development on my site. The monies that would be paid to me for the site is about the same as that which I would achieve if I were to sell it as a "pony paddock". I will have seven houses immediately next to the main entrance to my farm and the already narrow frontage of the field will be reduced by about a third.

Given the above I have never been bothered whether my site or another in the village was chosen. I have considered withdrawing my site for this project. However on reflection it is clear to me that this would cause very significant delays to the project which will impact on the people needing the houses and also negate the great deal of work done by the CLT and others, all of whom have given their time on a voluntary basis.

Yours faithfully,

Ross Dickinson

~~Londoner shops village project to HCA~~

**Background  
article  
withdrawn**

In order to bring you those important personal statements by key individuals we have withdrawn this article, which could have implied criticism of Mr Van de Weyer.

Citing his 'right of reply' (does this apply to one who neither lives here nor pays local rates?), he has submitted an article justifying his actions and repeating his many claims.

Unfortunately Beneath the Vale cannot print these as they stand since they are known to be deeply flawed and we will never print to deliberately mislead our community.

So to prevent further abuse our article has been set aside.

Mr Van de Weyer is invited to submit his article in a proper form as a Letter to the Editor for the next issue.

We will be pleased to assist.

## Bettiscombe Manor's Hester Pinney was unique

*Having saved her brothers life, this remarkable lady invented marketing, provided an unmentionable service to the gentry, retained her unsullied reputation in puritan times, life-partnered her man as he married another and made several fortunes for him - and others.*

### **I n 1685 Azariah Pinney of Bettiscombe Manor, made his big mistake.**

The Duke of Monmouth, a protestant and illegitimate son of Charles II, led a revolt against his catholic uncle King James II. The rebellion was quickly squashed and many participants were sentenced to death by hanging.

Azariah and brother John Pinney joined in the rebellion, fought at Sedgemoor, both were captured and brought before Lord Chief Justice George Jeffreys at the Bloody Assizes on 10th September 1685.

Along with twelve others, Azariah and brother John sons of an influential minister were sentenced to be executed at Bridport for collaboration in the rebellion, but their sister, Hester, paid a £60 bribe to Judge Jeffreys in order to spare Azeriah's life. Instead, at the age of 24, Azariah was exiled to the British colony in Nevis in the West Indies where he was later able to buy his way out of enforced service and to pursue the profitable sugar trade.

Why John was hanged when his brother was saved is not known but there is a clue in the cruel nature of the notorious Judge.

### **Hester, the sister**

Having saved Azariah's life the 17-year old Hester's timely intervention with the corrupt Judge Jeffries, demonstrated to the rest of her family at the very least her determination and persuasive personality. This was only the start, for Hester went on to become a businessperson, a banker, the mistress and associate of a nobleman - without sullyng her own reputation, and in the last few years, a prototype feminist icon.

Although another brother, Nathaniel, was busy trading abroad, the family business of lace making was in decline, not the least by the sensual connotations of the material as well as the association with royalty. Worse, at the time of the Monmouth revolution and the religious perturbations before and after, not even the living of her reverend father would provide a stable income.

Facing the family's imminent bankruptcy, Hester realised that as society changed, there would soon be a new market requiring a local production base for this once illicit fabric.

Moreover the hedonistic, erotic and exotic perception of the use of lace and the intimate nature of the care of lace was more suited to the feminine gender. For lace was not just an item of clothing, it was a laundry service as well; what Hester supplied was clean lace underwear.

But over 300 years ago what she did next was totally new: she did not make or sell lace, she marketed it.

Using her sister Sarah as a local manager of a network of workers in East Devon and West Dorset, - presumably



local lace makers long known to the Pinney family - this 17<sup>th</sup> century Ann Summers was able to produce the lace before sending it to the wealthy of London.

**In today's terms Hester Pinney did not just sell the lace, she marketed it.**

For this she needed contacts. Starting with Nathaniel, she gained access to the nouveau riche, desperate to throw off puritan couture. For the family, the future was once again Orange, the future bought very swift returns and the family business was saved.

It also bought this vicar's daughter to the attention of a scion of the nobility, the Honourable George Booth, son of Lord Delamer, Earl of Warrington. This family, although politically astute, was impoverished. Hester, after only 7 years of her venture, was sufficiently liquid to lend money in return for interest and influence. And, as a banker, Hester was even more successful, if small in scale to start with.

were lovers and finally, they lived together.

Pam Sharpe of the University of Western Australia has studied her pioneering life:

“On the face of it, what Hester and George offered each other were similar political and religious attitudes forged in the difficult years of the 1670s and early 1680s. Hester provided a source of ready cash to loan and a no-nonsense country-woman's measured yet forthright opinions.

“Due to his training as a lawyer, George gave Hester powerful connections, monetary wisdom and help with litigation.”

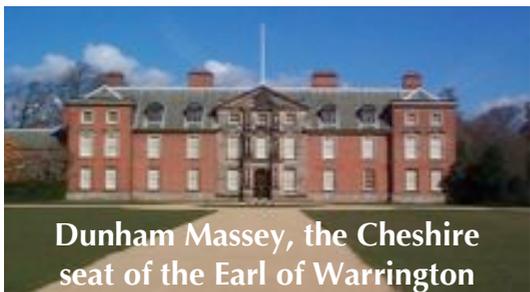
Dr Sharpe concedes that little of the emotional or physical side of their relationship can be drawn from their correspondence which concerned their business transactions. These make clear that she was good with accounts and as a result of her family misfortunes she was: “was very concerned that her money should be making more money.”

Yet she also ran the west-country production network and would act as a banker for her suppliers. So her reputation within this group was of utmost importance as it was based on trust.

*But her good reputation was under threat from her London lifestyle, her vulgar business and her illicit relationship.*

*More on Hester in the next issue.*

*Sadly we have been unable to discover any pictures of this remarkable woman. If readers know of one please get in touch*



**Dunham Massey, the Cheshire seat of the Earl of Warrington**

George Booth was 16 years younger than Hester; he was not the elder son so would not inherit and soon he married Mary, daughter of a wealthy London merchant. So what was the attraction between Hester and George that was to survive for more than 40 years and his death?

There was certainly a sexual frisson and more when they were young; many years later it was admitted that they

## You could write a book about it really

*Geoff Brierley, Elder Councillor retires from the county council*

### **D**eor's farm - now called **Durrington - near Salisbury**

has been populated since Neolithic times; it may even have been the home of Stonehenge's early builders with a very short commute to work. What is certain is that Marshwood's long-serving county councillor hailed from there aeons later - 1935 to be exact. It includes Larkhill so Geoffrey John Brierley claims to be raised to the sound of guns on Salisbury Plain even though his father had been in the navy and this was why they moved to Portland Bill when the war broke out.

Geoff and Veronica bought their first house in Whitchurch 1993 moving in 2 years later; in between these Dorset reference points lies a career of service and excitement in uneven measure. When asked if he was an incomer the correct reply was "How far back do you want to go."

His efforts to represent and support Marshwood as county councillor are a matter of record; his life prior to that is less well known but, as he retires fully, deserves recognition.

Wartime in Portsmouth was "pretty hairy", schools in Portsmouth and Winchester led directly to the army - not the navy since he could not pass physics at 'O' level - as he enlisted in the Royal Hampshire Regiment and 1954 he was off to Sandhurst to learn to be an officer.

"In those days it was rather better! In those days you took the Civil

Service Executive Entrance exam for Sandhurst, a very good examination which was why the army used it."

Graduating a year later, he was commissioned into the Dorset Regiment, his reasons for this choice hint at his future outlook:

"I wanted to be in the infantry. Don't ask me why, as actually you had to walk everywhere - I just had a thing about the countryside and the infantry tended to be closer than anyone else. I suppose that if I had not been a soldier I would have been a farmer."

Joining the 1st battalion in Dorchester, he went to Germany - and a memory that is ever present, even today - "All our sergeant majors had been in the battalion when they found Belsen. They had agreed that young soldiers should see just what war can do so we were all taken to that most grizzly of places.



**Belsen:  
all soldiers should remember..**

“When you got within about a mile of it there were no flowers, no birds singing, nothing. Ten years after the war, still absolutely desolate - something awful had happened there. Whether death spreads its wings I don't know. Cruelty of war... ”

Then army officers did not marry before they were 25 and then only with their COs permission, no marriage allowance for soldiers, no quarters, just ‘living in sin’. Veronica and Geoff got engaged when he was 22 and they married a year later whilst stationed at Topsham barracks near Exeter so he was definitely “persona non grata”. The young couple had a small flat - “all we could afford” - in Heavitree; in those days when marrying, the wife gave up work so they decided on a family without delay and their son arrived before his Cyprus posting.

A crown colony, Cyprus in 1960 was about to become independent of the UK with two, largely peaceful communities of Greek and Turkish ethnicity. National rivalry of those mother countries threatened a proxy war; UK had two retained sovereign bases, historic and strategic interests so was likely to be very much involved in someone else's civil war.

It was into such muddied waters that Geoff was appointed intelligence officer for the now amalgamated Devon & Dorsets. With wife, son and soon a daughter, he was still under 25 so “lived in a shack - and had 2 children and was not officially married.”

Back to the UK and a selection of seriously underwhelming jobs loomed. A soldier who had never been shot at, Geoff took his CO's advice and put in to join the



Parachute regiment and as an officer mature beyond his age as well as a fit sportsman, he was well suited for a three-year tour with the Paras. With 1 Para he - without family this time - was sent to Bahrain.

Here their role was to stop Iraq invading Kuwait so with tanks, field guns and what amounted to a small but complete army, they did what a coalition of countries failed to do nearly 30 years later. Geoff's role was teaching escape and evasion which entailed living with an Arab tribe in the middle of the desert, while Veronica and the children finally got a house near the Countess Weir in Exeter. Meanwhile the Cuba crisis played out and the world lurched towards a nuclear disaster, more threatening for their families than the distant military.

Eventually restored to his family, Geoff prepared for a routine

deployment to Cyprus in 1964. As Intelligence Officer he prepared all his briefings before going off for Christmas '63. But the Greek Cypriot goal of Enosis - union with Greece - intervened. As the proxy war went live, 1 Para arrived in a freezing Cyprus to re-establish and then keep the peace a role that eventually dragged in United Nations forces.

Equipped with woeful radios, as intelligence officer Geoff provided the essential communications:

"Our radios were so bad that as the intelligence officer I used to go round every morning in a helicopter and fly round for about 4 hours visiting all our posts and so on getting up to date information.

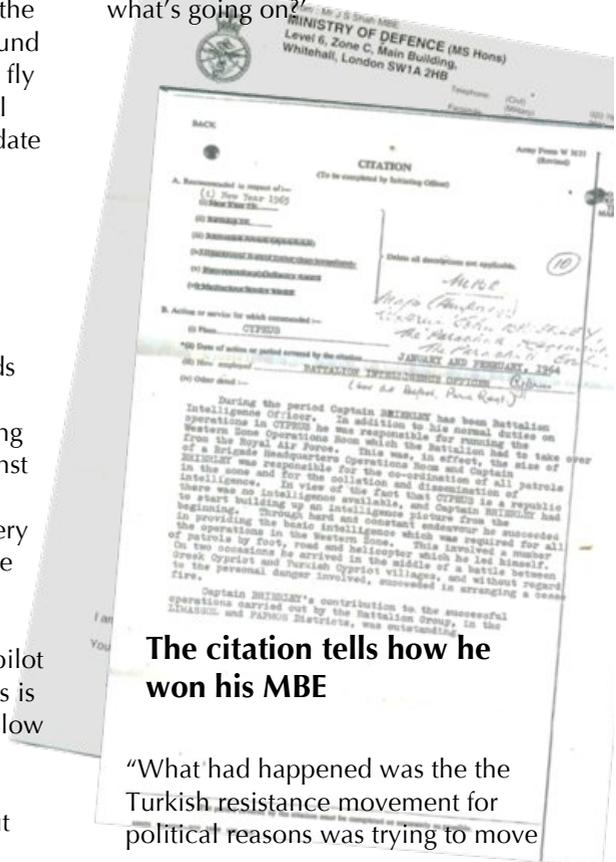
"I am flying over this Turkish - Greek village called Timi near Pathos. There were two mayors in these mixed villages one for the Greeks, one for the Turks but they had lived together OK for hundreds of years. A bit like Catholic and Protestants in Europe the underlying tension was Greek Orthodox against Muslims.

"Normally these villages were very busy in the mornings lots of people around and drinking in the coffee shops but I flew over the village - nothing, it was bare. I said to the pilot 'Just do a quick wheel round - this is not right!' 'We did a quick circuit low level and I could see some Greek policemen with weapons in one corner and nobody else. So we put down in the village school

playground and I nipped across with my sergeant and asked them 'What the --- hell's going on!'

"They said 'There's been fighting her all night and we are shooting at those Turks who are in those houses over there.'

'You can stop that right now!' I told them 'Lay down your arms, my sergeant will stay with you and we'll stop this!' I wandered up to the other end of the square and got a grip of the Turks and said: 'For Christ's sake pack this in - what's going on?'



**The citation tells how he won his MBE**

"What had happened was the the Turkish resistance movement for political reasons was trying to move

all the Turkish residents out of the village in order to create a communal problem as they did not like the way the Cyprus government was doing things. They had tried to move Turks out who did not want to go so they chucked a hand grenade so everyone went home to get their weapons to shoot at each other.

“So I took both mayors who had been to school together to the coffee shop and we all sat round in a circle and by the time reinforcements arrived it was all over

“Why I could be so stupid as to walk up a lane with weapons pointed at me and tell them all to shut up I don’t know. Perhaps that’s the power of the red beret [cap worn by parachute regiments] and that I was an outsider I suppose.”

Geoff later wore the blue UN beret as the peacekeeping went international. But this was a blue beret with a maroon patch, the only time such an acknowledgement was made. What he doesn’t say is that this was not the only ceasefire he had single-handedly enforced as the citation for his MBE (military) notes.

Back in the UK he selected and trained new recruits for the Paras, passed his exams at staff collage, collected his MBE from the Queen, and without notice or jungle experience, was sent to Borneo to confront the Indonesian takeover of Malaya. Not at all comfortable, he returned to a staff collage job at Camberley but soon the regiment promoted him to go to Aden and run 1 Para patrol company, their version

of the SAS. So they went to Malaya and the jungle to prepare for the desert and a “stormy time”, “3 ambushes” and a close shave when a rocket penetrated his command post injuring his staff sergeant. In the heat he and the others were not wearing shirts so suffered flash burns and deafness from a “bloody great bang”; as a result he is slightly deaf even today.

Much more fun was his time (2 ½ years) with the TA as one of the few regular officers and the wide variety of people and their civilian specialities that the TA attracted. In Ulster now with 3 Para, Geoff launched border patrols, got bombed at the Springfield Road police station in West Belfast, and dampened down the regular rioting but missed the events of Bloody Sunday which involved 1 Para.

A year in the USA at Fort Levenworth coincided with both Watergate and the Yom Kippur war giving Geoff an interesting if sardonic perception of our transatlantic cousins. The film ‘A Bridge too Far’ featured his troops jumping from Dakota DC3s, led of course by their commander, and his men drove the Green Goddess fire engines during the Firemen’s’ strike.

Recalling the halls in which the soldiers lived, Geoff remembers the kindness of Bentalls chairman Rowen Bentall who opened his store for Geoff’s paras to choose items from the shop to make themselves more comfortable. Back in South Armagh

he created a series of tactics to counter the hatred for paratroopers, and keep control of that bandit country.

Two more major overseas excursions capped off Geoff's career and set different tone: Ghana and Brunei.

Under President Jerry Rawlings, Ghana was bankrupt, Geoff was there working for the foreign office providing military advice but soon realised his work involved much reorganisation so was very political. His fair reputation even allowed him to stop a mutiny. Discovering that the mutineers had not been fed as suppliers had not been paid: "I soon got that one sorted out".

After his last appointment the Ghanaian Government flew Veronica and Geoff to Accra as an official 'thank you' visit.

Brunei by contrast is oil-rich; the Sultan is widely regarded as the world's wealthiest individual. No larger than Hampshire, this tiny state and its relationship with the UK was and is highly sensitive so was defended under a contract with the UK army. Brunei was lavishly equipped to defend the 365 oil rigs. Geoff headed up their military with a core of 120 UK soldiers, sailors and airmen. Not afraid to take on pirates his unit included a fleet of helicopters and high-speed Exorcet-equipped ships.

In a career that pioneered so many new ideas and tactics in situations now only too familiar - peacekeeping, deployment and withdrawal, terrorism, and now piracy, Geoff can claim to have been there and done it first. And in his final command Geoff achieved the sort of command structure that suited him, his personality and his experience.

"I like to be about a thousand miles away from any authority with a radio that doesn't work. I want a clear direction and then go!

As to his battles in the County Council - well that's another story.



**Geoff (right)  
with African and Finnish generals**

## Historic Marshwood revealed



At the end of April a treasure trove hidden for far too long was revealed and went on display at Marshwoods St Mary's church. Of no monetary interest whatsoever, the true value of what visitors saw was in their own history.

Presented with the help of Bridport's Local History Centre, and organised locally by sisters Helen Doble and Pauline Bailey, the roadshow arrived at Marshwood at the end of April. It drew in a steady stream of residents hoping to find out more about the history of their family or their house or both.

What visitors found was a series of displays from local residents, the school, and the organisers - and tables covered with family histories each lovingly compiled over the years by the families themselves. Many of the well-known families literally opened books and folders, files and deeds, correspondence and

comment from the last two centuries if not more.

Organised by the PCC and PFA at Marshwood school next door, refreshments and a barbeque sustained visitors and those displaying our own history. Meanwhile a short lecture from

Bridport Local History Centre's Community Engagement Officer Bruce Upton focused minds on facts and showed how even figures could fascinate.

Many of the photos on display drew the 'isn't that Uncle Geoff' comments as dimly remembered faces ignored the years and appeared as ordinary folk albeit somewhat oddly dressed or more than usually hirsute.

One particular comment regularly overheard was that this welter of information has to be preserved and made available, preferably on a local basis. A widely suggested possibility was the concept of a web museum.

Now that's food for thought.



## Letter to the editor

Sir,

All out of forked sticks, hence email...

You asked what kind of village development do **we** think is needed.

I feel we in Marshwood need certain basics: first and foremost, a proper (mains) sewage system.

Then other "village basics" such as a green (whether it be orchard, play area, or just a green space with benches where people can gather) and a village hall (ditto where people get together for community events and activities); a footpath so that walking through the village is safe and a bus service.

I consider the sewage system a Must!

*This is the sort of letter your editor likes to get - thought provoking, relevant and constructive - respect! More please!*

*On the transport front your editor has become aware of the Flexicars idea*

- *community-owned government-funded vehicles centrally placed in towns and booked by members as needed.*
- *Could this work in a village community?*
- *This idea needs working on!*



The other four give us community and mobility. Anything else would be a future bonus but not immediately essential.

For instance, as far as future for youngsters is concerned, a bus to Crewkerne, Axminster, Bridport, larger villages, and so to other transport connections would mean employment opportunities within 15 minutes and up.

I think it's inappropriate to talk of the "long-term future" of the village shop when we *have* a shop; time for that if ever John wants to sell up.

Linda Peifer

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## **Forde Abbey Charity Summer Fair**

for Marie Curie Cancer Care &

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution

25<sup>th</sup> July 11am - 4pm

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## An Annoying Quiz

- 1 How long did the Hundred Years War last?
- 2 Which country makes Panama hats?
- 3 From which animals do we get cat gut?
- 4 In which month do Russians celebrate the October Revolution?
- 5 What is a camel's hair brush made of?
- 6 The Canary Islands in the Pacific are named after which animal?
- 7 What was King George VI's first name?
- 8 What is the colour of a purple finch?
- 9 Where do Chinese gooseberries come from?
- 10 What is the colour of the black box in a commercial aircraft?

## On Reaching 60

Everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt - doesn't work.

The gleam in your eye is from the sun hitting your bi-focals.

You feel like the night before - and you haven't been anywhere.

You get winded playing cards.

Your children look middle aged.

You join a health club and don't go.

A dripping tap causes uncontrollable bladder urge.

You know all the answers but nobody asks you the questions.

You look forward to a dull evening.

You need glasses to find your glasses.

You sit on a rocking chair and can't get it going.

Your knees buckle but your belt won't.

Your back goes out more than you do.

You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.

*All absolutely hypothetical of course.....*

A gorgeous young redhead went in to see the doctor. She told him her body hurt whenever she touched it.

"Impossible" he said, "show me"

She took her finger, pushed on her shoulder and screamed. Then she pushed her elbow and screamed even more. She pushed on her knee and screamed, then she pushed at her ankle to scream again. Everywhere she touched made her scream.

The doctor said "You're not really a redhead are you?"

"Well, no" she said, "actually I'm a blonde."

"I thought so", said the doctor. ' Your finger is broken."

## Annoying Quiz - answers

1 - 116 years, 2 - Ecuador, 3 - Sheep and horses, 4 - November, 5 - Squirrel fur, 6 - Dogs, 7 - Albert, 8 - Crimmon, 9 - New Zealand, 10 - Orange

## Editorial

**“Just tell us.”**

**So said a leading light of our Community Land Trust.** She was referring in this instance to getting feedback from the village about the designs for the affordable homes, but it could well be more pertinent as a general comment on what Marshwood wants.

Our CLT under chairman David Hitchcock has worked tirelessly to deliver ideas and features that are both acceptable to distant and difficult officials and really wanted by local residents. Some ideas such as a medical centre for Marshwood at the Thane Farm site have come forward albeit in a pointless and counterproductive manner as Parish Council and CLT discovered these ideas only after being berated for not adopting them.

Presented as a practical and researched project, these ideas could have been presented to the Parish council or the CLT for serious consideration; indeed a Marshwood councillor offered to help this only to be rebuffed. But if the medical centre idea is more than a blocking ploy to fatally delay these much-needed homes, let us agree the real need and actual practicality of this seriously imaginative scheme.

**“Just tell us”**

“We are now looking at other ideas for our village” continued the Land Trust lady.

Now in the process of getting planning consent, approval of the homes project puts the work-load onto Rob Aspray and his team at Hastoe the housing association, and West Dorset planners. These professionals will now do what they are paid for, so life might well quieten

down for CLT members, or they can get their thinking caps on instead.

So let them know what you are thinking.



**Soil turned at Thane Farm**

BTV exists today as a direct result of our Parish Plan, as does the affordable homes project, so when your editor was asked to address some Loders residents on matters broadband, I felt well at home. The survey results handed out seemed remarkably similar even with the passage of time. With an active team debating the recommendations line-by-line, it seemed we were at the wellspring of local democracy. Such an operation usually takes place every 5 years, but ideas happen when needed or imagined.

By email, post or phone to councillors, CLT members or myself as editor - we're all listed at the back of this issue.

**“Just tell us”**

Oh yes the meeting took place in the Loders village hall - centrally placed, modestly equipped, good car parking, kitchen, side-rooms, hall and stage...

Ali Cameron

## Your Community Land Trust: Contacts

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Your Community Land Trust website: <http://marshwoodclt.org.uk>

Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Marshwood-CLT/234577716655748>

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## Your Parish Council meetings

Full council	Thursday	July 18 <sup>th</sup>	7.30 pm	Shaves Cross Skittle Ally
Full council	Thursday	September 19 <sup>th</sup>	7.30 pm	Stoke Abbott Village Hall

# Your Parish Council

website: [www.uppermarshwoodcouncil.org](http://www.uppermarshwoodcouncil.org)

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