

# Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Summer 2019: Issue 32



## Support our Post Office

The Post Office Outreach Service has now been running since January on Tuesday afternoons in St Mary's Church, Marshwood from 1.30pm-3.30pm.

With so many branches of local banks having closed, this service is highly valuable to Marshwood and the Vale. It provides banking services for personal customers and small businesses, you can get cash out, pay cash into most

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It's easy to park and while your there you can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee provided by a team of volunteers.

Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe

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# Summer is the season for road closure traffic chaos

**Regular readers will know that parish councillors and residents have formed a group to try to alleviate the problems caused on our narrow lanes when the A35 is closed because of accidents.**

**Back in November last year we held a public meeting in Whitchurch village hall attended by Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner Martyn Underhill. Mr Underhill encouraged us to form a volunteer group to consult with the police and Dorset Highways on this issue. He also spoke about new software for a police drone that would reduce the time needed to gather evidence**

**at an accident scene, potentially reducing the time needed by up to half.**

**In the spring we were surprised when Mr Underhill went cold. When pushed for a response and further meeting, he told us that the volunteer group was no longer needed. He said that the new 'Pan Dorset Critical Route Emergency Road**

**Closure Protocol' made it redundant.**

**Chris Noon, who leads the A35 group, said: 'We are concerned that the issues raised at the public meeting and subsequently collated and explored by the A35DVG have not, nor will be, fully addressed.'**

**Chris and two other members of the group recently met our MP Sir Oliver Letwin.**

Do Dorset's senior police recognise the damage their policies cause to thousands who live, work and travel through our area when an accident closes the A35?

To repeat what we were told in our first meeting with Mr Underhill last year: Dorset Police were to get a specially programmed survey drone. An information chain from a nominated police officer could possibly be set up to co-ordinate a team of local people to adjust road signs to indicate agreed diversionary routes. In this way the day-long interruption to life in the Marshwood Vale would be speeded up and our Vale reopened

as swiftly a possible. Sounded like the basis of a great plan.

Then followed the public meeting between Mr Underhill backed by local police officers at Whitchurch Canonicorum and over 80 members of the public from surrounding villages. The meeting cost was paid for by this magazine.

As a result, concerned members of the public joined an A35 group chaired by Chris Noon from Morcombelake. It set about their side of the bargain suggesting diversion

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routes. Their efforts were met with silence by the authorities. Finally a reply came back from Mr Underhill; it seems that the police had their own plan, which was already being applied.

So what had gone wrong, Chris, Jacqui Sewell and I asked Sir Oliver? He felt that it was all about the police DNA. If an idea came from the police it was a good idea, if it came from a close ally of the police such as the PCC it was probably acceptable, but if it came from the untrained disorientated general public it would be A Bad Idea and To Be Opposed.

### Revised proposals

He pointed out that it had taken a century for the RNLI to be accepted by the police as an adjunct of the emergency services even though it was comprised of civilians. Suddenly it all made sense. The police are institutionally incapable of accepting help from us mere civilians; it is in their DNA.

So what did our MP suggest to overcome this gross handicap of not being uniformed? He summarised as follows: 'Revise our proposals to emphasis what the police could not do by virtue of their cutbacks; such as reporting on the diversions – feeding back on signage and communications, adopt a lower key approach. Let the police, police.'

Chris Noon's team immediately accepted that advice and modified the group's proposals accordingly. Letwin agreed to write to Martyn Underhill recommending these changes. The response to this pressure was slow to arrive. It came eventually not from Mr Underhill but a Highways Agency



*Public meeting in Whitchurch Canonorum hall.  
Photograph by Jacqui Sewell.*

service manager for the A35 who reiterated the official line ignoring our positive suggestions, but offered a new leaflet and a press campaign. But then she works many miles away from our chaos in Exeter's M5 and other dual carriageways.

Is Martyn Underhill wasting our time – or is his failure to bring about his own ideas a more deep-seated problem for our police?

The real surprise came at the end of our conversation with Letwin when we enquired as to the status of Martyn's drone. Sir Oliver Letwin, our MP, fully involved in A35 improvements, had never heard of it!

Was it purchased, or is it just another pipedream?

**Ali Cameron**

## Parish council annual meeting and annual parish meeting

In an unusual way, two meetings were melded together in an annual event that has become usual. Two agendas, one for the parish council annual event, the other for the Annual Parish Meeting, were taken in order that resulted in an interesting meeting – and a noticeable increase in the community involvement of individual councillors.

As the result of an unfortunate mistake by one embarrassed councillor, councillors in Marshwood parish were actually voted for with Cllr Ali Edwards receiving most votes. Cllrs Ali Cameron, Fred Bailey, Trevor Richards and Chris Rabbetts were also re-elected. Roy Warburton was not.

The council's first duty was to chose a chairman and vice chairman, with Matthew Bowditch and Eddie Rowe being re-elected. That completed, the next step was to fill the spare seats in Pilsdon and Stoke Abbott.

Against all the national trends, three people were willing to be co-opted onto the council: Jacqui Sewell, Roy Warburton and John Piper. Jacqui was voted in first for Stoke Abbott as an appreciation of her proven track record of support over her years on the now defunct district council. However, two into one will always disappoint and it was local accountant John Piper who was overwhelmingly in front on the ad hoc ballot papers for Pilsdon. His co-option strengthens the council's financial muscle. Cllr Matthew Bowditch thanked Roy Warburton for his 10 years of service before Roy left the meeting.

The council agreed that 'Power of Competence' was an important enabler of what a council could, and therefore should, provide. This telling phrase covers both what the council does and is, and 'permits local councils to do anything that individuals generally may do'.

This all but coincided with 'Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes'. John Vanderwolfe, our everlasting parish clerk, pointed out that he had accidentally misled the council at the last meeting when he mentioned a notional overspend by the Neighbourhood Plan team. He confirmed was due to differing accounting techniques and the new accounts he presented to the new councillors were agreed and audited as correct.

The accounts show a continued improvement from the position when the old county council severed our payments for the Lengthsman project leaving UMVPC to carry that load.

Next came a short speech by our new Dorset councillor, Simon Christopher, in which he promised his support for those that needed it. One of 82 councillors, far fewer than the old regime, he pointed out that he was about to be trained as a councillor, but that he looked forward to representing his new community.

**Continued on page 6**

These days the police are always far too busy arresting folk to come to a mere council meeting, so this particular meeting drew to a close only to re-appear as part two, which comprised a series of annual reports from the village councillors, most noticeably from Cllr Ali Edwards, who mentioned the option of an official Highways survey to confirm the work done by Ali and her team.

### **Fee to collect traffic data**

It appears that the police are worried that their speed gun was being used for non-police approved situations. Perhaps if the police did their job properly and did not ignore the 110 who speed through our community then such 'misuse' of their equipment would not occur.

Instead Dorset Highways are very willing to collect the same information again and to process it into a survey, for the all-in price of £425. The irony is that it is Dorset Highway's duty to do such work and not to seek to bill the over-charged ratepayers of the parish, something that seems to be beyond their ability to comprehend. Milchcow Marshwood indeed. The parish

council said no, and asked Cllr Christopher to intervene.

It was very clear that councillors volunteered far more willingly than in the past to be involved with a long list of outside bodies thus increasing the influence of Upper Marshwood Vale's Quality Council.

With police who say one thing then tell us the opposite and self important officials denying the real democracy once practised in Dorset, our individual councillors are fighting back with information, facts, figures and sheer hard work against this applied superiority. The Power of Competence could just be the next chapter in the Book of Marshwood.

The Parish Meeting concluded with the distribution of the draft Neighbourhood Plan by NP chairman Charles Somers (more details on page seven, opposite this article). Next parish council meeting is on 18 July, at 7.30pm in Bettiscombe village hall.

*Ali Cameron*

### **Marshwood CLT AGM Monday 15 July at 13:00, Blackdown Hall**

**Before the AGM there will be a drop in and chat session similar to the one held last year. We will be at Blackdown Hall from 11:30am on the 15th for any local residents, be they CLT members or not, to call in and chat to other residents and CLT board members about local issues.  
Refreshments will be available.**

## **Neighbourhood Plan - results of the recent public consultation**

We opened a six-week consultation period on our draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP) several weeks ago and that closed on the 18th of June.

There were 54 return forms completed, of some 100 distributed, which was not a bad response rate. Of these, 43 were from Marshwood and Bettiscombe, seven from Stoke Abbott and four from others not in our parishes but with an interest in the NP. There were also four comments posted via our NP website.

There was strong support for the overall plan with many suggestions for minor changes: there were also general objections, around 10% of responses.

The support level on the specific sites (Colmer and Three Counties) was also strong, again with suggestions for minor changes and there were also several

objections, again around 10% of responses. The detailed response scores and the full list of comments submitted will be posted, by mid-July, on the NP web site below together with a revised version of the NP.

<http://uppermarshwoodvale.org/home/neighbourhood-plan/>

The revised NP will be presented to the parish council meeting of 18 July for them to formally adopt it and allow it to go forward to full consultation, this including examination by a Government inspector.

We have also begun a discussion on possible layouts for the Colmer site including the car park area, the location of a possible shop and housing and hope to publish some detail on that in future issues of the magazine.

*Charles Somers  
Chair of the NP steering committee*

## **Community loses notable residents**

After an active life as a head gardener, Patrick Niven retired to make his models and tend his own garden overlooking Marshwood Vale. He reached his 92nd year, only to die in Bridport where he briefly resided. Rosemary Niven, who many remember as their teacher died aged 89 also in Bridport, to re-join Patrick at a unique double service of remembrance at Yeovil.

They both contributed much to the

Marshwood community so will be sadly missed.

Others leaving Marshwood for promotion to a better place included Mary Gibson and John Green.

Mary was latterly famed for her excellent teas at her Bettiscombe home to raise funds for local charities, while film-maker John served on the parish council.

## Recipe: Quick pizza

**4oz self-raising flour**  
**S&P to taste**  
**5 tablespoons olive oil**  
**3-4 tablespoons water**  
**1oz butter**  
**1 small onion, chopped**  
**1-2 level teaspoons mixed herbs**  
**Tin of tomatoes, drained and chopped**  
**4oz cheddar, thinly sliced**  
**4-6 rashers bacon, chopped**  
**Olives to taste**

Melt butter in frying pan, add onion and bacon and fry until just starting

to brown then set aside. Meanwhile make pizza base. Mix flour, salt and oil in a bowl with enough water to make a soft dough. Roll into a circle the size of your pan.

Add the rest of oil to pan and fry pizza base until browned. Turn and top with tomatoes, herbs, then onion and bacon and top with cheese slices and sliced olives. When base is browned, pop under a heated grill until cheese is melted.

*Joy McClellan*



*Your local sweep: Glyn Yorke*

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'Golden Ball' cider apple tree (right) grafted at the 'Pylon Project' workshop in April.

## Grafting workshop success!

### Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council meeting dates

18 July  
19 September  
21 November

Meetings start at 7.30pm in Bettiscombe Village Hall. Everyone welcome.

**Our last issue reported on an apple tree grafting workshop organised by Dorset AONB as part of the 'Pylon Project'. A group of residents met at Filford Farm to graft trees for planting in the Vale. Many of these were old, traditional varieties, some of them suitable for producing cider. We can report that all the scions grafted that day have taken well.**

## Planning application submitted for shop

A planning application has been submitted for change of use at the old shop in Marshwood. Sebastian Walther – better known as Bash – is the driving force behind the plans. He hopes for consent to develop the old shop into a two-storey new home for his father John, and a carer.

Bash said: 'We hope that we will never have to go ahead with these plans, but if John's health deteriorates we could go ahead and create a comfortable home without waiting for the planners to make up their mind.'

The application is in John's name and he echoes these sentiments. He says he is comfortable in his present home and is much improved after his accident, which forced the closure of Marshwood Stores. He would be sad to leave the old farmhouse which dates back over 600 years and includes

an inglenook fireplace and bread oven. The application would add a ground floor extension to the old shop, which started life as a garage, so to accommodate a lounge, study, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom for John, and a second storey over for a live-in carer.

Our parish council will have to weigh up the merits of this plan. Extending the shop into the garden means that over-development could rank high in the thoughts of parish councillors, as the building would be seen from Bettiscombe. The plans show three windows on the south side overlooking the neighbours' courtyard and garden.

Councillors will have their say and recommendations will be made, but it is the new Dorset Council who will have to resolve this conundrum.

## Broadband - hopes rise and stall

Residents in the south-west corner of Marshwood parish still waiting for superfast broadband have a possible solution in sight if we can get some action from Openreach and Dorset Council's tech team.

Back in the spring I went to see our MP Sir Oliver Letwin about the lack of progress. He said that from 2020 service providers will be obliged to provide superfast to all addresses using the most appropriate technology for the location. Letwin said he would help to push Dorset Council's broadband team to make sure that our rural corner is first in the queue locally when the universal service obligation kicks in next year.

He contacted Superfast Dorset on our behalf. They said that we should apply for funding through the new Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme, launched in May. This is a re-launch of the scheme we applied to last year which was too expensive to be viable. More funding is available this time.

Pete Bartlett, a project manager at Superfast Dorset, advised me to re-contact Openreach about starting an application again. As *Beneath the Vale* goes to press, I'm talking to Openreach but I don't expect a speedy resolution to what has become a ridiculous marathon.

*Sara Hudston*

## Marshwood Community Land Trust: Officers

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### Marshwood Shop sub-committee

Chairman	Helen Golding (marshwoodsc@gmail.com)
Vice-chair	(Currently vacant)
Treasurer	John Piper

**Community Land Trust website: [www.marshwoodclt.org.uk](http://www.marshwoodclt.org.uk)**

**Facebook Page: Marshwood CLT**

### Interested in renting affordable housing?

Are you registered with Dorset Home Choice?

Would you, or someone you know, be interested in moving into one of the houses at Bramblehay, Marshwood, should a property become available? Allocation of these properties, and similar schemes in neighbouring villages, is handled by Dorset Home Choice. To be considered as a tenant, you need to be on the housing register. Be prepared by registering now at [www.dorsethomechoice.org](http://www.dorsethomechoice.org)

When registering, please make sure you put the following statement on your application to show you qualify for Marshwood CLT housing:

**'Have local connection required to qualify for CLT housing'**

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

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Address: NP Steering Committee, c/o The Old Rectory, Marshwood, Dorset DT6 5Q  
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