

Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Winter 2019: Issue 30



David Hayball (left) and David Corneloues fix the finial on the sign at Marshwood Cross.

Fingerpost sign restored

The new fingerpost sign at the bottom of Mutton Street has now been completed. Most of the funding came from Marshwood CLT, with the addition of £150 from the CPRE. The CPRE grant enabled a finial to be made. This was cast by the Bridport Foundry and shows the location of the post as Marshwood Cross. This name has been confirmed by Dorset AONB from old OS maps.

David Hayball and David Corneloues led the project with help from Roland Bugler, Brian Holmes and Nigel Gillingham. Simon Taylor made the timber 'fingers'. The CLT has agreed to fund the repair of the signpost on the Broadoak road just east of Shave Cross. This is an older cast-iron design of post and is probably the oldest in the Vale. OS maps refer to this location as Dodges Orchard.

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Beneath the Vale is published four times a year by the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council and posted to homes in the combined parishes of Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe.

Our mailing list covers household addresses using information that is in the public domain. We use this list solely to send out copies of *Beneath the Vale* and associated information relating to the parishes. We do not share data with third parties.

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Superfast broadband claim is 'blatantly dishonest' says dissatisfied resident

Homeowners in the southwest corner of Marshwood parish are beginning to despair that they will ever be offered true superfast broadband. This is despite claims by BT and Superfast Dorset, the county council's broadband team, to have brought superfast broadband to the area.

Dr Tony Farmer of Prime Farm moved his service from ADSL to superfast fibre in July last year. He said: 'Basically there has been zero improvement in speed. In fact the service has got very much worse of late. We constantly receive alerts from Gmail advising us to use their HTML version as the speed is so bad. Not only that, the broadband service regularly disappears completely for hours at a time. It is blatantly dishonest to claim that we are in receipt of "Superfast Broadband".'

Residents are regularly sent letters from BT offering better speeds and service by moving to fibre broadband, as Dr Farmer has done. The letters are sent despite Openreach's own engineers agreeing that superfast speeds are not achievable with the infrastructure in place at the moment. A tiny footnote in minute print on the back of

the letters admits 'not all lines in superfast-enabled areas can support the superfast fibre service.'

This corner of Marshwood parish was included in the otherwise excellent superfast project part-funded by DEFRA and coordinated by Charles Somers. All the other premises in the project were offered fibre to the premises (FTTP), bringing top broadband speeds directly to homes and businesses, a huge advantage.

But a scattering of about 20 premises in the heart of the Vale on Prime Lane and Cards Mill/Watery Lane are on a different telephone exchange. Because of this, they could only be offered fibre to the nearest cabinet (FTTC). This means their broadband uses fibre optic cable as far as the telephone cabinet, and then travels down old copper wires for the rest of the way.

Old copper wires

The Marshwood scheme paid for a new cabinet to be installed in Whitchurch, but this is too far away to be effective. Data has to travel for too long down copper wires before reaching households, losing download speed on the way. Upload speed is even worse.

Continued overleaf



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Almost all the premises affected are running small businesses. Better broadband is particularly essential for them.

Over the last few months, I have been pursuing a community fibre broadband grant with Openreach in the hope of raising money to pay for FTTP. This is the same solution used by the rest of the Marshwood project and it would solve the problem.

Subsidy slashed by Government

However, it eventually emerged that each and every address would have to pay a subsidy of nearly £2,000 to make the scheme viable. This is clearly not achievable.

The problem is exacerbated by the Government cutting the amount of subsidy available, despite public pledges last autumn to increase support for rural broadband.

Superfast Dorset say they cannot help and seem resigned to the idea that the problem will be left unresolved. This is simply not good enough – anyone who lives in a rural area understands how vital it is for businesses and families to have decent broadband provision. We will continue to lobby for this.

Sara Hudston



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Meeting with PCC addresses A35 road closure problems



Volunteers have formed a group to work with Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner Martyn Underhill (pictured above) on reducing the traffic misery caused in the Vale when the A35 is closed by accidents.

The initiative comes out of the public meeting organised by *Beneath the Vale* and held in Whitchurch Canonicorum village hall on 29 November. About 100 people attended and heard Mr Underhill outline ways that might mitigate the problem.

Inspector Matt Butler from Dorset Police's traffic section and Craig Baker, area manager for Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, also addressed the meeting. They gave a perspective on the challenges faced by emergency services when coping with accidents on the main road. Two actions emerged from the meeting. The first

was that the police will be using drones to map accident scenes. This could reduce the time taken by half.

The second was Mr Underhill's suggestion that locals form a group to help plan traffic diversion signage in the Vale. This will also need local authority involvement, but Mr Underhill pledged his support in helping us achieve results.

The core volunteer group met a few days after the public meeting to discuss next steps. They planned a further gathering to agree routes, but this had to be postponed due to flooding. The replacement meeting at the Five Bells took place last week while *Beneath the Vale* was at the printers. We'll keep you up-to-date in the next edition – in the meantime, please contact the editor if you would like further information.

Parish council meeting 15 Nov

Once again meteorological conditions almost interfered with the parish council meeting of the Upper Marshwood Vale. Mist and fog had joined forces to become a pea-souper, all but blocking out our Vale and limiting the meeting to just seven councillors. Everyone who attended had difficulties making progress in the fog, but chairman Matthew Bowditch, who had furthest to travel, started the meeting on time.

Speed limit request

Up first was really a Democratic Period item: a request for the council's backing for a 20 mph speed limit to protect our youngsters when being dropped off or collected from school. Juliet Evans spoke as a member of the public and as a parent, strongly putting the school's case for lower speed restrictions around the school including both the main road and on Mutton Street, which is currently subject to the 60 mph national speed limit. The number of cars has been exacerbated by cuts in the bus service.

Highways authority

This complex issue is subject to the highways authority. Clerk, John Vanderwolfe, was tasked with contacting the highways department to give the council's support to this request.

Next followed Finance; here John presented updates and a projection for the next year which showed a 1% increase. Councillors had agreed a more substantial uplift last year so this was found to be acceptable.

Then came county and district council reports, starting with Cllr Daryl Turner's comments on the appointment of Matt Prosser to become Dorset's new boss of the new council, replacing Debbie Ward, who is standing down as Dorset County Council chief executive.

In the future, this area will lose three of the four councillors and will be represented by a single Dorset councillor.

Your clerk was puzzled by the single planning application received for 37 new houses on the Clipper Tea site in Beaminster as this is over a mile from our boundaries so it was agreed that he should merely 'note' this application.

A report on the Neighbourhood Plan progress was used to remind councillors of the meeting on the following Saturday at Marshwood Church. (See report)

A similar but more detailed report was presented to councillors asking for their attendance and giving the background to another meeting, this time with Martyn Underhill, Dorset's Police and Crime Commissioner, talking about ways to improve traffic deadlock in the Vale when the A35 is closed. (See report on page 5).

The next council meeting was held on 17 January, too late to make the deadline for this issue of Beneath the Vale. We will have a report in the Spring issue.

Marshwood launches a new group tasked to get us a shop

Under the auspices of the Neighbourhood Plan, a gathering of many of the 'interested parties' took place at Ann Hitchcock's home. It initially reflected the early efforts of David, her late husband. As chair of Marshwood Community Land Trust (CLT), David started negotiations about a replacement shop.

After acknowledging David's work in a moment of remembrance, our district councillor, Jacqui Sewell, set out the strengths of the case for such a step, while acknowledging the weaknesses.

Since this is a Marshwood based project, the meeting decided that the CLT was the appropriate entity to lead the project forward, especially since it would involve setting up a new business.

Representing Wessex Community Assets, Liz Maunder explained that they had nurtured many new community shops into being and that she works in her own local emporium also under the umbrella of a local CLT. She offered support to the Marshwood CLT to establish the legal structure for a shop and to assist in its creation.

Two board members of the CLT were present and agreed to put this proposal to their next board meeting, recognising the additional work that this next new major project would involve after completion of Marshwood's affordable homes. The CLT board met on 7 January and agreed to

sign an agreement with Wessex regarding development of the shop.

Neighbourhood Plan chairman Charles Somers gave us a look ahead as to the plans already set out and studied by their group. There are two main sites being offered, with a third possibility being considered which could offer alternative benefits.

With this vital step close to being accepted by the Neighbourhood Plan, most of the rest of the meeting was given over to the 'who, how, what, and when' of the whole idea of a village shop. We discussed the importance – and good sense – of local products and freshly prepared food. We spoke about the relevance of passing trade and the vital role of 'community spirit' in what the village requires.

Cllr Sewell described how she had tried to ring-fence some funding, so far satisfactorily, but with the new Dorset Council close to taking power she could not guarantee the money would still be available. It soon became clear that there were two people at the meeting with personal experience of aspects of running a shop, plus a very experienced accountant with many shops on his books.

Helen Golding has set up and run retail businesses, so was promptly elected as chairman of the group. Jackie Mears, who

Continued on page 8

Recipe: Individual fillet steaks *en croute*

575 – 675g fillet steak, in one piece
50g butter
125g mushrooms, thinly sliced
25g onion, finely chopped
50g ham, shredded
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 clove garlic, crushed or 1 tablespoon
whisky
400g packet frozen puff pastry, thawed
Beaten egg to brush
Watercress to garnish

Trim away any excess fat, then press the steak into a neat shape. Tie firmly at equal intervals in 6 places to form a roll. Cut the steak through between each piece of string to make 6 equal-sized steaks. Heat half of the butter in a frying pan and when very hot add the steaks. Turn them almost immediately, so that the outside is seared to seal in the juices. Place aside until cold.

Add the remaining butter to the pan and lightly fry the mushrooms and onion until

the onion is just soft. Add the ham, turn mixture together and season to taste with salt, pepper and garlic or whisky. Cool.

Roll the pastry out on a lightly floured surface to a rectangle about 33 by 46cm, cut into six equal rectangles. Use trimmings to cut out pastry leaves.

Cut the string away from the steaks. Place a spoonful of the mushroom and ham mixture on each piece of pastry and a steak on top. Brush round the pastry edges with beaten egg, then seal over to parcel the steaks.

Place the steaks on a baking tray with sealed edges down. Cover with cling film, chill until ready to cook.

Cook at 200C for 30-40 minutes. Serve with vegetables and a watercress garnish.

Joy McClellan

Cont. from page 7

has done the same for a food outlet, was appointed as vice-chair. John Piper will handle the finances. We also have available invaluable guidance from Felicity who runs her eponymous shop at Morcombelake.

Others present found themselves performing familiar roles and all formed themselves into an as yet unnamed committee – perhaps the Marshwood Shop Group is appropriate.

But that was not nearly enough. With the wide range of talents available in the village, the Marshwood Shop Group is now

seeking your details in order to ‘coerce’ your involvement. We are looking for building ability, plumbing familiarity, electrical know-how. We need experienced shoppers and shopkeepers. Business folk to advise and guide, parents to ensure we get the best products on sale at the right price. Youngsters full of enthusiasm and the elderly wise with years, all have something to contribute.

Lack of experience is no excuse. It is starting to seem that John Walther will be replaced only by the skills of an entire village!

Ali Cameron

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Neighbourhood Plan update: focus on shop and parking

In the autumn issue we reported on the outcome of a public consultation on seven sites offered for consideration for future development.

Given the general lack of support for further housing, only two now remain which have received local support; the Dungeon and Three Counties sites. A further site, opposite the church and school, had been offered by its owner for parking but with the condition that some housing should also be allowed.

These results were presented at a public meeting held at Marshwood church in

Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council meeting dates

21 March: Annual Parish Meeting and council meeting.

(2 May: Dorset Council and town and parish council elections)

16 May: Annual Council Meeting

Regular council meetings follow on:

18 July

19 September

21 November

Meetings start at 7.30pm in Bettiscombe Village Hall. All are very welcome to attend.

November where questions were answered, and two topics of local interest presented:

- Cllr Jacqui Sewell explained how a new shop for Marshwood might be established and called on people there to volunteer to form a committee to see how that might be achieved. Several people volunteered, and this initiative is now being taken forward (see separate article on the shop) with the Dungeon site offering a possible location, subject to agreement on a detailed plan.
- A 30-space car park solution was proposed on the site opposite the school, this together with some housing, and that proposal was put to a show of hands at the meeting. There was a clear majority in favour given the potential benefit to the local community.

We now have three sites to be examined and surveyed in detail once outline layouts have been provided by the site owners. These will be passed to the district council for a final screening before being included in a first draft of our Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

By the time of the next issue of this magazine, we hope to be able to call a further public meeting where the first draft of our NP will be presented for comment. We then hope to begin the formal process that will lead to a local referendum by mid-year.

Charles Somers



Post Office goes to church every Tuesday

Almost 2,000 years after Jesus threw the traders out of the temple, the good news is that a weekly post office is now resident at Marshwood Church on every Tuesday afternoon from 1.30-3.30pm. Not only is this up and running, but the one-man service is more wide-ranging than ever before.

The one man is Peter Blakey (pictured above with a customer) and he carries with him communication equipment in the form of routers, tills, computers, *et al* which link him into the local Post Office system at Crewkerne so enabling licences to be issued and other payments to be made.

On Tuesdays, Peter arrives from Broadwindsor, where he conveniently

spends the morning on similar duties. A longstanding post-master, Peter retired from and closed another small, rural Post Office in Dorset so he is very familiar with our wishes and foibles. Even if the item or resource needed is not immediately available he will book them and complete the transaction the following week, all without the 'customers' leaving the parish.

Adding to the mix, the ladies of St Mary's open up an ad hoc kitchen offering tea, coffee and cake to further attract local resident. Cllr Jacqui Sewell expects to visit these open days on a regular basis both to talk council business and to keep up with the community.

Rural bus services: winter update around Marshwood

Routes 14 and 688, Thorncombe/ Marshwood to Chard/Axminster, every Thursday

Passenger numbers on these routes have decreased slightly compared to the numbers reported in previous articles. A similar decrease happened on the PlusBus after several loyal passengers developed long-term illness, moved away, or died.

PlusBus, Marshwood/Thorncombe/ Catherston Lewiston to Bridport, every Wednesday

Passenger numbers have increased slightly since the previous article. This is because of increased patronage from Drimpton, due in part to the change in timetabling of the No. 96 Chard-Yeovil service, plus the difficulties experienced with the No. 6/40 Bridport to Yeovil services.



All three of these buses continue to run on the back of the Beaminster secondary school contract.

Funding

Thorncombe Parish Council remains the custodian of our 'earmarked funds', for rural buses and we are very grateful for this support.

Thorncombe & villages bus schedules

Wednesdays:

PlusBus: Thorncombe to Bridport. £5 return fare. This bus route remains unchanged.

Thursdays:

No.14: Regular scheduled bus service. Thorncombe to Chard via Chard Junction, Perry Street, Tatworth. £4 return fare for adults without a concessionary bus pass.

Depart: Thorncombe 9.05am.
Arrive: Chard 9:30am.

Depart: Chard 11:35am.
Arrive: Thorncombe: 11:58am

The whole of the no.14 timetable listed below will cease from 7 March. This is because of a combination of changes to drivers' schedules and, it has to be said, poor patronage by users.



Depart: Thorncombe 12 noon
Arrive: Chard 12:25pm.

Depart: Chard 2:35pm.
Arrive: Thorncombe 2:59pm.

No.688: Thorncombe to Axminster via Marshwood and Hawkchurch with a £3.80 return fare for adults without a concessionary bus pass. The timetable for this bus remains unchanged.

Schools' transport, by First Wessex

As part of the contract awarded to First Wessex by Dorset County Council, it was agreed that the schools' transport would allow fare-paying passengers to travel on these buses along with secondary school pupils. Due to possible capacity issues, it was

proposed that double-decker buses be used as widely as possible.

A single-decker bus fulfills the A02 Holditch to Woodroffe via Marshwood service at present, which is full and standing with secondary school pupils.

Unfortunately, until all the overhanging trees on the route are trimmed to meet the regulated height, a double-decker bus is not an option.

Cllr David Marsh and Mrs Mary Marsh, Thorncombe And Villages Bus Users & Supporters.

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Marshwood Shop sub-committee

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

Community Land Trust website: www.marshwoodclt.org.uk
Facebook Page: Marshwood CLT

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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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Speed Watch active near school

Our Speed Watch team is now active in and around Marshwood school. Fortunately for the local speedsters, no one is to be prosecuted as a result of these endeavours since this is only a fact-gathering exercise and not part of the normal Speed Watch activities. As an early result a large, official '30' sign has been painted onto the road junction immediately outside the school.

Jointly led by district Cllr Jacqui Sewell and parish Cllr Ali Edwards, the team soon discovered that the passing traffic responded very differently to a group of people dressed in hi-viz jackets and pointing a speed gun to a far more covert group observing the flow of vehicles while checking their velocity. The fact that this alone reduced the speed means that their results really do represent the traffic past the school.

More relevant was the timing of these surveys: they coincided with the delivery and collection of our schoolchildren and therefore captured the real problems faced by the school and parents. To see what they've found, look at Juliet Evans' comments on the team's work as reported on Facebook under Marshwood Traffic Incident Log

'We need traffic calming around the school and more,' said Juliet.

'We are working on it. There are meetings



Marshwood Speed Watch team, from left to right: Emma Davies, John Bollam, Cllr Jacqui Sewell, Cllr Ali Edwards, Anne Marie Chapman, Juliet Evans.

lined up for this month, stuff going on behind the scenes (letters back and forth) in addition to all the data collection that has been happening.

'Ali Edwards has recruited and organised more volunteers to be speed watch trained, that will be happening at the beginning of this month and the councillors that we have on board are keeping this high on the agenda.

'The parish council are also backing us and that is vital in terms of following procedure, we also have the petition and parent letters in support. It's a slow, frustrating process but I

have submitted the application according to the applicable process, I've had professional advice on how to do this.'

In a single hour, Cllr Sewell noted 193 vehicles, eight of them recorded as exceeding 36mph with the highest at 41mph.

Cllr Edwards recorded a large 4WD doing 48mph as it passed the site of the new 30 sign.

But probably the greatest concern was the fact that a local bus was caught going at 39mph. Who should know more about the effects of speeding than a bus driver?



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