

# Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council

Winter 2018: Issue 26



*Joe and Louise with their sons Felix, aged nine, and Benjamin, aged three. They also have a third son, Khan, 20.*

## New landlords at Shave Cross Inn

**Joe and Louise Baron are the new landlords at the Shave Cross Inn. The family have moved to the Vale from Newmarket in Suffolk, where chef Joe ran a South East Asian eatery.**

At Shave Cross he is focusing on local and seasonal Dorset food. 'The produce in this area is such an exciting prospect,' he

said. 'It's every landlord's dream to have a freehouse. This is a bit of a lifestyle change for us. Plus it's an interesting building.'

Louise is a yoga teacher and experienced florist. She plans to run yoga classes in the skittle alley and host retreats in the inn's four bed and breakfast rooms.

The pub is open Wednesday to Saturday for lunch and dinner, Sunday lunchtimes, closed Mondays and open Tuesday evenings.

Marshwood, Stoke Abbott, Pilsdon and Bettiscombe



**David Hitchcock and his wife Ann. David died last September after a short illness. He was 78. The quotes below are a selection supplied by Ann from her letters of condolence and Christmas card correspondence. She says: 'The reason why David was such a good committee man was that he was able to have heated discussions in the committee room but when he came out he would be the best of friends and carry on as before. "You cannot hold grudges", was one of his favourite sayings.'**

'His expertise has been invaluable to Axe Vale Festival, especially in running and then advising me on the Floral Marquee – without his help there would never have been to date such success for so many years.'  
*Liz Stonex*

'His knowledge and experience was invaluable and was always tempered with his lovely sense of humour.'  
*Anne Kearle*

'He was always incredibly kind to me at the RHS, especially when I was catapulted in as Chairman. I have memories of David's smile, his quick answers and the fact that his exhibits appeared overnight!'  
*Lady Alice Boyd*

'It was a privilege to judge with him at the New Forest and Axe Vale shows.'  
*John Penney*

# 'An English gentleman: so many memories' *(Keith Berry)*

**This appreciation of David Hitchcock was contributed by his wife, Ann, and other family members. They sum up David and the various communities he served so well**

Eldest of three brothers, David first learned his lessons at Manor House School, Seaton, and then at West Buckland School in North Devon, but enjoyed being outdoors most of all. Riding, haymaking and hunting were his hobbies along with rugby, cricket and cross-country running.

He almost became an accountant like his father Cecil, who was finance director of Axminster Carpets, but this was interrupted by his call-up for National Service. Then this too was interrupted by compassionate leave as his mother had cancer. After her death, he completed his Forces time in the RAF at Rudloe Manor, but preferring an outdoor life he never returned to accountancy, choosing horticulture instead.

David learned his trade at St Bridget's Nurseries near Exeter on a seven-year programme of horticultural and management skills. In September 1962, David married Ann and they lived at Alphington, near to St Bridget's. In 1964 they were joined by Michelle, followed by Samantha in 1967.

No management position came from St Bridget's, so they acquired a compact bungalow in Marshwood along with 1¼

acres of land. They were striking out on their own, calling the new venture Three Counties Nurseries, which refers to living in Dorset and having sight of fields in front of the house in Devon and Somerset.

In 1977 Ann had a son, Quentin, whose very early arrival led to a first few months of shaky health. As well as her family, Ann possessed business management skills, very handy for a new business as David decided to concentrate on dahlias and shows. First came Yeovil, and then a silver gilt award at the Royal Horticultural Society autumn event in 1972.

Some will be familiar with this next aspect of David's career, for others it does explain how, as well as becoming a gifted plantsman, he served on various RHS committees. He learned the art of being an effective committee member, influencing national policy, something that was to become so very useful when he took over Marshwood's Community Land Trust.

There followed shows and gold awards in most of the West before the first RHS Gold Medal. Chelsea Flower Show was out as dahlias bloom too late, but when he added

*Continued on page 4*

*David Hitchcock, continued*

garden pinks to their bouquet, they gained a Gold Medal, the first of 10.

Soon David was in demand as a judge joining one of the RHS panels. In 1983 he was elected chairman of the dahlia committee. Involvement in other committees followed, some requiring a ready supply of tact and diplomacy.

### **Chairman of Dorset NFU**

Closer to home, David became chairman of Dorset's branch of the National Farmers' Union at a time when farmers were very concerned about milk quotas. As a plant seller, he was well used to finding and developing his own markets for products otherwise destined for the rubbish heap. This too required much diplomacy.

### **Chelsea Flower Show accolade**

In 1998, with garden pinks going out of fashion, they chose to specialise in a new strain of aquilegias, producing some 7,000 cut blooms for Chelsea 2000 and gaining a Gold Medal. This horticultural achievement was in addition to David's committee work. In 2007 the RHS appointed David as Floral Chairman for the Chelsea Flower Show, and a year later his committee took over all the RHS shows in the country.

Marshwood was indeed fortunate to gain the benefit of such a man as CLT chairman when he moved away from his RHS work.

**A shoulder injury suffered by his assistant was the final straw that ended John Walther's 30-year-reign as Paper Pontificate and Milkmeister of Marshwood. John was originally given the established round by a local farmer, Percy Williams, who had a herd of cows in the field next to the Bottle Inn. The brewery decided to sell the pub and Percy asked John to take on his milkround. 'No-one else wanted to do it!' John recalls. In those days he ran the local garage and a small but useful shop.**

Newspapers arrived by van early in the morning from the Exeter-based distributor, allowing John to sort out his round and put out the day's milk ready to go. Later, he shared the work with various assistants before ill health prevented his direct involvement.

John ran a series of small Citroen vans to reach his customers over much of the western reaches of the Marshwood Vale and a decent chunk of Devon. Assisted by his helpers and against a lifetime of travelling through narrow lanes and byways, few of these vehicles grew old and were replaced only too frequently. A purpose built rack of papers and a series of milk crates held their produce firm in the backseat.

This set-up proved profitable; up to 180 customers got their papers, milk and occasionally other groceries, until a new trend appeared. As people died, moved away or sold up, the new customers bought



*John Walther of Marshwood Shop and Post Office.*

## **The 'Milkmeister of Marshwood'**

their milk from supermarkets, not the shop. As distribution reduced to 39, the overheads increased and the travelling distance remained the same, and the round finally lost money. So when Mike Whitaker fell off his ladder and dislocated his shoulder, John had to give notice to his customers that the round would cease at the beginning of last December.

So far he is selling less milk and fewer papers – milk sales are down by half, *The Times* is holding up, and although *Daily Telegraph* sales have reduced, it is the tabloids that are suffering most. Some local distribution has been taken on by civic-minded groups of

customers, such as John Brown's Sunday Bettiscombe effort and a group of seven under the auspices of Bill Slade who are looking to share a run from Shave Cross. Others stores are looking at taking a chunk of the old round, but so far none will reach Marshwood Village

This naturally calls into question what will happen to the shop when John steps down. Sebastian (Bash) Walther promised David Hitchcock he would keep the shop going and the Neighbourhood Plan will take this into account. John wants to stay with his shop until he can't be there any more, then it will be Bash who takes over.

# What do we want for our parishes in the future? Now is the time to think seriously

**Housing is the top issue facing our combined parishes over the next 15 years. We need to decide whether to allow ANY new homes to be built. If we do want new developments, we must think about what sort, and where.**

We could choose not to have a single new dwelling of any kind added in Stoke Abbott, Marshwood, Bettiscombe or Pilsdon. We might make this decision because we want to preserve the character of the area and feel that there aren't enough facilities for more people and traffic. This is the view of several people who attended the public meeting in Stoke Abbott last year.

Or we could decide that shutting the door on development will disadvantage local people and their families. We might agree that while indiscriminate development would harm the area's character, some types of new development would be highly beneficial.

We haven't got a totally free choice. Planning constraints mean that we can't build a whole new estate of houses on green fields. It also

means that we can't justify much more affordable housing. Bramblehay has largely satisfied the official affordable housing need for our area.

This is not to say that we don't have local people who need homes. It means that there is no 'official' housing need that will be recognised by planners. While Bramblehay is a great addition to the community, it only answers part of our problem.

What are the housing and development issues we face? The Neighbourhood Plan survey and public meetings at Marshwood and Stoke Abbott identified the following:

**Providing affordable homes** to rent or buy for local people, especially younger people with families and older people retiring and leaving tied houses. This is seen as a real need even though there is little 'official' housing need.

**Second home ownership.** Second homes and holiday cottages can be an economic boost when there are not too many of them and they are occupied frequently. However, it damages communities to have a high proportion of second homes standing empty for most of the year.

**Community facilities.** We need to keep our three pubs, our shops, post office, village



*Bramblehay affordable housing in Marshwood.*

halls and school. We also want to support small, local enterprises that start up in our parishes.

**Jobs.** Do we want to push people of working age out of our communities because they have to make long journeys to work elsewhere? Could we provide some good working facilities here?

What might we do to tackle these matters in the best way? We need to balance conservation concerns with the needs of the community. Here are some suggestions put forward by the Neighbourhood Plan committee.

**Set a policy that favours small-scale, self-build homes and sensitive renovations and conversions of**

**existing buildings.** Such a policy could help younger people whose families already live in the area. They could build, or convert, modest, low-cost housing. The number of these new homes is not likely to be high and could in any case be capped.

**Decide we have enough second homes.** We can't rule against them but could discourage conversions specifically for second home use.

**Rule against the commercial development of sites intended for open market sales.** This would include proposals to cram several expensive houses on a site, creating a big profit for the landowner but little benefit for the community as a whole.

**Welcome small-scale business developments.** This could include recommending a site that might provide affordable small offices suitable for one or two-person businesses. We now have exceptional superfast broadband in Marshwood, Pilsdon, Bettiscombe and Stoke Abbott with a host of micro-businesses operating from people's homes. An office address and the chance to work alongside other businesses could combat rural isolation and foster economic growth.

**State how much we value our pubs, shops, village halls and school.** Being open to ideas might ensure their survival in the future. This could include tackling the problem of a safe path to walk to Marshwood School, thinking about parking in Stoke Abbott and provision of new community services such as a village shop in Stoke Abbott.

In the next couple of months we need to decide what we think about these matters for the Neighbourhood Plan. Once the plan is prepared, there will be a referendum on its adoption but we must agree what is best for our area long before voting day.

You'll see there is a 'call for sites' form included with this edition. This is to help us identify places and buildings that could fit in with the plan's aims. Do fill in and return the form if you know of a possible site.

Please contact NP committee chairman Charles Somers if you would like to discuss any of these ideas further.

Charles can be contacted on 01297 678178, email [somers984@btinternet.com](mailto:somers984@btinternet.com)

## Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan 'Call-for-Sites'

**We would like to know if there are landowners in the Upper Marshwood Vale parishes of Marshwood, Bettiscombe, Pilsdon and Stoke Abbott who might be willing to offer land to contribute to sustaining our community over the next 20 years.**

**Contacting us commits you to nothing at this stage.**

**Full details of this call-for-sites can be found at [www.uppermarshwoodvale.org/home/neighbourhood-plan/](http://www.uppermarshwoodvale.org/home/neighbourhood-plan/) or by contacting Charles Somers at [somers984@btinternet.com](mailto:somers984@btinternet.com), telephone 01297 678178. The call-for-sites will close on Friday 2 March 2018.**

*Your local sweep: Glyn Yorke*

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# Parish council meeting: November

**16 November, Bettiscombe Village Hall.**

As is now usual this was held at Bettiscombe Village Hall where a full agenda would have indicated an extended meeting. However on this occasion with four councillors missing, this possibility was somewhat offset.

Also as usual chaired by Matthew Bowditch, the meeting started promptly as he welcomed to the meeting a larger than usual group as 'members of the public.' He then introduced the new chairman of our Community Land Trust, Rob England, as David Hitchcock's successor. Rob briefly updated your council on CLT progress on a new bus shelter - we need a paper exercise to get planning consent - and efforts to get a defibrillator for Marshwood.

## **Stoke Abbott parking**

Another member of the public present was George Hart of Stoke Abbott who is once more seeking to remove a wall to allow off-street parking in that village, a popular idea with local councillors only too aware of the limitations on parking space, but unpopular with planning officials as the wall is listed.

District Councillor Jacqui Sewell pointed out that under the Neighbourhood Plan, if adopted, these powerful officials would have to take the village's wishes into account and she advised patience. Mr Hart was to be put in contact with NP chairman Charles Somers.

Next came council finance which showed

a balance of £2,589.94 in the bank but our clerk, John Vanderwolfe warned of a possible overspend on our lengthsman budget. County and district council reports were led by the good news from Daryl Turner that the unitary council had been approved although there is some mopping up yet to do.

Planning applications were all supported, including the existing 'dogs-home' controversy which is not quite in our parish.

Then the council discussed a letter of complaint concerning an application to extend The Old Bakery in Marshwood. It was noted that letters of complaint, often dealing with possible excess car parking, have been received from near neighbours, but letters in support of the application emanate from far less local addresses. Cllr Roy Warburton, whose family owned the property for over 100 years, denied that the three cottages claimed in the application ever existed.

In correspondence with the clerk, it appears that Marshwood's war memorial has not been officially noted, but locals will be pleased to hear that Historic England will now correct this and list it as Grade II. Sad that this coincides with the ceasing of our local Remembrance Day event.

**Parish council meetings for 2018 as follows: 18 January, 15 March, 17 May, 19 July, 20 September, 15 November, 13 December. Meetings start at 7.30pm in Bettiscombe Village Hall. All welcome.**

# Parish council meeting: December

**14 December, Bettiscombe Village Hall**

This was the council's annual budget setting meeting when the councillors decide whether to increase the parish precept levied as part of the council tax.

Parish clerk John Vanderwolfe began by explaining his fears of a possible cashflow crisis for February and March. With no more money due from West Dorset District Council until April, he was worried that there were sufficient reserves to pay the lengthsman if bad weather meant that more work than usual was needed.

The lengthsman service is the council's main expense. The clerk said that so far this year (from April to November) it had cost £2,980 plus VAT. Councillors agreed that the contractor, S. Lee, provides a good value, essential service, necessary in a wet area like ours where drains block frequently and heavy downpours can make roads impassable.

However, members discussed the need to take closer oversight of the work to ensure that efforts were being directed in the best places and costs kept under control. Cllr Jane Gillingham from Pilsdon said that drains near Pilsdon badly needed attention and hadn't been cleared for some while.

Cllr Ali Cameron said that in his opinion the lengthsman was a 'trustworthy, decent guy but somewhat old fashioned in his approach' and he needed to itemise his invoices in more detail.

Moving on to the budget for 2018/19, the council first considered raising a precept of £10,000. This would equate to £31.89 on a D rate property, an increase per property of £1.42 on last year. This figure represented a minimum spend which it was hoped would allow the council to cover essential running costs and the lengthsman service only. It would leave the council with no reserves. The clerk advised this would be a risky position to take.

Councillors then discussed their wish to refurbish more of the traditional fingerpost signs. This would mean levying a higher precept. Cllr Eddie Rowe asked if it were feasible for second home owners to pay a higher precept - the clerk said it was not possible to discriminate.

After further discussion, Cllr Chris Rabbetts, seconded by Cllr Gillingham, proposed a precept of £12,000. The extra £2,000 would be prioritised for restoring the council's reserves and the members would debate later whether to spend money on repairing fingerposts. The proposal was carried unanimously. This means we will have an increase of £8 for the year on a D rate property.

Planning applications were supported except for a proposal to demolish and rebuild Holdcroft Lodge near Nash Farm. The proposed new building had a curved metal roof, which councillors felt was too industrial and not in keeping with the surrounding area. They had no objection to a rebuild in principle but didn't like the design presented on the application.

## Recipes: a taste of summer in winter's depths

### Blackberry Mousse

Serves 4

450g blackberries  
4 tablespoons water  
100g sugar  
15g gelatine  
300ml double cream  
To decorate:  
150ml double cream, whipped

Reserve a few blackberries for decoration. Put the rest, with 2 tablespoons of the water and the sugar in a pan, simmer about 5 mins until fruit is cooked. Rub fruit through a sieve into a bowl, removing all the pips. Soak gelatine in the remaining water and stand in pan of hot water until dissolved. Stir into the blackberry puree and chill until just setting. Whisk cream until it forms soft peaks and fold into the setting blackberry mixture. Turn into a pretty dish or individual glasses and chill until set. Decorate with reserved blackberries and piped cream.

## Superfast broadband - time to connect

There are a very few minor works to be completed in January to finish off the superfast upgrade across our parish area with those around Shave Cross and Fishpond now completed and ready for service.

Remaining areas due for an upgrade include a few houses near Birdsmoorgate, the new houses at Bramblehay (where the previous problem of lack of copper cable capacity has now been resolved) and some houses on the edge of Whitchurch, which will be

### Creamy Rhubarb Fool

Serves 4

450g rhubarb, washed, trimmed, and cut into pieces  
100g sugar  
150ml natural yogurt  
150ml double cream

Place rhubarb in a saucepan and cook over a low heat until soft and pulpy, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking.

Stir in the sugar and leave to dissolve (the pulp should measure 20 fl oz). Beat the fruit to a puree and keep it in a cool place until it is completely cold.

Whisk the yogurt and double cream together until thick, then fold it into the cooled puree mixture. Place mixture in a pretty bowl or individual glasses. Chill for 30 minutes before serving.

*Joy McClellan*

served by a newly installed FTTC green cabinet. Take-up of this much-improved service is however presently rather low at 20%, whereas we were hoping to achieve quite 50% fairly quickly, given the very slow speeds previously available to us via copper.

So could I encourage everyone to look at what is now on offer and place your orders. More about the benefits of faster, more reliable broadband can be found at [www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/superfast](http://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/superfast)

*Charles Somers*

## Bottle Inn 16th Century Freehouse



**Marshwood, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 5QJ**

**Tel: 01297 678 103**

Michael and Pauline welcome you to the West Dorset CAMRA branch pub of the year 2014 and 2016. Open Tuesday to Sunday inclusive serving a selection of changing real ales, keg beers, cider and perry.

Full menu with a wide range of local produce on offer, including Dorset ham and cheeses.

Weddings and private parties a speciality in our large, purpose-built function room, or alternatively in our marquee in the garden, with catering for up to 120 guests.

Contact us for further details, or just call in at any time.

# Defib unit supplied for village

**Marshwood CLT are pleased to announce that they have secured a public access defibrillator for the use of the community in the event of a cardiac arrest.**

The CLT were successful in applying to the British Heart Foundation (BHF) for a part-funded defib and the remaining amount (£600.00 plus the cost of the cabinet), has been paid for by the ground rent of the affordable homes at Bramblehay, as well as donations received at the service celebrating David Hitchcock's life.

The public access defib will be located on the wall of Marshwood Garage (DT6 5QD) with the kind permission of Bash Walther, within an unlocked, heated, weather-proof cabinet to enable easy access for all. It is scheduled to be installed during January and its location will be registered with South Western Ambulance Service.

If and when you call 999 in the event of a cardiac arrest, or potential for cardiac arrest, the ambulance service will inform you of your nearest defib location and will assist you through the very easy process of using the automatic defib and performing chest compressions.

Please do not be afraid to use it! It is fully automatic and very easy to use. You just open the defib, attach the pad on the patient's chest as clearly shown on the defib and follow the voice prompts. You cannot deliver a shock unless the person is in cardiac arrest. It will never shock a person whose heart is beating normally.



Along with the defibrillator, the BHF also supplied a cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training DVD and 10 dummies to enable training for the community. An informal training session was held at Blackdown Village Hall after the CLT AGM on 6 January.

Other local sessions will be offered throughout the next few months, and annually. This type of training requires no previous first aid knowledge and can be arranged among groups of friends or community groups.

So if you fancy getting a group of friends together, have a business with staff, are part of a local community group or just want to learn or refresh your CPR techniques in the comfort of your own home and would like to arrange your own informal session, please contact Ann-Marie Chapman on 01297 678 579, or any CLT director, to arrange collection of the training kit.

## Marshwood Community Land Trust: Officers

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**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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Members Jacqui Sewell, WDDC councillor  
Ali Cameron, UMV parish councillor  
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## The British Property Awards Winner for Bridport

Parkers have won The British Property Awards for Bridport. Their team performed outstandingly throughout the extensive judging period, which focused on customer service levels. Parkers have now been shortlisted for a number of national awards which will be announced later in the year at our lavish ceremony in London. The British Property Awards provide agents with an invaluable opportunity to compare the service that they provide against the service provided by their local, regional and national competition. Agents who go that extra mile and provide outstanding levels of customer service are rewarded with our accolade, which acts as a beacon to highlight these attributes to their local marketplace.