

Spring
2014

Beneath the Vale

Published on behalf of Upper Marshwood Vale
Parish Council

Pilsdon Experience

Pilsdon Manor nestles comfortably beneath the slopes of Pilsdon Pen and has done for centuries.

'Pilsdon Court', the present house was built by Sir Hugh Wyndham, but the tiny church in the garden dates from 15th century so hints at a much older manor.

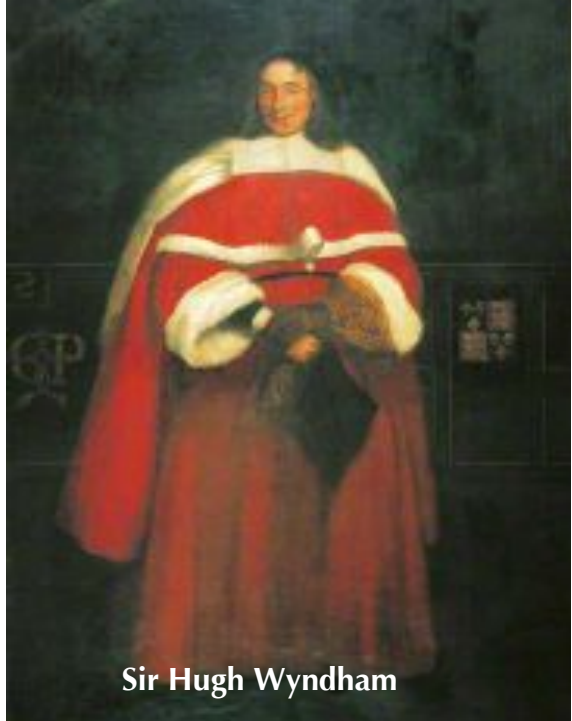
Sir Hugh's nephew and a noted royalist, Colonel Francis Wyndham of Trent, then in Somerset, sheltered Charles Stuart after his defeat at Worcester, but the pursuing Parliamentary forces got the wrong Wyndham and raided the newly built Manor and, in the words of Frederick Treaves, the Dorset historian (and surgeon)

'burst in upon the astonished family with some heat, and commenced their blundering proceedings by declaring that one of the young ladies of the house was Charles Stuart in disguise.'

As Charles was famed for his height this is rather odd.

'When this error in diagnosis had been corrected, they placed the old baronet, his lady, his daughters, his man-servants and his maid-servants in the hall under guard, while they set to work to search every cupboard and loft in the house....'

All in vain.



Sir Hugh Wyndham

However, the Wyndham family were not forgotten by Charles when he became king. Even though Sir Hugh had become a senior judge for Cromwell, he was forgiven, knighted and resumed his role at the Court of Common Pleas.

Religion - Catholic against Protestant - may have fuelled the Civil war; but new concept, the deliberately unworldly Community, had already been set up in Huntingdonshire by a wealthy businessman, Nicholas Ferrar, who in 1625, drew on his family to set up a

Your Vale News
Issue 12

group of some 40 souls, all rejecting the prevailing extremes, choosing instead the middle ground of the Anglican Church of England and the self-supporting community life style in a dilapidated manor.

In 1958, 3 centuries later and 6 decades ago, Reverend Percy Smith and his wife, Gaynor, bought the run down estate for just £5,000 and founded the Pilsdon Community on the lines established so long ago by Nicholas Ferrar's community at Little Gidding, and similarly, within the Anglican community.



By 1960, Percy was writing 'Letters From a Community', a prototype of today's blogs. He described the planting of japonica, forsythia, aubrietia; he described the animals and the harvests and the potato-peeling. 'If Pilsdon teaches anything,' he wrote

in December 1960, 'it teaches through failure and disappointment how far we fall short in our love.' It was, he said,

'a school for sinners and not a museum of saints.'

This dangerous idea soon gained definition. At Pilsdon you paid nothing, and you were paid nothing for the work that was done everyday by everyone who slept under its roof. Self-sufficiency took a great deal of work, and the community was dependent on every hand. More than this, it was work that gives everyone a stake in the interdependency at the heart of Pilsdon's philosophy.

So work was the first rule at Pilsdon. The second was no alcohol. Percy was called unchristian often enough for turning away drunks, but for him Christianity was made of sterner stuff. If Pilsdon was to keep its doors open to addicts and alcoholics, to the emotionally raw and the unstable, the shared discipline of sobriety was an essential base from which repair could begin.



Beyond that there were no rules, no proselytising, no preaching. You could come with any belief system, any religion, any politics; you could come from prison and not be judged; you could come from a psychiatric hospital and not be marked; or you could come because you hated school and not be questioned. The point about Pilsdon then was not what it said, but what it did - and what it enabled you to do with what it did.

Michael Deegan, the present warden defines the community's role these days:

"Pilsdon has always maintained the same ethos so, for the past 55 years, it has been a place of hospitality, worship and welcome. In every generation we try to maintain that. Pilsdon, for almost any one coming back here from 20 years ago, is a different place because Pilsdon does change with time. Because the needs of people - and the world - change, and the ways of meeting those needs change.

So the community probably has a bit more technology than it used to.

"In the days of Percy Smith everybody worked in the garden because there was no such thing as a Rototiller, no such thing as a power lawnmower or a strimmer, so work was done differently. So we have had to be more creative



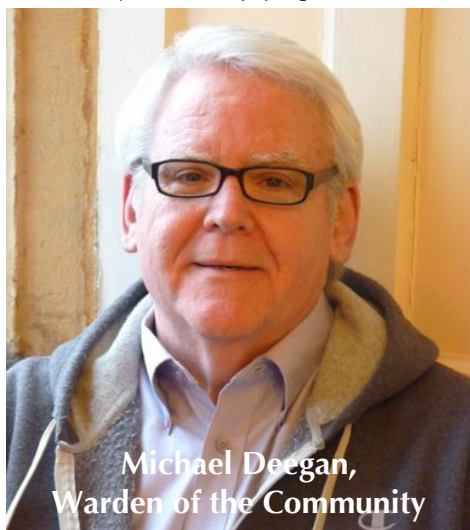
with how people are employed or what they do within the community. And the nature of wayfarers has changed; if you actually look at the kinds of journeymen that came through here in the 50s, 60s and 70s, it is different from the folks that come here today.

So I think it is a different place but the same ethos. Not changing but adaptable to the needs of the generation we are living in".



So what is it that makes this community such a refuge?

A Reverend, Michael Deegan, is American, a businessman in the financial industry, a west coast based churchgoer who ran a substantial community mission in California before coming to the diocese of Salisbury as Director of Social Justice and was ordained there. He thought carefully before replying:



**Michael Deegan,
Warden of the Community**

"There are two major things that Pilsdon provides. It is a place of safety, and we offer a healthy pattern of day-to-day life which we invite out guests to be joined into."

Part of the safety that we offer for many people is the fact we are a somewhat-closed community. People come and visit us but they announce they are coming. Members and volunteers are CRB-checked and interviewed before they are allowed in, because this is a community of vulnerable adults,

and safety is one of our highest priorities. Without safety there can be no healing." I don't know if we could ever be 'open' in a sense without sacrificing that safety which is what people come here for."

Long used as extra accommodation for people, many of those ex-residents will be proud of the time they spent in the loose boxes at Pilsdon. Now nearing completion in the old stable area, the loose boxes have been properly converted to single rooms for wayfarers.

Under recent regulations, shared accommodation is no longer allowed in refuges and similar communities, so even the short-stay wayfarers get their own room. The new Loose Boxes, delayed by swallows' nesting season but soon to be opened, will also provide more communal space and some will still used for animals as the community runs Pilsdon as a working farm.

Local communications especially poor internet and dodgy mobile phone reception is welcomed. Seen here as a benefit that protects all guests from the "compelling and constant intrusion of personal time" that these provide. Pilsdon Community looks inward to its own strengths to provide those for whom the world is a difficult place, something rather special, peace, quite and protection.

Respite - short or long term - from life crisis, mental illness, addiction, being driven into isolation, is what the community offers. Instead, sufferers discover protection and a community, shared meals, shared manual work, even a shared a computer situated publicly in the library.

Although other activities are available, even a cricket team, they are not mandatory. Nor is Anglican or even Christian worship.

Pilsdon has its own church; no longer needed by Salisbury, it has long been leased by the Community and although the most used church in the Vale with three services every day, only Eucharist and baptismal services are allowed since it is officially redundant.

Michael: "We are an intentional Christian community, and currently there are 5 members. We take our spiritual prayer life very seriously: we have 4 offices of prayer each day that we are either leading or taking part in. It is the mainstay, the backdrop of what we do; it is what fortifies the work we do take on here." Someone who moved on told Michael that 'they had never been a churchgoer,

probably would never be a churchgoer, but the realised they needed more people like us in their life, it made their life better.'

Relationships with other churches in the benefice also take place; the two ordained ministers at Pilsdon take their turn in preaching in local churches, as do our local ministers in Pilsdon's ancient church, while local vicar Steven Skinner regularly takes part in their community activities. School children visit the community, as do occasional church groups.

But the community, which is entirely self sufficient in meat and dairy products, is also not dependent on our communities. It does however raise funds and seek grants to make up the shortfall left after the contributions of agencies and from guests. The Loose Box development demonstrate the generosity of their supporters.

Since Pilsdon is a small farm with animals the usual agricultural courtesies and co-operation takes place.

"We have a wonderful barter system with many of our farming neighbours, sharing of resources, assistance when we need to do something we provide a lot of milk to a farmer down the road and when he has hay in season we help fill the barn and get bales to take back. A lot of good neighbours and mutual support takes place."

"A place of rest along the journey for an unspecified period of time - could be years or could be months.

It is good to know such a community exists; it is even better to know that exists and thrives in our own Vale.



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Council news - weather or not

We are justifiably very proud of the lengthsman operation in the Vale. Outsiders, including county officials, have long highly rated the work that Steve Lee and his team do. Under the guidance of Bob Wyatt, a retired farmer who knows our Vale like his own back yard as well as being a councillor, Steve has restored effective drainage to most of the roads and lanes we all use.

BTV has written before on his careful work re-establishing the once excellent drainage, by joining road to run-off and drain to stream. Regular maintenance, clearing blocked pipes of rubbish and branches has helped, but most of all, Steve knows how his predecessors set about keeping our fragile lanes open in all weather. It is ironic that our county council seeks to cut costs and eliminate on the spot repairs by substituting a computerised reporting system that knows nothing of waterflow is operated by outside workmen and is designed for roads not lanes .

It may that some lengthsman ill-served their community by

instruction from managers or by default, but this is not the case hereabouts so it is unfair and illogical to blame our team for others' failings. As a result your Council has chosen to support the work by devoting most of our limited budget to the work of the lengthsman. As the County support is cut off we have sustained 50% of the budget for this work.

But the fragility of this situation was demonstrated when the post Christmas rains hit. Yet Steve and his team succeeded in keeping the Vale open. Any flooding that did occur was rapidly drained away, a tribute to those custodians of our countryside long gone but mostly to the hard work over many weeks put in by Steve and friends.

In the downpours of January and February your council budget was also submerged and John Vanderwolfe our clerk soon realised we had a problem.

Cashflow.

Your council can only pay suppliers if it has the money. Just like you or me really.

As this magazine is printed and posted out, which also costs money, we delayed this, the 12th issue, due through your letterbox at the beginning of March.

With other areas not so far away suffering far more privation, far more spectacularly, Flood Alleviation has become flavour of the month,

Certainly government funds are being focussed for this. Fortunately the work Steve has done fits in this category so we should be reimbursed.

So where does this leave Beneath the Vale? The Council has now decided to publish this issue.

To sustain our Quality Council status we have to publish 4 newsletters

per year to keep residents informed about local matters. Although budgets agreed only in January allowed a half time lengthsman, and the four-per-year magazine, the emergency remedial action to keep the Vale open demonstrates just how fragile all council funding has become, even our own tiny economy.

Some councillors think we should push for funding for Flood Alleviation, by Steve, pointing out that not only is this a cost saving way of working but national funding is becoming available, albeit belatedly.

For us, our unique Vale puts the burden of responsibility on someone's

shoulders, so far better to use local and highly experienced Vale services to do this as opposed to the expensive option of regularly turning out centrally based and specialist teams whose lengthy journey times would more than double the time on the job.

In this way we could get our fair share

of funding ring-fenced to deal with our greatest environmental threat and saving overall costs.

Now it is the editorial team's turn to cut our costs and seek extra income to keep all our residents well informed.



**Marshwood will flood
- unless we look after our Vale**

Your editorial team has already started to seek extra advertising. Some longer-established Dorset parish publications carry enough advertising to meet their costs. Their advertisers gained extra business from their regular reminders, so why not support those who support your parish magazine by using their services?

But we are also seeking more direct funding by seeking grants. Since an application is pending we cannot go further at this time, but Upper Marshwood Vale does have a history of success in this area.

Certainly our own goals would match the objectives of several grant schemes that support local communications with residents.

Broadband Latest News

Delays in publishing Issue 12 Have allowed us to bring residents up to date with the progress of our local superfast broadband. This can be summed up as the best coverage in the county or a black hole for the largest village in the parish!

The background to this follows the announcement of the application to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for further funds set out below. BT and DCC agree that Fibre to the Premises is better for us, even if it is more expensive. In this system we would get the highest quality of connections, fully future-proof and highly upgradeable; a serious long-term investment.

But this is only an application, funds are limited and the costs are much higher so although first in the queue, Marshwood is not guaranteed the bonus, however well-deserved it may be.

Application to DEFRA for broadband support in the Marshwood Vale

The Marshwood Vale Broadband Project will deliver superfast, reliable internet access to some of the most rural and isolated communities in Dorset.

The project will deliver a Fibre to the Premises technology. This will offer download speeds of up to 330Mbps and upload speeds of 30Mbps transforming this area from one of the worst connected, to one of the best connected in the County.

The project will enable access to 373 premises, many of which are businesses or support home workers. Along with the environmental and social benefits, the estimated economic benefits of this project will increase this area's GVA by £2million and create or sustain 22 jobs in the area. 170 letters of support from local residents and businesses have been received to date.

There is also a high level of political support for this project from Parish Councillors, District Councillors, County Councillors and local Member of Parliament.

The project will make use of approximately £1.02 million of the DEFRA Rural Communities Broadband Fund along with a supplier contribution from BT.

The Superfast Dorset project, a partnership of Dorset Councils and BT will be used as the delivery mechanism for this project. This area's coverage and funding will be incorporated in the existing contract delivering 95% Superfast Broadband coverage to the rest of Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth.

BT partners have agreed in principle to the financial contribution and also to the inclusion of the works in Phase 5 and 6 of the main county wide contract (starting in April 2015).

Broadband background - meet the boss

The Dorchester broadband team have announced the first phase of connections to superfast broadband in West Dorset. Unsurprisingly this is for Bridport, but less obviously the spur towards Lyme Regis includes linking Chideoch and Charmouth.

Described as the most distant and most rural area of Dorset that needs broadband, on the planning maps Marshwood village is largely yellow indicating no superfast broadband, just the minimum 2mbs. This is in spite of the area's long time support for rural broadband - ever since our parish plan - and the clear-cut need for the many services delivered by superfast to an otherwise lightly-served community.

This situation had been foreseen by Charles Somers who has chaired our broadband team from the start. He had picked up on other funding possibilities for rural areas and had applied to DEFRA - the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for some of their cash.

At a press conference to launch the first construction phase of ten which will cover Bridport to Lyme Regis, we buttonholed Dugald Lockhart the DCC's broadband supremo as he ventured into the urban delights of a stormy Bridport Town.

As well as leading the Dorset County Council broadband team he has taken over the DEFRA application with our team's

agreement, to integrate these extra possible funds and to ring-fence them to increase the amount to be spent on connecting Marshwood residents.



Your editor was able to forcefully express the community's disappointment at being a slated as broadband black hole while nearby areas, some already well served, are promised a minimum of 12 times the performance even for the odd homestead or small farm. This 'poke in the team's ribs' was taken seriously as it would seem that the problems of Marshwood and the village are their first priority for finding a solution. Such as the DEFRA funding - if this is both delivered and sufficient. A formal interview spelt this out in greater detail

Editor: Phase 1 has just been announced; there are 10 phases, when will Marshwood get its turn to be connected?

"We are about to submit a full application to DEFRA for funding and if that application is successful and it may well be - there is still money out there in DEFRA - we will know by April. We will then be able to start the build in the Marshwood Vale area once the infrastructure in the surrounding exchanges is complete. We need to do this as soon as we can because central government will want its funds spent as soon as they can.

Realistically it will be during 2015. We can't be more precise than that at the moment because we need to get the funding secured and to make sure the rest of the infrastructure has been built, and if - and we very much hope it isn't - the business case to DEFRA doesn't find favour, then we have a very well argued, very well put together business case that we can use to seek funding from other places and other solutions and there are additional funds that are due to open up towards the end of this financial year.

So we continue the work. We are very pleased that the communities of Marshwood Vale are continuing their championing activity and continue to badger us, because we know how important it is to them. We all are sure that it

will ultimately be successful, but I hope that we will be successful in the current funding round with DEFRA."

You mentioned the infrastructure, are we talking about linking Marshwood village from exchanges in Hawkchurch, Broadwindsor or is there another solution?

"It will be from one of the existing exchanges - the exchange that currently serves that community - Hawkchurch."

But our present green box is at Hawkchurch, not in Marshwood?

"We would build infrastructure elsewhere within that exchange area."

Within the village?

"That's the solution currently being put forward by Open Reach (BT)."

Is an additional survey needed to decide the best solution?

"Yes, what we do is in this sense no different than the countywide project. What we do is model solutions base on Open Reach's understanding of the current infrastructure and the new technologies available for them.

Once we have done that and had accepted into the project, we will do a detailed survey. What we often find, particularly with the hard to reach areas, is that the actual solution may vary considerably from the modeled solution and may well be cheaper."

The Cornwall experience?

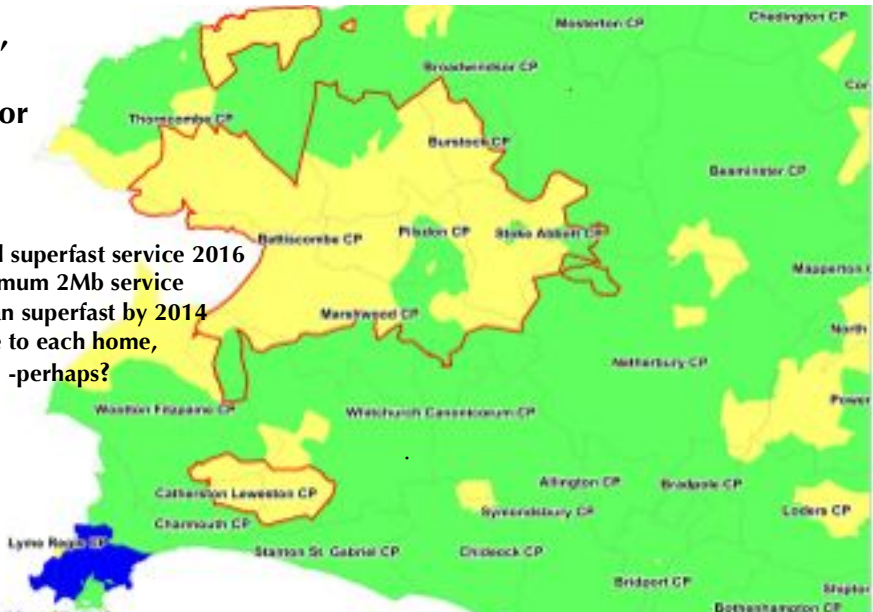
"Correct.

We understand their frustrations, we understand their problems. This is why we are building the infrastructure, even if in the first instance we are not able to get to places like the Marshwood Vale."

Marshwood, No longer a black hole for broadband?

Legend

- Green Rural superfast service 2016
- Yellow Minimum 2Mb service
- Blue Urban superfast by 2014
- Red Line Fibre to each home, 2015 -perhaps?



Map courtesy Dorset County Council

"Then, once the infrastructure is built, the final hop to Marshwood is much easier. At the moment it's a giant leap to connect infrastructure to Marshwood Vale. So we are committed to making a difference and we know the community is likewise committed. The local MP, the elected members, we're all lined up and singular about the need to make a difference."

What else can the Marshwood community do to help?

"I think we are currently well placed; we are doing every thing we can and I look forward to coming back to Marshwood Vale and use that as a case study if and when we are successful."

OK, so we should get funds to ensure proper superfast reaches even into the depths of the Vale

But it does not stop there as further funds are becoming identified and the determination of Dugald's team is now impressive.

His team feel our case for funding is very strong and even if DEFRA won't/can't support our agricultural community, this alternative funding is now seen as Dugald's next major objective.

Another pointer is reference to technical improvements emerging from development labs all-over the world. These make slow but cumulative improvements that are already allowing superfast to travel further, go faster and carry more traffic and cost less per home than the technology already installed in say Cornwall.

So the Vale will get real superfast, the only fluid question left is when?

And not even Dugald can schedule that. Yet.



Marshwood's Bottle Inn has been welcoming customers for nearly two years and has gained recognition for its real ales. But these days, with sensible limitations on travelling to a rural pubs and the consumption of alcohol, pub food is a vital contribution to any pub's business.

Even the determined efforts of Chrissie and Nigel Blake, the present experienced tenants, have been handicapped by the lack of approved kitchen facilities. Hence temporary albeit attractive features such as the Curry Bus; but otherwise hot food has not been practical without a substantial investment in kitchen facilities. This has left the pub's future under question since it is hard to see the Bottle as a thriving business without a substantial further investment.

When Chrissie and Nigel Blake took over the pub it was in poor condition and had a long list of repairs set out by West Dorset District Council and needed under its grade 2 listing. Work on the property was

promised by the landlord, Miichael Brookes and his wife, who are based in Australia and although their lease was signed, they were unwilling to put these into effect. Indeed the restrictions posed by the non-working lease made any permanent or substantial investment by the incomers in the pub very risky.

So at Nigel and Chrissie's expense, only the minimum of repairs were effected to get pub open - such as repairs to the thatch instead of a full replacement. With these in place the pub could and did open and immediately ran the famed Nettle Eating World championship.

But the problems remain, so Nigel approached one of the regulars with financial experience, Mark Van de Weyer to ask him to front up a group of supporters to get the Bottle listed as a Community Asset. Under new legislation a community asset is 'a piece of land or a building whose use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and

could continue to do so'; clearly the Bottle Inn falls into this category.]

Mr Van de Weyer who lives in London is a regular visitor to the area and owns property in Marshwood; with his background in financial media he quickly offered his help. A meeting of interest parties was held, formed into Supporters of the Bottle Inn they registered the pub as an asset. The Brookes disputed the listing but when this failed, they announced that they would sell the pub even though previous enquires regarding that property had been rebuffed or ignored.

WDDC officials explained that if a listed asset of community value comes up for sale, long term rent or assignment, there is an initial pause of six weeks for any community body to decide whether or not to exercise a right to bid for the asset.

In a recent report in the Bridport News and in his Marshwood village report Mr Van de Weyer told readers that the Brooke's asking price was £450,00 and said the Supporters would seek to raise funds to buy it. At a subsequent meeting of the Supporters they agreed that they should notify the District Council of their interest in bidding for the pub.

This has been done.

With their interest noted within the allowed 6-week period, a 6-month hold period has started. The pause of six months enables them to raise money to buy the asset. This does not however, mean that they get a right of first refusal (as suggested elsewhere) or have the opportunity to buy the asset at below market value.

Indeed under the new law, the Brookes can sell to anyone they wish for any agreed price after 6th August 2014 when the 'hold' expires, but it is known that a first 'refusal clause' is part of the tenancy agreement between the Blakes, and the Brookes.

During this period community bodies may seek to raise funds and bid in the usual way, as can others with commercial or private interests in the pub. These are unlikely to include the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council and our Community Land Trust but the Supporters have set up a steering committee to fund and make the bid.



Nigel and Teddy

The actual value of the Bottle has yet to be agreed and is unlikely to reach the asking price. Nigel points out that a properly repaired, fully functioning Bottle doing good business might well have reached the value sought in previous years but is not realistic in times when eating out is an exception and pubs are closing all over the country.

He believes that a sale at around the business logic of the proposals he offered. the £250,000 mark is more realistic.

and has a number of interesting financial models for the Supporters to consider. Having invested time and money in the pub and with Chrissie and himself having fallen for the charms of the area they are determined to get finance and has posed Mark and the Supporters three possible options they prefer.

1 Shareholder pub - a community based financial model with many medium value shares taken up in single or multiple units or often by those living locally and who use the Bottle.

2 Sale and leaseback - the pub bought by a smaller number of investors (including the Blakes) each putting in substantial funds and then agreeing a formal lease to the Blakes to run the pub for a respectable period on a shared profits basis.

3 Investment - purchase of the property by a few well-heeled investors seeking a safe haven and a reasonable return on their money. This too would have some form of tenancy for the Blakes.

Nigel has visited a shareholder pub, the Hope in Carshalton which impressed him, and the community finance of Whitchurch Village hall is an example of this principle

Mr Van de Weyer also addressed the Parish Council as a member of the public when he mentioned the asking price and outlined his Supporters interest. Councillors listened attentively but questioned the

However, if the property price was closer to the £250,000 figure the situation would be much more practical.

Mr Van de Weyer pointed out that Marshwood that does not have a village hall but proposed one on the Bottle site. Marshwood villagers presently share a refreshed and comfortable Bettiscombe village hall to the benefit of residents of both communities.

An ex-FT journalist and a writer on financial matters, Mr Van de Weyer has offered financial links to the Bottle tenants previously and he has strong links with the financial community. He and his team now have until August to produce a working business plan that would ensure the future of the Bottle and the continued involvement of Chrissie and Nigel.



Instead of his widely promoted Medical Centre idea for the Thane Farm site, he recently suggested the new homes should be erected on land at the Bottle.

With Hastoe the housing association now able to start building the affordable homes, Marshwood Community Land Trust would “welcome suitable land for further homes if and when needed, but insists that this would be in addition to their present homes not as an alternative.”

None of this would be relevant if a new owner could turn the pub into a house, a move that has attracted the attention of several possible purchasers. Such a move would be complicated by the listed building status enjoyed by the pub.

WDDC’s Marshwood councillor, Mike Robinson has reiterated his

determination to oppose any change of use for the pub, a move which, if approved for residential use and then sold as a home or as a site for homes, would provide a huge increase in value for the owner. If then sold on the open market, this would generate substantial profits but a total loss as a community asset.

To get a change of use, any future owner or owners would have to show the operation of the Bottle as a pub could never be viable, a position which the Supporters might not support. Marshwood villagers, who are still getting used to having a working Bottle once again would agree.

Name those affordable homes

With the final official announcement of both planning consent and the 4-way agreement between land owner, CLT, developer and district council, work can proceed. Here are some of the names already suggested.

Blackberry Close

Bramble Close

Bramblehay

Copse Close

Cottarshay Court

- after cottages once in the same field

Greenacre Close

Higgerns Court or Close - the field was once called Great Higgerns Wood

Lamberts Court or Close

Marshay Close

Orchid Field

- yes, there are wild orchids nearby -

Sadborow View

Sawinhay

- after a pre-Norman thane called Saewin

To register your preference or suggest an alternative name, please contact the editor or CLT chairman, David Hitchcock, details on page 21.

Working Dogs

Matthew Bowditch, UMVPC's Chairman and Beaminster-based vet confesses



First aid: a St Bernard

I have a passion for animals, they have fascinated me all my life. Often people ask me whether I have a favourite. It is a close-run thing but the dogs win. Clever and crafty is the domestic canine as it creeps into your affections.

A couple of years ago the results of tests to find out which of the species of animals on the planet were the most intelligent; guess who won!

Yes the border collie - forget your dolphins and chimps, they cannot remember the four hundred commands the collie could.

I get a great pleasure from the company of a dog when we work together - we are not just cuddly friends, we are a team. Training is a steady and ordered process that takes the dog a long time to achieve in his detector owner.

So we have a super-intelligent canine and average intelligent human, what can we ask them to achieve?

I sat at the desk and made out a list of the incredible number of benefits

to humanity dogs provide. Everyone knows about sheepdogs and guide dogs but disease detector dogs that can find Tuberculosis are really being trained.

Imagine having a dog that will do chores like empty the washing machine of clothes, spotting the onset of epilepsy or warning of low blood glucose in a diabetic owner. This is not science fiction it is a present-day fact.

The dogs that do this are not specially bred for the job, but they are carefully assessed by trainers for particular gifts or abilities, which are then encouraged and enhanced for the benefit of humans.



Hot dog: working the spit

From the days of turnspit dogs, that turned a treadmill to rotate a roasting spit or churn butter to the sensitive noses and inquisitive minds of dogs the list of working dogs continues to grow.

Draught dogs that pull small carts even those carrying people. They were even used in World War I to pull small field guns. Dogs in harness sometimes had guard dogs to protect them from stray dogs.

Service or assistance dogs help people with various disabilities in every day tasks. Some examples include mobility dogs for the physically handicapped, and guide dogs for the deaf or blind.

Therapy dogs provide cheer and entertainment for the elderly in retirement facilities and the ill and injured in hospitals. The very act of training dogs can also act as a therapy for human handlers, as in a prisoner rehabilitation project.

Rescue dogs assist people who are in difficult situations, such as in the water after a boat disaster.

Search or tracking dogs locate people who are missing or lost, covered in avalanches, or buried under collapsed buildings.

Herding dogs are invaluable to sheep and cattle handlers around the world. A well-trained dog can adapt to control any sort of domestic and many wild animals.

Sled dogs although today primarily used in sporting events, still can assist in transporting people and supplies in rugged, snowy terrain.

Hunting dogs assist hunters in finding, tracking, and retrieving game, or in routing vermin.

Guard and watchdogs help to protect private or public property often with security firms,

Detector dogs offer a wide variety help by detecting termites and bedbugs in homes, illegal substances in luggage, as well as bombs, chemicals, and other substances.



War dogs now usually called Military Working dogs can specialise in military tasks such as mine detection or wire laying.

Police dogs are highly trained to track or immobilize possible criminals while assisting officers in making arrests or investigating the scene of a crime.

One of my favourites is the deaf teacher who had a Mexican hairless dog working in the classroom. An unusual choice so why that dog?

When a pupil put up their hand the dog touched the teacher's leg and pointed out who had asked for attention.

And why hairless? The teacher was very allergic to dog hair!!



Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

Unfortunately, the last issue of Beneath the Vale was below the usual standard.

1. The statement was made that "Our affordable homes ARE to be built on the Thane Farm site." I have just checked: there has not been any decision made on this, some two months later, so the matter is still under discussion. Readers may like to check the current status for themselves on the website of WDDC.

2. It is not correct to say that Mark Van de Weyer asked for a medical centre on the land "instead of the homes". This can only be a deliberate misrepresentation. The idea of a medical centre was an add-on. Who could possibly object to such a bright idea, from someone prepared to work hard to research this possibility for the local community?

3. Two officials, Jennifer Clarke, Dorset AONB Planning Officer, and Sally Lloyd-Jacob, Planning and Urban Design Officer, WDDC, are singled out for ridicule in Beneath the Vale. These two ladies were only doing their job, and were presumably given no right of reply, or even done the basic courtesy of being informed beforehand that potentially libellous comments were to be made about them. Mrs Lloyd-Jacob in fact spotted an important error in the original plan for the car park, which meant cars would have been blocked in. The plans had to be re-drawn. She is given no credit for this in Beneath the Vale.

What a pity that the opportunity to present a useful community magazine has been wasted, for lack of a bit of fact-checking and editorial restraint. We all pay about £1 per copy for this publication. It is not "free". It should not be used as a mouthpiece for minority interests.

With hope for a better magazine in future, I remain,

Yours truly

Caroline Dilke

Editor's reply

We are grateful for all letters to the editor especially those that criticise our efforts.

Ms Dilke is quite correct; issue 11 was below the standard the editorial team sets itself. A new distribution method failed and publication was delayed for which we all apologise.

If I may comment on her other key points that she lists:

1 The internet is not the only source of information. We were told by the two councillors directly involved that, although the decision to grant delegated consent to Hastoe, had long been decided, it has to be accompanied by a 'Section 106 agreement' between all 4 parties and it is this that has delayed the formal announcement. In this instance we had also checked other direct contacts, all of whom confirmed that position and all of us were in fact correct.

2 Mr Van de Weyer has insisted that a Medical Centre be part of the affordable homes plan. But, only enough land was sought for the 7 houses, so to add a medical centre would have led to fewer homes. We are aware that Mr Van de Weyer did not ask for any extra land to back his idea, so BTV's comment is correct.

3 Beneath the Vale, paid for by the Parish Council has always represented the community as a whole. It is a strange form of democracy, let alone freedom of the press that does not allow us to comment on officials who impinge on our lives especially if they are wrong. However it should be noted that a more senior officer subsequently welcomed the farmstead style that would mitigate the impact on the landscape. All this can be seen on the website and agrees with our information.

Whilst we welcome all fair or personal comment, as we have set out previously, it is not the policy of the 5-person team behind BTV to allow misleading or inaccurate information to be printed in your community publication. Now let us get on and watch the homes being built.

Ali Cameron,
Editor, Beneath the Vale

The Silly Pages

Last weekend we attended a birthday party in the next village. Young and old, parents and children, all were invited and were having a great time when our best friend's wife realised that a four-year old girl sitting opposite was staring at her with disconcerting blue eyes.

The girl, daughter of another close friend, was hardly eating her food for staring. The object of attention could not ignore the girl so she checked her dress for spots of food, wiped her face as subtly as possible and even smoothened her hair just in case.

Worse other guests were starting to notice the girl's behaviour. As the table fell silent our friend finally could take no more and asked the girl. "Why are you staring at me so intently?"

All innocence, the young lady replied:

"I am waiting to see how you drink like a fish!"

Friends are like biscuits;
Some are sweet,
Some are cheesy,
But my favourites are crackers!

During a visit to a mental asylum, a visitor asked the medical director what were the criteria for whether or not a patient should be institutionalised.

"Well," said the director "we fill up a bathtub and we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the person and ask him to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," said the visitor, "A normal person would use the bucket because it is bigger than the teaspoon or teacup."

"No," said the director, "a normal person would just pull the plug out. Do you want a room with or without a view?"

Mrs Brown went into the kitchen to find her husband stalking about with a fly swatter.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Hunting flies," Mr Brown replied.

"Oh have you got any?"

"Yes, three males and two females," he said.

Intrigued, she asked: "How can you tell?"

"Easy," he said, "three were on a beer can and two were on the phone!"

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

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