

Char Chat News

For residents and our guests in

Whitchurch Canonorum, Wootton Fitzpaine, Morcombelake

Stanton St Gabriel, Fishpond, Ryall and Monkton Wyld

April 2021

Welcome to the Char Valley Parish Council newsletter

Spring 2021...

Its now over a year since we first came to realise how serious a threat COVID is to our way of life. In that time, both the benefits and the challenges of living in this part of west Dorset have been highlighted in our efforts to cope with exceptional loss and disruption, but we have also seen how resilient our communities can be.

As we move into Spring, and gradually regain our freedom of movement and choices, we have seen a greater appreciation and concern for the needs of others, and that has underpinned our resilience.

So, it's a big **Thank You to everyone**—the workers, the volunteers, the neighbours, the friends—who have all, as a community, cared.

Obviously, the challenge is not over. Neither our health and social services nor our economy has yet recovered. As with any global health issue, variants and mutations could derail our recovery, but we are already making plans for the future.

Major policy proposals are being put forward by the Government and, more locally, Dorset Council. They encompass housing, transport, environment, culture, tourism, and post-Brexit trading.

These proposals will affect the way we live here in west Dorset. Over the past 10 years, we have seen a steady decline in local services (shops, pubs, post office, buses, etc) and increased investment in our local centres of Bridport, Lyme Regis, and Broadwindsor. The cost of local housing has increased and it is very difficult for locals to find accommodation locally. We have also seen an increased appreciation and awareness of our local environment, and we may see the formation of a new National Park. This does change the nature of our local villages and hamlets, and Dorset Council's current plans will continue this trend. CVPC have responded to these proposals on your behalf and we explain those responses in this newsletter. Let us know your views.

Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) is a group council made up of the civil parish councils of Stanton St Gabriel, Whitchurch Canonorum (North and South), and Wootton Fitzpaine.

Because each separate council is small, we join up for meetings so we can take decisions together and achieve more.

The combined civil parish stretches from the Jurassic Coast to the Marshwood Vale, all falling within the West Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

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Opinions expressed by individual contributors do not necessarily represent the views of CVPC as a whole.

The Editor

CVPC Meetings

CVPC meets monthly except in August and December. Being a group council, our meetings are held in each of our village halls in rotation—James Hargreaves Hall in Morcombelake (JH), Whitchurch Canonorum village hall (WC), and Wootton Fitzpaine village hall (WF). The meeting minutes and agenda are posted on parish notice boards and website. All our meetings are open to the public and we welcome public participation.

Our meetings start at 7:30pm, with the following schedule:

2021 Meetings:

12 April 10 May – proposed AGM (dependent on COVID advice) 14 June 19 July
13 September 11 October 15 November

Following Government Covid-19 guidelines, our meetings will be held on-line until we are advised otherwise. As always, our meeting is a public meeting so please contact our Clerk if you wish to take part.

CVPC COUNCILLORS

www.charvalley.org

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

ANNUAL PARISH MEETINGS for local civil parishes within CHAR VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Each civil parish council must hold an Annual Parish Meeting each year at which the PUBLIC can discuss any subject relevant to the local parish. Your local elected parish councillors will be in attendance but the meetings are primarily for the local residents.

The dates for your meetings are:

Whitchurch Canonorum NORTH on **Thursday April 8th at 7:30pm**

Whitchurch Canonorum SOUTH and **Stanton St Gabriel** on **Tuesday April 20th at 7:30pm**

Wootton Fitzpaine (includes Monkton Wyld and Fishponds) on **Thursday April 29th at 7:30pm**

This year, the meetings will be held on-line. If you wish to participate, please contact our clerk, Mike, who will provide all the details for joining the meeting.

Char Valley information services

Parish Noticeboards for local community use

CVPC maintain eight noticeboards around the parish, 3 of which have been replaced by new lockable boards. Suitable items of relevance to our residents may be posted on the CVPC Boards by anyone.

If you have a notice, an event, or a local request that you want to publicise on our locked noticeboards, please contact one of your local Parish Councillors.

CVPC Website

The Char Valley website at www.charvalley.org has dedicated pages where you can find contact details for local councillors, details of Parish Council meetings (agendas and minutes), information about planning applications, and copies of the submissions to National and Local Government that CVPC have made **on your behalf**.

The Char Valley website also has information on local history, local environmental initiatives, back issues of this newsletter, news about transport in the area, early warning of road closures and lots more.

Char Chat News

The **paper copy** of Char Chat News will be distributed to all residents and local organisations or businesses unless we are specifically asked to only distribute the digital copy.

We aim to produce 3 issues per year, and will be using our website to update information and notify residents of any non-urgent matters arising between the issues.

However, we recognise that some of you will be happy to receive a purely digital copy through email. If this suits you, please email our clerk with your name and home address and we will remove your address from the physical circulation list.

Your Address

We use the local electoral roll as our primary source for addresses. However, this may not be up to date, so we also update the names and addresses based on local knowledge. If the address used for your copy is not correct,

PLEASE TELL US HOW YOU WANT TO BE ADDRESSED.

For example, we have over 70 addresses that say 'The OCCUPIER' - is this right for you? We also recognise that personal circumstances can affect the addressees, so please inform us if we need to change the name or title of any one on our list. Contact our Clerk, Mike, with your changes.

Community Projects Update



River Char Community Project

You've probably read about two local projects in recent issues of Char Chat News. These are two local schemes to help the environment. They are an important part of our local response to the Climate & Ecological Emergency declared by the Government, by Dorset Council and by Char Valley Parish Council in 2019.

First, the River Char Community Project run by Char Valley Parish Council. We are working with Dorset AONB and Dorset Wildlife Trust and Phase 1 is now well under way.

Dorset AONB have talked to a number of local farmers and landowners already. But they want to gather opinions from all of us. Please have a look at the leaflet about the Project in this issue and, if you can, look at the short film made by Ian Rees of Dorset AONB about the river and the Community Project.

Then, please complete the survey – fill it in online in about 10 minutes, or complete and return the printed questionnaire inserted loose with the leaflet in this newsletter.

Your answers are confidential and you don't have to give your name and address. (But if you would like to volunteer to help with the river in the next stage of the project, or you would be happy for Dorset AONB to contact you to discuss your answers – or if you would like to be entered in the prize draw – then please do give your name and contact details.)

Have you any wildlife sightings to report?

This is a great opportunity to share sightings (if you've

seen fish, an otter, kingfishers or anything else of interest on the river recently) and to tell Dorset AONB about any problems and concerns you know about. Please watch the film and answer the survey – and tell your friends to do the same.

Have you got any photos of the river?

Dorset AONB would love to have photos of the river at different times of the year. If you have any you'd like to share, please contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance – details at the front of this newsletter.

We hope this project can bring local families and friends together to help improve and restore the state of our river.

See the leaflet/questionnaire in this newsletter and/or go to www.charvalley.org/riverchar

Lifelines Community Project

The Lifelines project is not run by the Parish Council but we have endorsed it. It's a community project to reduce the amount of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fungicides that are used in our gardens and on our farmland. The National Trust and others have signed up to the scheme, which is described in detail in the other leaflet in this newsletter.



They are also looking for volunteers – do help if you can: www.thelifeline.site

The Planning System in West Dorset

People tend to think of the planning system as an unwelcome restriction on their personal freedom to do what they want on their own land but, generally, we understand that without the planning laws, our cities, villages, and countryside would be a lost in a sea of uncontrolled development.

Here, of course, we all enjoy our exceptionally beautiful landscape and the planning system provides various ways of protecting it and shaping the development that is allowed to take place.

First, there is **UK planning law** set by the government, which defines various categories of protected landscape such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which covers most of west Dorset. Planning restrictions here are aimed at protecting the beauty of the landscape and are more onerous than in the country at large. There are also more than 100 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in West Dorset and many village Conservation Areas, such as the one in Whitchurch Canonorum.

The Government sets targets for how much new housing and employment each authority is required to provide in a given period. Here, there is often a conflict between landscape protection and these government targets. An example is in the proposal to allow over 700 new houses and some new employment at Vearse Farm, on this side of Bridport. The land here is included in the AONB where the landscape is theoretically protected, but government targets have taken priority.

The national planning system is currently under review and, in autumn 2020, the government published a new version for consultation. The consultation period ended on 20 January 2021 and CVPC made comments which you can see on the new CVPC website, www.charvalley.org.

The proposed new system would mean that more decisions would be taken when the Local Plan is decided with much less scope for input from local people.

Second, there will be **Dorset Council's Local Plan**. The term 'local' is a bit misleading as it covers all the new Dorset Council area that came into being in 2019.

Dorset Council (DC) has just finished consulting on a new draft Local Plan for the whole of this unitary authority area. This plan is intended to cover the period from 2021 to 2038, with reviews at 5-year intervals. The consultation period ended on 15th March 2021 and the plan and our CVPC response is on our website.

The new Local Plan is not expected to become law until 2023 and there will be more opportunities to comment as the plan is developed further.

Meanwhile, the **2015 Local Plan for West Dorset** is still in place. This identifies 'Defined Development Boundaries' in towns and larger villages (Charmouth, for example), within which new development will generally be acceptable, subject to all the other legal constraints. There are no such development areas in Char Valley.

The result of all this is that when a new planning application is submitted, DC planners check to see that the proposal conforms to both UK planning Law and the existing 2015 WDDC Local Plan.

At present, they also have to publicise the application and invite comments. Char Valley Parish Council (CVPC) is what is called a **Statutory Consultee**, and is asked to respond to every application within the parish using our local knowledge and local consultation.

Individuals can also make comments to DC and these are published on the DC website.

Most applications are decided by DC planning officers, but large or contentious proposals may be referred to the DC Planning Committee where individuals have a limited right to present their evidence, for or against, in person.

An applicant can appeal a decision they believe to be wrong.

In the more immediate locality, there is an opportunity for parishes to prepare **Neighbourhood plans**. Neighbourhood Plans are intended to reflect the vision of the local area and must be recognised by the DC Planners in making their decisions.

A great deal of work is involved and there needs to be a dedicated team involving both parish councillors and members of the public to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Some parishes, such as Upper Marshwood Vale, have already chosen to do this and have had their plans adopted. In Char Valley, a survey in 2017 showed little interest among residents.

We hope to tell you more about Neighbourhood plans in a later issue of Char Chat.

Everything is in a state of change at the moment. As the Local Plan obviously depends on the national policy – which may well be radically over-hauled - nothing is certain. All we can do is to keep a keen eye on what happens and do our best to steer the reforms in a positive direction.

Recent news about Bats on the Dorset-Devon border

Background

Not everyone likes bats, but those who do, feel passionate about them.



Bats have long had a bad reputation, but you will be relieved to hear that no UK bats are blood-suckers and they are such agile fliers that

there is almost no chance that they will get caught in anyone's hair!

Recent concerns about the transmission of Covid 19 from bats to humans are to do with a single species of bat in China which has links, not to Covid 19 itself, but to another similar virus.

Why are bats so important?

We are gradually realizing that everything in the natural world is related to everything else. Loss of any one species affects the whole system in ways we are only beginning to understand.

In the UK there are 17 species of bats and bat populations have been in decline for a long time. This is obviously related to the decline in insects, their main food.

A lack of bats indicates a lack of insects to pollinate our crops and feed the birds. Projects to help pollinating insects involve increasing the amount of flower-rich grassland and encouraging us to plant more insect-friendly flowers in our gardens. More insects mean more birds as well as more bats.

The importance of bats is recognised in the Wildlife and Countryside Act which provides a high level of protection for all the UK species.

Some of you may have found this out the hard way by discovering that heavy fines can be imposed for disturbing the bats which may be roosting in your attics or barns. When you apply for planning permission to alter or demolish a building you will be asked to pay for a professional survey to establish if any bat roosts might be disturbed by your work. If bats are found,

your plans will only be approved if what are called 'mitigation measures' are put in place. In one local case, the owners had to put up an entire new building for the bats before they got their planning permission.

A new project close to home

The decline in bat populations has become so serious that some species are at risk of extinction in the UK. One of these is the Grey Long-eared Bat *Plecotus austriacus* which the Bat Conservation Trust describes as "an enchanting little creature with ears almost as long as its body". There are said to be only 1,000 of them left in the UK and only 8 maternal roosts.

They are now known only in a few parts of Southern England and specifically here around Lyme Regis, Charmouth and Uplyme.

As these bats generally forage in the open, their preferred habitat is flower-rich meadow land with plenty of pollinating insects.

Recently, funding has been won from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund to provide additional areas of suitable habitat to encourage our local Grey Long-Eared bats to move further eastwards so they can ultimately join up with colonies in Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Wootton Fitzpaine is one of the target parishes for action.

This project 'Return of the True Night Rider', will be run by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in partnership with the Bat Conservation Trust.

Meanwhile, Dorset Wildlife Trust is already actively encouraging the preservation of existing wildflower meadows and the establishment of new ones, so this new project will complement their work.

Look out for new meadows near the Devon boundary!



Organic farming - Worth another look?

Many people have strong views about organic farming and its produce, but relatively few people buy or know much about it even though it can be cheaper than the supermarket 'finest' range.

The benefits of organic farming to people, nature and



Bottle-fed, orphan Dorset Poll lambs on a local organic farm, learning how to eat grass under a Mirabelle plum tree

the land are now backed by decades of research, so perhaps it's worth another look?

Here are a few facts for you...

* Observational research on 68,946 French adults published in 2016 by the University of Paris noted a 25% reduction in certain cancers in those eating organic food. This was not controlled clinical research so can only be considered an indication.

* Organic farms have 48% more wildlife and insects than conventional farms. Apart from the joy they bring us, we now understand the scientific importance of creatures and insects to our own existence and well-being. Organic farmers have always been encouraged to plant new hedgerows and trees to provide wildlife habitats, and to keep beetle banks alongside fields for the easy passage of wildlife and insects. Now this is becoming mainstream practice.

* For the past 26 years, through their Countryside Stewardship Schemes, the Government has paid farmers and landowners to convert to organic methods and makes annual payments to stay that way.

* Organic food often offers better nutrition. Organic dairy products have increased nutrients and trace elements, as do many vegetables and fruit.

* Organic meat also has greater amounts of Omega 3

fats and fewer Omega 6 fats than cattle and sheep reared alternatively. Opinion varies as to whether the amounts are significant enough to affect human health.

* Organic farming is an *extensive* system which means fewer animals are kept per hectare. It uses only a few, approved chemicals on the land and livestock drugs only as needed. It has the health of the soil, animals and the natural environment at its hub.

Hence the name of Britain's oldest and largest organic body, the Soil Association. This is able to certify organic enterprises along with several others such as Organic Farmers and Growers. Annual inspections are held by all organic certifying bodies. On a farm, that inspection includes examining field records, fodder labels, invoices, storage areas and animal inspections. The fields and their management are scrutinised. Sometimes, the inspector may even take a peek inside your larder to see how organically minded you really are!

Fortunately, in this area, there are many traditional farmers whether officially organic or not, who nurture both nature and the soil. Without healthy soils, the human race, along with everything else, would not survive!

Pesticides are now strictly controlled in UK and only allowed for use with a licence but they have been used for decades and much of it still lies in the ground where your food may still be growing or grazing.

For example, DDT was banned in 1972 in USA and 1986 in UK but traces are still found in the soil. A 2019 Canadian study found that DDT washed down by rivers was still adversely affecting the ecosystems at the bottom of New Brunswick lakes, at least 47 years later!

Using artificial fertilisers, and herbicides and fungicides that kill everything in their wake, whether on the farm or in your garden, mean the soil becomes thinner and sterile not only for now but for generations.

People use new products and systems often thinking they offer improvements or easier management of the land and, sometimes, that is true. For businesses, the search for ever more efficiency and profit is a seducing cocktail. However, many of the long term results are not and, later, a higher price is paid.

Perfection is an unattainable goal both for humans and nature of which we are a part. Let's give ourselves a break! Cherish and treat nature the way you would like to be treated yourself. Start by wearing organic clothes, and eating some organic food. What's more, it can also feel and taste a lot better too!

Closure of Moores Bakery—and Dorset Knobs

Moores Bakery closed its doors in Morcombelake in December 2020, after trading in the same village site for 140 years.

Dorset Knob Biscuits have been synonymous with West Dorset for over 160 years. The Moores family were already established at



Stoke Mills in the Marshwood Vale, (on the Whitchurch/Broad oak boundary) by 1860. Samuel Moores (born 1829) and his wife Eleanor brought up eleven children in the farm house with an overshot



water mill alongside and a small bakery in the yard.

Although the farm was isolated by very narrow

lanes, farming, milling and baking continued to thrive for many years in this rural setting. Wheat was sown and harvested, flour was milled and bread baked in the small oven heated by faggots (bundles of kindling wood).

The Moores employed a local thrashing machine to process their wheat and also bought wheat from local farmers.

After the breadmaking was finished it was the custom to make Dorset Knobs by adding butter and sugar to the left-over dough and then rolling it out by hand into small buns. The dying heat of the oven was used to dry them into rusks. Dorset Knobs probably took their name from the hand sewn Dorset Knob buttons which were still being made in the last revival of the once thriving cottage industry of Dorset Buttony in the eighteenth century.

These Dorset Knobs were eaten soaked in tea by farmers and farm workers and called 'soaks'. Dairy farmers ate them before early morning milking so that they didn't work on an empty stomach. They then came indoors later for a big breakfast. Nowadays they are more often split open and eaten with a little salted butter or mature cheese.

Samuel, (born 1854) the second son was established in Morcombelake by 1880. He first leased East View

Cottage in 1879 (on the main road through Morcombelake) but by 1882 had bought this property, along with a stable, outbuildings, premises and garden adjoining with further stables and another cottage. He married Frances and they had six children.

The Bakery was extended piece by piece around the



house and the staff increased gradually until after WW1 when there were at least thirteen bakers and three bread carts on the road.

In 1924 Samuel retired and his sons Reginald and Donald took over the business. Labour was always found in the close-knit community: the chief confectioner was the landlord of the Five Bells at Whitchurch (Mr James Veryard) and the bakery foreman was the landlord of the Sun Inn across the road.

Unfortunately WW2 and subsequent rationing was the start of a gradual decline in the business and the staff who left or retired were not replaced. By the end of the war the last of the other Moores Bakeries in the area had closed.

When Donald died in 1953, his son Ivor took on the partnership briefly with Reg, and on Reg's death in 1959 Reg's son Keith, after some deliberation, decided to take on the partnership with Ivor. Keith and Ivor worked together gradually to improve the poor situation. Bread and cake making were stopped altogether and the Dorset Knob production was increased. Also the small number of sweet biscuits that had been baked were increased considerably. A self contained shop area was set up and visitors were encouraged.

...continued



Moore's Bakery... continued

In 1967, Ivor, who was not in good health, sold his share of the partnership to Keith, who (joined with his wife Gill) continued to run the business.

A new kind of biscuit was developed starting with Dorset Ginger and Walnut Crunch, and with the other sweet biscuits these then formed the major part of production, the packaging designs being drawn by Gill. In the late 1970s the old ovens were replaced and there was a steady expansion in bakery equipment. In 1980 space was allowed for a small gallery of Gill's Dorset paintings.



In 1989 Keith's step son David, came into the business and after a year took over as managing partner. Keith was able to retire in 1990 and took on the roll of odd job man, occasional van driver, road-sweeper and decorator.

The business, of necessity, became very tourist and gift orientated, most of the big newsagents, garden centres and farm shops having taken over from the traditional High Street customers; which meant that the two vans then had to travel much further afield to deliver Moore's Bakery products.

The **Dorset Knob Throwing** competition, in conjunction with the Frome Valley Food Festival, started in 2007 and took place at Cattistock near Dorchester. This brought a new level of popularity for the Dorset Knob biscuit. Other activities included 'guess the weight of the knob, knob and space race, knob darts and knob painting. When the event moved to Kingston

Maurward College, Dorchester in 2017 over 8000 people attended.

In 2007 the company moved most of its manufacturing to Bridport. This meant that only about a quarter of the Morcombelake building was being used for baking and retailing. But even so bread, cakes, pasties, doughnuts, and sausage rolls were still being baked by a small number of staff and tailor-made to customers' needs at the Morcombelake bakery. There was a fresh bake every day, and the busiest times were the May half-term holiday and the summer.

The closure of the bakery at Morcombelake in December 2020 coincided with the retirement of the shopkeeper, Sue Rice. The timing was right to lead the company in a different direction. As most of the activity and manufacturing came from the Bridport site they wanted to simplify operations. David Winship, a partner in Moore's, said that it was sad after so many years to close, but he believed it was a necessary change.

A very sad day for Morcombelake.

Plans are afoot to set up a small shop connected to the Bridport manufacturing site, and it is hoped that this will open in time for Easter 2021.



(We are greatly indebted to David Winship and Mrs Gill Moore's for permission to use material from their publication "Biscuits from a Dorset Village" and thanks to Helen Doble, Luba, and George Rendall for further research into topics covered in this article.)

Playgrounds

Char Valley Parish Council is responsible for the playground adjacent to the village hall in Whitchurch Canonorum. This is a small but well-equipped playground which is used extensively by the playgroup based in the village hall. When Covid struck last March we had to immediately close the playground, as per government regulations, in an effort to prevent the infection spreading. The playground opened again in July last year but only as a result of us producing a stringent risk assessment, an ongoing action plan and clear signage. Fortunately playgrounds have been able to stay open during the last two lockdowns and it has continued to be well used.

Apart from the Covid safety measures, we also ensure the equipment is safe to use and have quarterly inspections and reports. Recent recommendations and actions included replacing the roman rings and the mountings for the chain and tyre swing, modifying the access to the slide and net to encourage traversing, and replacing the barrier on the swings for safer movement around the playground.

CVPC Responses to National Government and local Dorset Council Consultations

There has been a flurry of consultations and proposals published by National and Local Government bodies in the past few months. *These will affect our way of life here in west Dorset either directly or indirectly.* CVPC have responded to a number of these with comments and submissions that we believe represent the majority view of our local residents.

You are urged to read these on our website www.charvalley.org and please let us have your feedback.

Dorset Council Local Plan

The Local Plan is Dorset Council's strategy detailing the areas within Dorset where housing and employment opportunities will be allowed and encouraged. The plan details Dorset Council's reasoning behind that strategy and describes policies based on housing targets, employment needs, protection of green belt and AONB, tourism, and environmental impacts.



We are concerned that the apparent lack of any integrated strategy on the future rural west Dorset will lead to a neglect of our communities.



Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

This was highlighted in our November 2020 newsletter and our detailed submission is available on the CVPC website.

We are pressing for stronger and more urgent action on reducing carbon emissions, improving river water quality, restoring biodiversity, supporting changes in agriculture and land management and much more.

Dorset Council Cultural Strategy

The Cultural Strategy makes a strong case for the economic and well-being benefits of an effective strategy covering arts, sports, events, museums, playgrounds, and tourism.

We welcome a positive approach but have concerns that it concentrates on major population centres and neglects our residents living here in rural west Dorset

Dorset Cultural Strategy 2016 – 2021



National Government consultation on the Future of Rural Transport

HMG published a call for evidence (cfe) aimed at the current difficulties and future options for rural transport. In particular, the cfe looked at transport innovations and

using technology to improve services. CVPC pointed out the challenges of all forms of travel here in Char Valley, from the cost and impact of private transport, the narrow lanes, lack of pedestrian facilities, to the practical difficulties of e-bikes or scooters, and the commercial failure of local bus services.

Dogs—we love them, but some owners...

Last issue, we reported on the increased number and devastating effect of livestock worrying by dogs, and unfortunately, it was not just visitors who had been acting irresponsibly **but also local residents**.

Sadly, here is another example of selfish and inconsiderate behaviour by local dog owners.

Lest Anyone Still Believes in Fairies

Some time ago I was contacted about dog poo. Apologies for being blunt. It's a problem we are all familiar with and most of us have seen dog poo bags hanging in bushes or left on verges. We shake our heads disapprovingly and wonder about what sort of idiot does that.

Actually, we know exactly the sort of person who does that. Such a person is thoughtless and selfish and needs reminding that the practice is illegal. Chucking your dog's full poo bag in to a hedge does not comply with the legal requirement to clean up after your pet. Failure to remove dog mess attracts a substantial fine.

However, the person who rang me had a more specific problem. Someone was regularly leaving full poo bags in the hedge near his house. Contractors arriving to cut the hedge alerted him. I leave you to visualise the scene ... hedge trimmers, plastic bags full of poo ... ew! I said I would have a look, contact the dog warden, see what could be done. I promised to report back.

The dog warden was sympathetic but not very helpful: the service is under-resourced, witnesses are needed, the police are not interested. He suggested putting up a sign. Regretfully, I passed this information back. It seemed there wasn't much to be done.

Not long after this, a friend asked me if I'd noticed all the poo bags hanging in a hedgerow up the road from the village. She was talking about the same hedge. We agreed we should do something about it rather than wring our hands and moan and decided to clean up the mess ourselves.

Off we went, armed with gloves, a couple of carrier bags and masks. COVID compliance on this occasion had some unintended benefits. At least we couldn't smell the stuff.

I won't gross you out with the details. Suffice to say, we soon lost count of the number of bags we removed but it amounted to around 50kgs of dog mess. Yes. That's right. 50Kgs. Some of it in small poo bags, some of it in supermarket carriers, most beginning to degrade. Imagine that (if you can bear to). We had to call home for back-up in the form of a large roll of black bin liners and a car to take all it away.



The removal of all that s*** was revolting enough. But the fact that someone thought it was acceptable to dump dog mess there in such quantities is shocking. The accumulation of so much excrement and plastic posed a significant health and contamination risk.

I still can't decide which aspect of this sorry story disgusts me most but its message is clear: **please bag up your dog's poo, take it home and bin it**. Believe me, the poo fairy does not exist.

COVID

CVPC are maintaining their contact points for help and advice if you or friends need help with the continuing challenges of the COVID pandemic. Here is the list:

Morcombelake:

Clare Mahaddie clare.mahaddie@icloud.com 01297 489813

Ryall:

Rachel Coney rachelconey0@gmail.com 01297 489825

Eddie Hall edwardhallhome@gmail.com 07971 225873

Fishponds:

Jeanne Coates jeanne@coates2.com 01297 678303

Monkton Wyld:

Sarah Drewer info@monktonwyld.org (please ask for Sarah) 01297 560342

Stanton St Gabriel:

Andrew Carey acarey@charvalleyipc.com 01297 560057

Whitchurch Canonorum:

Carolyn Peck carolyn56peck@gmail.com 01297 489185

Wootton Fitzpaine:

Debbie Snook debsnook@aol.com 01297 561395



Alternatively call any one
of our Parish Councillors
listed on page 2.

[In the Upper Marshwood Vale Parish Council area, please contact Matthew Bowditch -
m1bowditch.vets@virgin.net 01308 862758]

Dorset Council produce an online Covid update—CVPC sends details to all residents on our electronic lists.

Char Valley Parish Council

Dorset Council Covid Support

For general support, please phone Dorset Council on 01305 221000, 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday or access their website (www.bit.ly/34s33to)

For well-being and mental health issues, please phone Dorset Healthcare on their 24-hour helpline, 0300 123 5440 or access their website (www.bit.ly/3dWaNqH)