

COMBS PARISH COUNCIL



Spring 2023 Newsletter



Chairman's Report

Dear Residents

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Newsletter. This traditional time of renewal, in which nature shakes itself out of winter slumber and bursts into life. As I type I can see a profusion of new green leaves, a carpet of daisies in a close-by field and white sprays of cow parsley lining a pathway.

And, more prosaically, your Parish Council is also in a period of renewal. Stuart Scarff, Chairman for 10 years and Council stalwart for more than 30, has decided to step down for a well-earned rest. He leaves with our sincere blessings and thanks and with a great deal of respect. Our Clerk, Tony Bamber pays a tribute to his old friend and colleague on page 2. For my part Stuart has provided first-class support to me over my first year as Chair. He has long been an asset to the council and, thereby, to the whole community. I imagine we all know some very intelligent people but perhaps fewer who are also wise: Stuart is as clever and wise as they come.

As it stands the remaining four councillors (Terry Betchley, Suzanne Ottewell, Alan Tomlinson and I) are staying on – the election was uncontested as the parish council quota is seven persons. We would LOVE some company so do please consider joining us – talk to any of us or Tony Bamber if you'd like to find out more. We'd especially like to bolster our team with some younger people and with some representation from the Moats Tye/Little London area. We have the discretion to co-opt councillors at any time.

I want to touch on an annoying issue: the housing development on Bildeston Road and the attendant disruption. As a Parish Council our legal powers are limited but we do wield our 'soft power' as we see fit. We have been busy lobbying both our County and District Councillors, Kay Oakes and John Matthissen, providing them with the evidence to take up the cudgels on our behalf. We are grateful to them both: they've obtained two Stop Notices and putting the development under condition enforcement. We've also compiled and sent a file of the various problems caused to the owner of the development company and received an apology and a stated aim to reduce disruption. We will keep on top of it as best we can.

Finally, weather permitting (!) we'll be holding an informal 'Meet and Greet' on Saturday 24th June at the corner of Park Road and Jack's Lane from 10:00-11:00am. If you're around, do drop by and say hello – we'd love to get to know you, hear your issues, answer your questions and help out as best we can.

Tony Kitson
Chair

Retirement of Councillor Stuart Scarff

After being involved with the parish council for around 30 years, 10 of them as chairman, Stuart has decided to take a well-earned retirement.

Aside from being involved in pretty much everything that has happened in the village, Stuart is a regular sight driving his farm vehicles around the village tending to his fields and crops. There have been many village events, with notable ones in recent years being the annual village fete, whose revival was instigated by Stuart in 2008, when he brought together a committee to work with the gardening club, cubs and scouts, brownies and guides and other local interest groups.

As well as becoming a popular fixture in the village the fete was a great way for local residents to meet up and few who attended could have failed to notice Stuart's helpful presence everywhere from being on a tractor moving bales (and occasionally crushing garden chairs that sneak up) to helping to create the bar and, after the work was over, sampling its produce. What many people may not have appreciated was how much in the way of effort and materials Stuart contributed in order to ensure the fete worked.

Other relatively recent events in the village have included:

- the development of a parish plan, which helped to defend the village against speculative development;
- the erection of a commemorative beacon, which was lit for the WW1 commemorations and the jubilee celebrations;
- and the now annual village litter pick.

Stuart grew up in the village and as a result probably knows as much about its people and history as anyone. As the village farmer Stuart is known to many as he tends his fields and many will appreciate what an excellent steward he is for the countryside and, as well as being a major stakeholder in it, he is a fine custodian of the village.

We residents have been fortunate to have such a good neighbour: not all farms are so sensitively managed and farming is far from a 9 to 5 job yet still Stuart has been able and willing to be a very active councillor and latterly chairman.

On occasion parish council meetings have involved topics that raise passions and Stuart has been a wise, calming influence when tempers have been high.

Despite him being responsible for getting me first to sit as a councillor and more latterly as clerk, I am proud to call Stuart a friend and I'm delighted that he intends to stay active around the village.

Tony Bamber

Litter Pick

Heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers for turning out on 2nd April. Your sterling efforts have visibly spruced up our village and between us we managed to cover the lengths of Park Road, Bildeston Road, Mill Lane, Tannery Road, Moats Tye and Scotches Corner to the Church Hall and our Spring Clean resulted in nearly 30 bags of rubbish being carted off by the District Council.

A round of applause for Tony Bamber and Stuart Scarff who not only pitched in with pickers and bags themselves but organised and set everything up so efficiently and a clap on the back for everyone who joined in. Finally, thank you to Mr Portway for permitting us to assemble at the Tannery car park.



Oaks Meadow - Bildeston Road, Little Finborough IP14 2LA

The Reflective Garden is taking shape with a newly added water feature, the dead hedge being built and more plants and four archways are on their way.

The mud kitchen in the playground is proving very popular with some unusual culinary delights being produced!

The Coronation Community Day was well attended with many having a go at Maypole Dancing. We all took a moment to marvel at the plait produced after a bit of practice.

Funds are currently being raised to put in drainage around the playground and along the roadside edge of the meadow.

A 20 space car park area is planned in the near future.

We are always looking for more volunteers, please contact us via email: oaksmeadow@gmail.com or via our website: www.oaksmeadow.org.uk

We are planning our next event, near to Midsummer Day, on Saturday June 24th, please save the date, details to follow.



Did you knowthat Combs is the home of a unique variety of apple?

“Catherine” is a long keeping, late -flowering, cooking apple from the garden of the Live and Let Live PH. It keeps its shape well when cooked and is more sweet than acidic in flavour. It was sent to the National Fruit Collections in Kent in 1977, when the original tree was already believed by residents of Combs to be a century old. It is believed to be a seedling tree. That is, a tree that developed from an apple pip, either dropped accidentally by a bird or animal, or deliberately planted by someone in the past. Seedling trees from pips do not grow “true” to their parents, so we will never know what the parents of this tree were. It is a vigorous grower and crops heavily.

Catherine was received at Brogdale in April 1977 from a man called Peter Cox. Catherine was never sold commercially until 2004 when EEAOP began propagating trees for sale for the first time. As far as we are aware the old original tree is no longer in the garden at the former pub.



The people of the village named it Catherine.

In December 2009, 17 Catherine apple trees were bought from The East of England Apples & Orchards Project and have been planted around the village.

Battisford & District Cricket Club

Unfortunately the weather at the start of the cricket season didn't play ball and we have had to call a few games off as the wicket and the outfield were too wet to play. However recent weeks have seen more cricket played both by our senior and junior teams. We have matches throughout the season so please do follow our Facebook page to see when we are playing, or look out for the details on our signboard near the ground.

We are delighted to be hosting games for both Suffolk and Hertfordshire. The bar will be open when these games are played so please do come along and support us. Dates for the calendar are 9th July, and 8th and 9th August.

We are really pleased that the work on the clubhouse to improve our facilities has now been completed. It was brilliant to be able to thank those organisations and individuals who had donated money and to thank the contractors and our volunteers at an event on 8th May. Over 80 people came along and enjoyed a cream tea in the sunshine and to acknowledge the hard work. The clubhouse and grounds are available to hire for functions such as weddings, wakes, birthday parties etc. Hopefully you have spotted our new veranda, clock tower, picnic benches and refurbished practice nets all of which support the club in its aim to be a family friendly and inclusive club punching above its weight in the cricket community of Suffolk.

In excess of 575 hours of volunteering has been focused on improving the pavilion, for which we are extremely grateful. Throughout the year we have volunteers behind the bar, preparing the ground, doing cricket teas and coaching our youngsters as well as undertaking all the behind the scenes work of treasurer, secretary, getting grants and sponsorship etc etc. So if you are keen to get involved in any way then please do get in touch.

Finally we are celebrating our half century as a cricket club which is a credit to everyone at the club. We still have some founder members involved and we will be holding events throughout the year linked to our 50 years. We want to ensure that the club continues to thrive and so are always looking for new senior and junior male and female players, so if you, or your child want to come along to play cricket new members are always welcome.

Please look out for details of a summer event taking place at the cricket club on Saturday 19th August. A match will be played, the club will be open as well as a gin bar and refreshments. An auction of promises will be held in the evening.

Website <https://battisforddistrict.play-cricket.com/>

Twitter @BattisforDCC

Facebook @BattisfordAndDistrictCricketClub

Or contact Julia Stephens -Row secretary@battisfordcricket.co.uk



Elections

Thanks to everyone who voted to re-elect me. I will now be one of 24 councillors in the Green group which will be leading the Council, and inevitably I will have some extra responsibilities. I hope to continue attending most parish council meetings and other local events as far as possible, and of course remain available to everyone via email and phone as below.

There will be a review of the running of the election, and if you were adversely affected in any way, such as Voter Photo Identity requirement or not receiving a postal vote, please let me know. Note if you don't have a suitable document, such as driver's licence or passport, you can apply now for a Voter Authority Certificate ahead of the General Election expected next year.

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/applying-a-voter-authority-certificate> or phone the council on 0300 123 4000.

Recycling and Repairing

<https://www.recyclenow.com/> is a useful web site where you can check what can and cannot be recycled in our area, and where.

The Eco futures stall continues to attract more and more of the 'hard to recycle' items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, pens, Coffee pods and tetra-paks. (juice cartons).

Please note they cannot currently take medical 'blister packs' as the volumes have exceeded the willingness of the Superdrug shop in Bury to handle them. I will be working with the group to find a new pathway to get the sack-loads processed to recover the aluminium.

Sunday June 11th: Repair Café and recycling, Red Gables, 2-4pm

Thursday June 22nd: Recycling Stall, Market Place, 9.30-11.30

Trees Needed

When weeding your flower and vegetable gardens, and seedling trees appearing in the wrong place can be potted up and taken to the Stowmarket Tree Nursery at Red Gables, Ipswich Road. Stowmarket. Suffolk. IP14 1BE

John Matthissen: councillor@matthissen.net. Telephone 01449 258894 (7 days a week !)

Or write to me at 2 Brick Kiln Cottages, Barretts Lane, Needham Market IP6 8RZ

Parish Council Meetings
Battisford & District Cricket Club
@7.30pm

Monday 12th June

Monday 10th July

August - no meeting

Monday 11th September

Please contact our clerk 7 days before
if you wish to suggest an item
for the agenda or to attend a meeting
combsparrishcouncil@gmail.com

Don't forget our 'Meet and Greet' on Saturday 24th June at the corner of Park Road and Jack's Lane from 10:00-11:00am. If you're around, do drop by and say hello - see our Chairman's report on the front page for more details

On The Farm

Having looked back at what I wrote for the last newsletter and noting that rainfall was down on average, February turned out to be one of the driest on record with only 3.7 mm of rain recorded on the farm, but then we got to March and I recorded over 100 mm of rain. Mother nature can be so unpredictable. April has not fared much better with more rain and temperatures still low, what has happened to spring. Last year we were in a heat wave !!

The weather can have a big impact with everything that happens on the fields, so watching forecasts and having our own weather station to plan work is very important. Applications of inputs on the crops need certain weather conditions, whether applied to the ground “rain to make it work” or to the foliage then “no rain in 6 hours”, some only need an hour.

Getting crops planted this spring has been much of a challenge with so many wet days. The spring barley was planted in the dry February, it then had so much rain it did not grow. This has since been re-drilled and has finally established. The peas had to wait for better weather and drier conditions so not to sit in cold wet soil. These were drilled 3 weeks later than normal and are growing well.

Work continues in the vineyard with all the 46,000 canes tied down onto the fruiting wire by the 3rd week in April. Our team have now started to go back through each vine selecting two shoots in the crown of the vine and removing the rest which become next years canes. The vines are looking good this year with good buds and growth. So far we have only had one night that the temperature got down to 0 degrees. Only a few buds have showed sign of damage. The new weather station in the vineyard is capable of predicting disease conditions, instead of spraying every 2 weeks to keep on top of disease we will now only spray when the disease pressure is predicted. We could do with the sun showing itself a bit more and some warmer temperatures please.

Next job will be to keep on top of the grass which seems to be growing rapidly at the moment with cutting of footpaths and tracks

Before you know it summer will be here.

Stuart Scarff



Wattisham Flying Station Liaison

The Parish Council received an invitation to a liaison meeting at Wattisham Flying Station which, as many of you will know, hosts a section of the UK's attack helicopter force. After discussions it has been decided to keep the station operational until 2045. Some training and maintenance activities have been deployed and there are now only half the number of aircraft from a few years ago: I imagine residents will have noticed the reduction in flying activity.

The extension of the station's lifetime means that accommodation will need to be refurbished. Existing buildings will be replaced by a modular design and this means that there will be transportation of these large modules around and about the area. The roads of Combs are less likely to be affected than those of Ringshall and Wattisham and the overall impact will be less than a full scale rebuild. We'll endeavour to keep you informed as we will receive updates.

A note for your diaries: there will be a Flypast over Buckingham Palace on 17th June to celebrate the King's Birthday. Wattisham has been selected as the marshalling point for the entire helicopter contingent – so expect a sizeable force to be taking off in the morning to join up with the other aircraft taking part.

Our thanks to the Station for inviting us to a most interesting session.



**citizens
advice**

Mid Suffolk

Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk are looking for volunteers to provide vital support in the community – can you help?

The charity supports people all over Mid Suffolk from their office in Stowmarket, providing free, confidential, independent and impartial advice. Demand for the charity's services has continued to increase, and the wonderful team of volunteers are paramount to the help Citizens Advice provide.

The team are seeking volunteers from all kinds of backgrounds to support local people with their problems. No experience is necessary as full training will be provided.

Citizens Advice volunteers come from all walks of life and choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons. Volunteers are often looking for ways to make use of their skills or to gain valuable experience and make use of the fantastic training. They also enjoy the opportunity to meet different people and be part of a friendly, welcoming team of existing volunteers. They find it rewarding to support local people and make a difference to their lives.

A current volunteer at Citizens Advice said:

"I volunteered to help others, but didn't realise how much I would get back! I love the feeling of satisfaction at the end of the day and the feeling you get from being part of a brilliant, friendly, professional and happy team."

Interested in volunteering? Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk would love to hear from you! Go to midsuffolkcab.org.uk/volunteer or call 01449 676060 for an informal chat.

Orchard Barn News

Architecture students from University College London recently spent 5 days at Orchard Barn, learning about how to build with natural materials. The students, originally from Singapore, India and Australia, stayed at a B&B in Wattisham and were able to walk to Orchard Barn each day. They helped with our timber framed long house project, by mixing rich boulder clay dug from our neighbour's footings, with locally grown barley straw to make a light



straw clay. This was then packed between the oak timber frame and around the long house walls to form a natural and effective form of insulation. The students were very interested in sustainability and were also inspired by our off grid site – no mains water or electricity. It's great to think that future architects are taking natural and sustainable building methods seriously and are looking to incorporate this approach in their professional lives. We look forward to hosting more international students this Summer.

Why not find out more about building with earth! We have some FREE sessions coming up, funded by MSDC. Check our website for details. www.orchardbarn.org.uk

We are always pleased to welcome new volunteers and are currently in need of regular weekly help on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and some Saturdays.

To find out more about us and what we do, or to volunteer with us, look at our website, email carole.orchardbarn@gmail.com or call Sarah on 07766 054042.

Orchard Barn, Ringshall, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 2LY



**Combs Green IP14 2NP
from 10am – 12pm
on the 2nd Thursday of each month**

**Next visits are
8th June
13th July
10th August**

More volunteers are also required - from towing the caravan, to serving teas and coffees, to baking cakes, to lending a friendly ear, to setting up and packing away plus lots more!

**For further info, call the HQ on 01379 855338 or Diana on 07494 572153
or see the website www.ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk**