

PARISH NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025



***St Winifred's Church,
Branscombe
Holyford Mission Community
www.holyford.org***



ST WINIFRED'S CHURCH, BRANSCOMBE

SEPTEMBER SERVICES

7 th	11.15am	Holy Communion
14 ^h	11.15am	Morning Prayer
21 st	11.15am	Holy Communion
28 th	11.15am	Morning Prayer - Harvest will be celebrated followed by a bring and share lunch.



There is no longer Evening Prayer on a Thursday in St Winifred's

For any questions regarding St Winifred's, please contact the
Churchwarden: Ross Willmington 680264

For the latest information across the Mission Community,
consult the website www.holyford.org if possible, or see the relevant
Church Noticeboards

HOLYFORD MISSION COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Holy Communion	Every Wednesday 10am St Andrew's ,Colyton
Morning Prayer	Weekdays Monday - Friday 8.30am St Andrew's Colyton
Transport to/From Church:	Please contact a churchwarden
Baptisms, Marriages & Funerals:	Call Administrator 01297 552307 or email office@holyford.org
Holy Communion at Home:	Please call a Minister, Reader or Churchwarden



FROM THE MISSION COMMUNITY

HolyFORD
MISSION COMMUNITY

Staying Curious

Some of us don't like Autumn - the nights drawing in, the colder days reminding us that winter is getting near. Personally I like the fresher bite to the air after summer's humidity (at least this year!) Plus the beautiful colours and scents in nature as leaves change colour.

When I was younger, I looked forward to the return to school or college after the long summer holidays. Sad soul that I was, a highlight was my trip to W H Smiths at summer's end - to spend some birthday money on a nice assortment of coloured pens or ring binders. Then at home, there was the prospect of rifling through my parent's old wallpaper oddments to cover my new exercise books when term finally started. Even today, I still enjoy the challenge of starting a new hobby or learning something new after the lull of summer. Not necessarily anything too intellectual - just something to stimulate the grey cells or broaden my perspective: maybe leading to questions or sharing insights with others.

Take questions of faith for example. I believe that any religion, including Christianity, rarely 'comes to life' if learnt as a factual subject at school: indeed I don't remember any of the Religious Education taught at secondary school. My interest was only stirred when a friend's mother invited me to church with her daughter and another friend. As we grew older, some of us kept going while others didn't. But this simple invitation provided us with lots of food for thought. Giving us our first insights into how we might understand the Bible - in particular, when reading about Jesus and his relationship with God and the first disciples. Then, when Jesus died, learning of the potential of the Holy Spirit to carry on guiding our lives, if we are willing to follow. And being part of a church family - providing support and friendship but also some challenges, like in any family.

All of this has left me grateful that I was given the chance to learn about what the Bible says of God's affirming, unconditional love. In generations past, people have give verbal and written testimonies of how much a close relationship with God lovingly challenged and nurtured them. Yet others were 'put off' for a host of reasons: perhaps believing that they should stay feeling guilty about any personal shortcomings, or were negatively subject to the Church controlling all moral aspects of their lives.

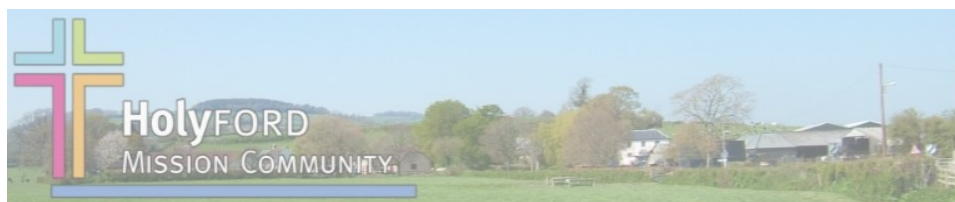
Despite these mistakes and misconceptions, I still believe Christian faith and fellowship can lovingly shape and fulfil our lives, now and in the future. But it's definitely a case of we need to 'come and see' for ourselves.

At the beginning of John's gospel, the first disciples were not coerced into believing in Jesus. He didn't tell them to memorise a creed or join an institution. Instead he wanted them to experience 'the good news' for themselves. One of the first questions they asked him was where he lived. *Come and See* replied Jesus. In other words, he invited them to 'come home' with him and to stay curious about what he had to offer. He asked them, and encouraged them to ask lots of questions. Experience what he could offer first hand and then decide for themselves if he seemed authentic or worth knowing.

So if you are curious, why not try out the new *Alpha* course starting in September, hosted by our Holyford Mission Community of churches. From Wednesday 17 September, there will be 15 free sessions at the Sunday School building, Colyton - each session starting with a shared supper at 7pm. The group then watches a video episode on different aspects of faith. Conversation and questions will follow - you don't have to worry about 'being wrong' or expressing your doubts on a particular subject. Come along by yourself (with another friend?) and find out more. All are welcome!

Please email holyford.alpha@gmail.com to register your interest (and to help with catering needs) or phone Caddie or Ian Doulton on 01297 552558. More info on Alpha can be found at <https://alpha.org.uk>. And if study and chat aren't your bag, why not try out a service or another activity being held in our parish? A flick through this magazine reveals there's plenty of things going on: for all tastes and ages.

Blessings Sue, Retired Licensed Lay Minister.



Enclosed with this month's Parish Newsletter is a gift aid donation envelope towards the cost of publication.

We endeavour to keep the cost down and currently receive a very competitive price for printing and collating from Sharper Print and Mail: our editor Dee and all the distributors are volunteers.

If you would like to make a donation towards covering the cost it would be most gratefully received. The envelope can be given to Pat Ayles or Ross Willmington, put on the collection plate, in the wall safe or posted. If you are not a U.K. tax payer then there is no need to fill in the detail on the envelope.

Thank you very much in anticipation!

Branscombe P.C.C.



Church Floodlighting

If you would like to sponsor the lights, perhaps in memory of someone or to mark a special occasion, please contact Pat Ayles (680328). The suggested donation to church funds for a week of floodlighting is £15.00

*27th July to 2nd August Remembering Stuart.
From all the family*

*14th to 20th September Wishing Scarlett a very Happy 18th Birthday
from Mum, Dad, Charlie and Hugo.*



DONATIONS NEEDED

The Food Bank needs non perishable food, toiletries, washing powder or liquid etc. They particularly need: cold meat (eg ham/corned beef/Spam) *tinned/ jars of hot dogs* chilli con carne*long-life whole milk*baby wipes* toilet rolls*toiletries.

We are still happy to pick up any items from your house if that is easier. For financial gifts the bank details are available on the Mission Community website
Thanks again!!

Jill & Tony Johnson

Please support this worthwhile cause.

Naked Larder

Love food but hate plastic waste??

Naked Larder Sidmouth, based in Weston, is a unique plastic and packaging-free grocery service offering re-fillable dry food goods, eco-friendly cleaning & personal care products ethically, and sustainably sourced at affordable prices. Simple to use - order online & collect using your own containers once per month.

Now open every Monday 2-4pm (except Bank Holidays)

Get 10% off your first order with GIVEUSATRY

www.nakedladdersidmouth.co.uk

DEVON'S FINEST GALLERIES



Marine House at Beer

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original art
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sculpture
jewellery



Steam Gallery

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Open all year

www.marinehouseatbeer.co.uk



CAKE AND CHAT

All welcome to September's Cake and Chat

Branoc Hall,

17th September 2pm-4pm

Come along and meet villagers, old and new, over a slice of cake and a cuppa.

If transport is required call either Andrea Bass on 01297 680447 or John Bass on 01297 680432.

We look forward to seeing you



BRANSCOMBE / WESTON DEFIBRILLATORS

Defibrillators are now kept at the following locations:

Branoc Hall – Branscombe
The Fountain Head - Branscombe
The Masons Arms – Branscombe
The Sea Shanty – Branscombe
Oakdown Caravan Park – Weston

These defibrillators are available for use at the above sites and within the villages of Branscombe and Weston



Camps International Cambodia 2026

As part of my fundraising, I will be continuing to make Fudge

Below are this month's flavours.

After Eight Mint Fudge £3.50

Terry's Chocolate Orange Fudge £3.50

Rum & Raisin Fudge £3.50

To order and arrange delivery

E-Mail: gracecamps2026@gmail.com

Tel: 01297 680447

Coming Soon Christmas Bingo

Grace Bass

GoFundMe



Easy
Fundraising





**Craft Thursday
at The Old Bakery
Thursday 11th September 10.30am – 3.00pm**

We welcome anyone who would like to come along to our craft sessions which will be taking place on the second Thursday of the month

Bring an ongoing project of your own, work on one we are doing or just join us for a chat...

Please feel free to come for an hour or the whole session

Maybe stay for a coffee and/or lunch

We look forward to seeing you

For further information please contact:

Joan Pike 680206 or Sheila Wilcox 680126



SEATON HOSPICE
AT HOME

Sue's Fundraiser

In aid of

Seaton Hospice at Home

In memory of Roger and Chris

DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES

Saturday 27th September

7.30 pm to 11 pm

**Dance the night away to Jurassic Cocks and food by
Sea side & Tacos.**

Tickets are £20 this includes 2 seafood tacos.

Tickets will be available very soon.

Profits to Seaton Hospice at Home.



THE SEA SHANTY BEACH CAFÉ

The Café is open 9.00am to 4.00pm everyday

The shop is open from 8.30am

Breakfast menu is served from 09:00am Last Order - 11:30am

Lunch menu is served from 12:00pm– 2.30pm

Breakfasts, lunches, and **daily specials**.

Pasties, sausage rolls, and homemade cakes.

Senior Specials

Cod, Chips & Peas, with a pot of tea or small coffee £14.00

Scampi, Chips & Peas with a pot of tea or small coffee £13.00



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If you would like any advice, please contact your local Devon team:

HONITON

01404 42456 | devon@humberts.com

humberts.com

MOVING YOU SINCE 1842

THE BRANSCOMBE PROJECT
TALKS & EXHIBITION 2025 – 2026
BRANSCOMBE VILLAGE HALL
ENTRANCE FREE, DONATIONS WELCOME

2025 November 24 7.30pm:

AGM & Annual John Torrance talk:

Robert Reed, Gatcombe farm

Talking about Badgers and different ways of farming

2026 January 26 7.30pm:

Gary Calland: *Vindolanda* –

Recent Work and Discoveries and the Problem of Climate Change.

2026 February 23 7.30pm:

Mike Parker-Pearson:

Stonehenge: Yet More Amazing Discoveries.

2026 March 23 7.30pm:

Launch of *The Burnt House at Weston (Branscombe), Winners and Loser in an Eighteenth Century Devon Parish* by Barbara Farquharson & John Torrance. Talk by Barbara Farquharson and drama-doc.

2026 SATURDAY March 28 & SUNDAY March 29 10am-5pm

Celebration of Thirty Years of the Branscombe Project: *Exhibition, Cream Teas, Interactive Favourite Places, Talking Head Video.*

We are very grateful to all of our contributors for their wonderful articles. If you would like to submit an item for publication, eg recipes, poetry, 200 word story, please ensure it is with the editorial team by the 10th of the preceding month. All articles and letters for publication must be signed and include a contact telephone number or email address

Please email:

Parishnewslettereditors@gmail.com or send to Old Thatch Branscombe

If you would like to make a donation towards covering the cost of publishing the Newsletter please contact Pat Ayles (680328)



Branscombe Parish Council
For further information please visit:
<http://www.branscombe-pc.org.uk/>
Clerk to the council: Nicky Ingarfield
clerk@branscombe-pc.gov.uk

Telephone: 07814 521538

Next Parish Council Meeting **Thursday 4th September— Branoc Hall Social Room 7pm**

July and August have been fairly quiet for the Parish Council, but as September approaches, there's a lot on the horizon.

But stop seats at the Masons Arms

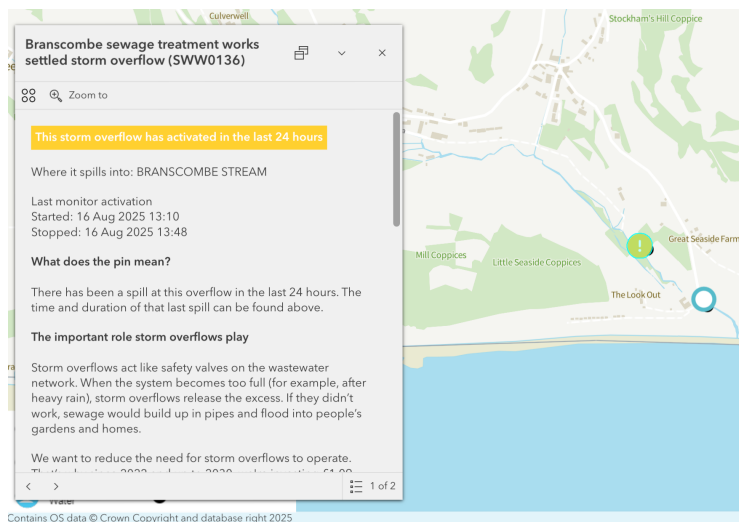
A replacement bench for the one by the Masons Arms that was damaged is being delivered and installed shortly.

Nutrient Recovery Facility

There have apparently been some changes in the management of the possible Nutrient Recovery Facility near Hangman's Stone, and the new consultants have been in direct contact with the Parish Council regarding a public exhibition and a presentation to the Council. We will give details both in the parish magazine and on the dedicated Parish Council web page at <https://www.branscombe-pc.gov.uk/village-info/> as soon as these have been arranged.

South West Water

Despite at least 2 attempts at repair, the water leak close to Customs Cottage remains.



There was a storm overflow discharge at the sewage works for nearly half an hour on the afternoon of Saturday 16th August

We're keeping the pressure on Southwest water and seeking an explanation for these two issues. Once we receive that, we'll share it here.

Local Government Reorganisation

The UK Government is requiring all areas that are currently organised as “2-tier” areas—a county council with a number of district or borough councils—to put forward agreed local proposals to reorganise as unitary authorities—a single council combining the responsibilities of the district and county councils. Proposals need to be submitted by 28th November.

Whilst this does not directly affect the Parish Council, it will mean new relationships will need to be built and the representative structure of the new authority will be different. It’s also important that both the Government and the new authority continue to recognise the important and critical role that Parish Councils play.

Our major concern is that whatever new authority Branscombe is part of is not so large that our voice is not heard, and that larger communities don’t see resources disproportionately diverted in their direction.

At present there is divergence across Devon—the district councils except Exeter have a common approach— retaining Plymouth as the existing unitary, and forming 2 new unitaries in (roughly) the east and west of Devon. Exeter is seeking to expand and become a new unitary, with the rest of Devon except Plymouth forming another unitary.

Scam alert: texts claiming to be from the DWP

Scammers pretending to be from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are contacting people around the UK about applying for the [Winter Fuel Payment](#) and [Household Support Fund](#).



Stay safe, vigilant, and keep an eye out for tell-tale signs of scams. These include weird phone numbers, generic greetings, urgent threats, bad spelling/grammar, requests for personal info, and suspicious links or attachments (don’t click on them).










If you’re ever in doubt about whether a message is real, please check with the organisation that you suspect is being impersonated, by contacting them through their official channels. You can report scams by using [Action Fraud’s online reporting tool](#), and by forwarding texts to your mobile network provider using the number 7726.

East Devon District Council’s Financial Resilience Team manage applications to the Household Support Fund. [Visit the council’s webpages for more information](#) and [contact the council if you require any further assistance](#).

Below is an up-to-date list of your Parish Councillors, along with the areas of the village that they have responsibility for. Please contact either your local councillor or our clerk if you have any issues affecting your locality.

There's a zoomable map showing the precise areas at

<https://tinyurl.com/4ked5zbe>

	Cllr Mike Pellatt Chair	Old Thatch Branscombe EX12 3BL	01297 680714	07952 946533	Street (from Holmcourt to Village Hall
	Cllr Emily Gladstone Vice-chair	1 Parkfield Terrace Branscombe EX12 3BD	01297 680398		Deep Cut/ Culverwell/ Hole Bottoms to Woodhouse Farm
	Cllr Ralph Cox	Sunnybank Branscombe EX12 3BL	01297 680392		Bulstone/ Edge/ Rockenhayne
	Cllr Bill Evans	2 Kingsleigh Barns Weston EX10 0PH	01395 519039	07330 944615	Weston
	Cllr Tony Fastnedge	Coxes Barton Branscombe EX123BJ	01297 680311		Elverway/ Watercombe/ sellers wood/ Castle Corner
	Cllr Dave Pegler	Higher House Branscombe EX12 3BH	01297 680364	07903 084488	Bridge View. Parkfield Terrace
	Cllr Chris Pike	2 Myrtle Cottages Branscombe EX12 3DJ	01297 680206		Millers Lea/ Square Vicarage Hill/ Beach
	Cllr Caroline Powell		01297 680616		Mill Lane to Bennetts Close
	Cllr Mark White	Berry Barton Branscombe EX12 3BD	01297 680208	07717 485111	Fountain Head/Hillside/ Coxes Corner/ Berry Hill

Planned Road Closures/Delays

2 Sep 2025 09:30 – 15:30	Road from Higher Barn to the Old Cider House – closure. BT Openreach. Location – outside telephone exchange (next to Thatch Barton). Replacement of pole
17-19 Sep 2025	Road from Higher Barn to the Old Cider House – closure. Southwest Water Location – outside Fountain Head House. Install green cabinet.
1-3 Oct 2025	Road from The Square to Great Seaside Farm – traffic management only. Southwest Water. Location – outside Glebe Cottage. Temporary to permanent reinstatement
8-10 Oct 2025	Road from Higher Barn to the Old Cider House – traffic management only. Southwest Water. Location – outside Millers Lea. Temporary to permanent reinstatement
24 Nov 2025 09:30 – 15:30	Road from Higher Barn to the Old Cider House – closure. BT Openreach. Location – outside Cotte Barton. Replacement of pole.

PLANNING

2 new planning application this month, 2 decided by EDDC.

Date	App ref	Description	BPC Response	EDDC Decision
04/11/24	24/2147/FUL	Annexe Higher House Farm Branscombe EX12 3BH Replacement conservatory	Support	Approved 03/07/25
14/04/25	25/0422/FUL	Land And Stables West Of Higherlands Farm Toilet with concrete base and associated Marsh Ensign Treatment Plant	As retrospective, insufficient information for informed comment. No documentation on compliance of STP installation.	Approved 05/08/25
29/05/25	25/1155/MFUL 25/1138/FUL	Higher Coxes Farm Weston Sidmouth EX10 0PG Housing for sows and gilts, Extension to existing pig housing	Support	Awaiting decision
05/08/25	25/1592/FUL 25/1593/LBC	Hole House Branscombe Devon EX12 3BX Planning: Main house: part re-covering of roofs, installing four rooflights, opening blocked front door, replacing green-house, installing external flue, moving roof vents. The Granary: part re-covering of roofs, installing ASHP plus further works under LBC	To be discussed meeting 04/09/25	Awaiting decision

**DATE FOR YOUR DIARY
BRANOC HALL BONFIRE AND FIREWORKS
SATURDAY - NOVEMBER 1 ST 2025**



**BONFIRE AT 6:45 – FIREWORK DISPLAY AT 7:00
BAR – BURGERS – BANGERS - 6:00 TILL 9:00
FREE ADMISSION –
DONATIONS WELCOME ON THE NIGHT**

		Branoc Hall bookings – September 2025
M	1 st	
Tu	2 nd	Private Hire Main Hall afternoon
W	3 rd	Post Office foyer 2.00 - 3.00pm Private hire Snooker Room evening
T	4 th	Erecting Marquee by pavilion Parish Council Meeting Social Room 7.00pm
F	5 th	Pavilion and Hall all day private Hire
S	6 th	Private hire Pavilion and Hall all day
Su	7 th	Private Hire Pavilion all day
M	8 th	Removal of marquee by pavilion Private Hall Hall morning
Tu	9 th	Private Hire Social Room all day
W	10 th	Post Office foyer 2.00 - 3.00pm Private Hire Social Room all day Private Hire Snooker Room evening
Th	11 th	Private Hire Social Room all day
F	12 th	Private Hire Main Hall - morning
S	13 th	Private Hire Main Hall - morning Private Hire Main hall and Social room afternoon and evening Cricket Match Ravens v Touring Team Pavilion afternoon and evening
Su	14 th	Private Hire Main Hall/Pavilion morning
M	15 th	
Tu	16 th	
W	17 th	Post Office -foyer 2.00 -3.00pm Cake and Chat Main Hall and kitchen 2.00 - 4.00pm Private Hire snooker room evening.
Th	18 th	
F	19 th	
S	20 th	
Su	21 st	Private Hire Main Hall and kitchen morning and afternoon
M	22 nd	
Tu	23 rd	
W	24 th	Post Office foyer 2.00 - 3.00pm Private Hire Snooker Room evening
Th	25 th	
F	26 th	Private Hire main hall morning (provisional)
S	27 th	
Su	28 th	
M	29 th	
Tu	30 th	

To book the hall please contact Sue Hawkins 01297 680466

August 2025

Proposals for the construction and operation of an Anaerobic Digester (Biodigester) Nutrient Recovery System on land adjacent to Hangman's Stone.



This will result in the following potential consequences for Branscombe village and surrounding communities:

- Increased traffic volume on A3052, day and night.
- Odour pollution.
- Light pollution.
- Potential impact on wildlife (bats)
- Noise pollution, including traffic (particularly reversing beacons on large vehicles) and operation of the plant.

Review the Environment Impact Assessment here:

https://www.branscombe-pc.gov.uk/nutrient-recovery-facility-proposal/?fbclid=IwY2xjawMBKnFleHRuA2FibQlXMQABHk9nUDhz1b0wDICXZ0pHD-6mj3JWXSvp9En8HR_ggKw2ZPc4CaW2C-k6sMiy_aem_QfKvKjJ-nd_IKUeJ_hthNg

Once the formal planning application is received we will only have **28 days** to register formal objections. It is believed that the acting agent is proposing a village meeting. It is vital that we attend if we want to make known our objections.

If you would like to be kept updated by email about this issue please email:
biodigesterbranscombe@gmail.com



Spring feels like a lifetime ago, but the breeding bird survey has been sitting on my desk for a couple of months and I did promise to share the details here ...

Key findings

Total species across all Branscombe compartments: 36

Total species across all Salcombe Regis compartments: 32 (down from 36 in 2024)

Seaside (Branscombe) increase in species from 20 to 26.

Crash in House Martin numbers at Manor Mill (from 34 to 2)

The number of breeding species detected in the Salcombe Regis compartments has declined from 36 to 32. In Branscombe, the Seaside compartment has shown an increase from 20 to 26 species. As the survey effort was consistent across 2024 and 2025, these trends may be significant.

Manor Mill 28 species (28 in 2024)

The most noticeable change is a crash in House Martin numbers, from 34 last year to just 2 this year. This is very likely a direct result of the destruction of all the nests (at least 20) on a large building in the centre of the village. The martins from these nests used the fields of Manor Mill as feeding grounds. It takes several generations for House Martins to establish their colonies. The ability of the martins to build new nests this year will have been impacted by the dry weather as it prevents them collecting the mud that they need. House Martins are endangered species, having declined by 42% since 1995. Some nests remain on houses in the village, and we very much hope that these will be kept safe. Branscombe residents and visitors greatly value the sight of martins performing aerobatics over the fields. If you are considering having any work done on your property, look out for the presence of nests. There is plenty of information available regarding what you can do to protect or replace nests.

We are seeing an increase in Woodpigeon and Great Tit numbers, especially where the hedges are so tall that they are, in effect, a line of small trees. Great Tits are doing well because they are woodland birds that nest in tree cavities, but there are less Blackcap this year. These migrant warblers need hedges with plenty of dense cover. Many small birds do not like tall, straggly hedges because they provide perches species (like Crow) that steal their eggs and nestlings. Most small birds nest in the plants at the base of hedges rather than in trees. The management of the hedges across the farm is something that we have been discussing for the past 5 years or so and it looks like the future management will play a part in the bird species that will thrive here.

The stream that flows through Manor Mill still has the resident Dipper and where it flows from the Sea Shanty car park to the beach (not actually part of the farm), the small reed bed has a pair of Reed Warbler and the scrubby slope above has two nesting Whitethroat.

It should be desirable and possible to create more habitat for these two species of migrant warblers along the stream from Manor Mill.

Culverwell 23 species (27 in 2024)

The number of species detected here has fallen from 27 to 23, so we have thought about why this might be. Due to fences that have been squashed by felled and storm blown trees, and a lack of manpower and ability to replace them, there has been no grazing in Culverwell in the past 18 months. The grass has become dense and has formed a thick thatch so the birds may be struggling to find the insects that they need to feed their young. Additionally, the woodland areas lack biodiversity because the understorey is poor. If desired, Culverwell has the potential to support more species of breeding birds.

Additional comments from our Culverwell volunteers:

“It is always a delight to catch sight of a Goldcrest, the tiniest British bird, with its lemon yellow head stripe. We were lucky during our breeding bird survey to observe this energetic wee acrobat for several minutes.”

“Culverwell is famous locally for its Wild Garlic – an indicator of ancient woodland and a source of food for insects, which in turn provide food for birds to feed to their young. So we were alarmed to discover during our May visit that a beautiful patch of garlic had been covered by large squares of carpet. This deprived birds of a foraging area and risked the leaching of harmful chemicals into the soil. It also left the farmer with a big headache, as they will have to remove it. It remains a mystery why anyone should cover such a large area with carpet. Perhaps someone from Branscombe can help us to solve the mystery?”

Seaside: 26 species (20 in 2024)

The number of breeding species has increased from 20 in 2024 to 26 this year. This result is likely to reflect a real improvement in bird diversity, but we will need a few more years of data to be sure. Seaside includes the main farmyard for the Branscombe holdings at Friar's Park Barn, and the larger flatter fields surrounding the barns see much more farming activity than most of the Manor Mill and Culverwell areas. Seaside provides a nice illustration of how farm operations (especially when thoughtfully carried out) are good for bird diversity. The increase in Linnet numbers from 7 in 2024 to 55 this year is especially encouraging. Yellowhammer numbers have also increased: from 3 in 2024 to 6 this year. These increases will be partly the result of the neighbouring farm leaving winter stubbles, but supporting bird diversity is all about creating a varied mix of nesting and feeding opportunities across all the farms in an area, with each farm doing their best with the soils and micro-climates that they have. Song Thrush like the mix of copse and pasture on the steep slopes and numbers seem to be holding steady.

Seaside is the only compartment in Branscombe with breeding Whitethroat. They do not like to nest in tall, straggly hedges. Hedge cutting regimes can be adjusted to ensure some stretches provide the shorter hedges that they like.

Combe Wood: 19 species

This compartment continues to under-perform in terms of bird diversity. It looks very attractive to humans, but most bird species experience a lack of feeding opportunities. This is a pity because there are some good hedgerows and woodland edge nest sites. This is an area that we can continue to focus on in discussion with the National Trust.

Additional notes from our Combe Wood volunteers:

“ When the former farmhouse at Combe Wood (not part of the farm holding) was renovated this year, all the House Martin nests were removed. An attempt was made to put up a few artificial nest cups, but all were in locations that would be too hot. Some were on elevations that get too much sun, and none were tucked up under the overhanging roof. If we had been warned of the renovation work, we would gladly have recorded the exact position of the nests before they were removed. It would then have been easy to explain to the builder where to position the artificial nest cups. The House Martins have not nested this year, and they are greatly missed. The sight of the martins feeding over the fields brought the valley to life.”

South Combe: 29 species

This compartment has a wide range of habitats, hence the good number of breeding species.

Endangered farmland specialists are present: Linnet, Yellowhammer and Cirl Bunting. But the numbers are low, so the populations are fragile. A few Skylark nested here in 2024 but none were detected this year. Unfortunately, the best habitat for Skylark nests is in those areas that are most heavily used by dog walkers. Free-running dogs are an on-going cause of disturbance here, and an example of how we need to consider the mix of land use alongside our biodiversity priorities.

On a positive note, Cirl Bunting territories increased from 4 to 5. For numbers to continue to grow, they will need a good source of seed over the winter.

Linnet numbers have fallen back from 13 to 8, perhaps because of the very poor weather last year. This year, ungrazed fields provided a good crop of dandelions: dandelion seeds are the favoured food for feeding the nestlings, so we hope Linnet numbers will recover.

Farm buildings provide nest sites for Swallows. These migrants from South Africa arrived very late this year, so we hope the two we detected will turn out to be an under-count. It may be possible to increase the number of suitable nest sites to support this fragile population. Some local farms put extra pieces of wood into their farm buildings in suitable spots, to encourage more Swallows to nest and this is something we could consider in the future.

Future

We should like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our wonderful volunteer bird surveyors who will continue to survey for us across Combe Wood and South Combe and will conduct the winter bird survey for us across the Branscombe holdings. They have offered to continue to survey for the National Trust in order to provide continuity and help inform future management.



Abbeyfield (East Devon) Society
Marjorie Baker House

Providing rented apartments for older people.

We offer accommodation in a home from home environment where you can maintain your independence and take advantage of all that the local area has to offer.



Why not join us for one of our monthly coffee mornings held on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 10am

To find out more
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www.abbeyfieldeastdevon.co.uk

PEST CONTROL



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THE PACHA POSSE

Although it has been 2 months since I last wrote anything, nothing much had happened, until yesterday....

Very excitingly Coca has unpacked and I now have a beautiful cria called Fuego. I did



actually make the effort of sourcing a beautiful black alpaca boyfriend for Coca this year in the hope I would get a little black cria (Coca is bay black so I thought it would be a high chance). However, nature had other plans and little Fuego is the spitting image of her granny, Reeya, gingery brown on top, a rose grey face and fawn undercarriage and inside of her legs. She was born, as cria should be, on a beautiful sunny day, with light breeze at about 11:30 in the morning. No help was required, and Fuego was up and staggering about within an hour and feeding in 3. She weighed in at 7.7kg after she had dried off in the sun (alpaca mothers don't lick their babies dry, it is all done by the power of the sun). Next morning she was happily running round the paddock, testing those very spindly legs out. Poor Coca is absolutely ravenous and ate virtually the whole bag of carrot pieces I had taken up for the whole herd, so the following morning when they all came in for breakfast Coca had a bonus double helping of pellets plus an apple with some blackberries thrown in for good measure – she was a very happy girl and almost inhaled it. In fact,

she was so focused on eating she didn't bat an eyelid when I gathered up Fuego and gave her the next weigh in. This is necessary to ensure that the mother is producing and the cria are actually getting milk in order to grow. As a general rule babies drop a few grams after birth before getting into the swing of this suckling business, however Fuego has already increased to 8.15kg so Coca is obviously doing a very good job.

For the past month I have been "saving a paddock" to provide fresh green grass for when the cria arrives however this has proved a little tricky as most of you may have noticed we have not had any consistent rain for months, although there are a lot of springs around here, this just means I have a strip of green running through each paddock and the rest is brown. The girls are now enjoying this newly opened up lovely green strip of grass, while the boys look on with envy.

In a normal year we are mowing the grass every week as the alpaca can't keep on top of it, this year we have taken the mower round once – just to take the tops off the weeds to stop them seeding. I have however discovered that alfalfa, the odd pruned branch, blackberries, carrots and apples seem to top them up, so they are all still in good condition.

However, on the upside to no rain I have only had to clear the badger wire once all summer!

We have had the annual shear, so all alpacas are looking bald but are somewhat cooler. The downside with the minimal covering does unfortunately mean that they are now more bothered by flies, but I spray them each morning, although you would think I was killing them the way they react. Cusco even managed to kick the fly repellent bottle out of my hand, he really is very grumpy at times.

The floof is now mainly packaged up ready for the mill, and I am really looking forward to getting my hands on the yarn produced from Inti, it is his first shearing and his floof is unbelievably soft although this is the one fleece that does need skirting (picking out all the debris from the fleece, which he seems extremely adept at collecting). I am also happy to report that I have had several people ask for fleece, so Jester, Coca and Imogen are all destined for other floof users and I can't wait to see the results.

I am also now getting the hang of weaving, and managed to purchase a loom on e-bay. It was all very exciting and I have already produced a scarf for a friend using silk and alpaca floof (from Lucha), I was absolutely amazed that my first real attempt actually didn't look too bad, so I am just in the process of setting up the warp for another go using a more complicated pattern, but I will probably use Jester this time.

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National Trust Countryside Update

National Trust **Wildflower Seed Harvest at Coxes Cliff** *Helping Nature Thrive, One Seed at a Time*

This summer, the ranger team has been busy brush-harvesting wildflower seed from the beautiful meadow at Coxes Cliff, near Branscombe. Nestled along the South West Coast Path, this stunning coastal meadow is a rich tapestry of native wildflowers, buzzing with life and colour - a vital haven for pollinators and other wildlife.



Thanks to the kind permission of the tenant at Coxes Cliff, we've been able to carefully gather seed from this special site. The seed is collected using brush harvesters, then sieved by hand and taken to Killerton, where it is gently dried for a few days in an airy barn to ensure it stays viable.

Once dried, this precious seed will be used to overseew and plant in other grassland areas nearby. By using locally harvested seed, we help preserve plant varieties that are specially adapted to our coastal climate and flowering patterns. This method not only boosts the species diversity of our grasslands but also supports pollinators and contributes to the resilience of our local ecosystems.

We're incredibly grateful to the tenant at Coxes Cliff for supporting this conservation work. The wildflower meadows of East Devon are a treasured habitat - every seed sown brings us closer to a more vibrant, nature-rich landscape for future generations to enjoy.

Pebble Play

A Summer Treat from Our Apprentice Ranger

Did you spot the noughts and crosses game boards along the valley path to the beach and in the Old Bakery Orchard?

Our talented apprentice ranger, Emily, turned slices of tree trunk and painted pebbles into beautiful, nature-themed game sets. Each board features hand-painted wildlife designs,

Whether you're stopping for a rest or exploring with little ones, we hope you find time to enjoy a game.

The game boards were there for everyone to enjoy throughout the summer holidays and the beginning of September.



Emily created these as part of her apprenticeship, using the project to hone her carpentry and creative skills - and the results speak for themselves! We're so proud of her work.

A few of the pebbles have wandered off on their own adventures - if you happen to find any, we'd be very grateful if you could return them to the Ranger's yard or the game boxes.

Thank you — and happy playing!

Meg Vallender, Visitor Experience Officer at East Devon Countryside, National Trust.
branscombe@nationaltrust.org.uk



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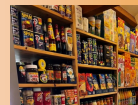
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