

# The Pilot

June 2026



Charminster, Charlton Down and Stinsford

## DEAR COMMUNITY,

The Pilot is the work of a team. We have a number of people who write articles and take photos - more than 30 so far this year. We have a management team who sell the advertising space, pay the bills and generally keep things right and proper. We have a professional team of people who put the magazine together, print it and produce the finished product. We have businesses and organisations who advertise, or who give grants, to help to provide the magazine free to homes. And we have a team who deliver it to your door.

If anyone out there would like to help, in pretty much any capacity, then you would be more than welcome. You would be joining a team of others to help this magazine reflect the voice of Charminster, Stinsford and Charlton Down. It is not a lifetime commitment, you can volunteer for as much or as little as you can do. Just email [Editor@charpilot.com](mailto:Editor@charpilot.com).

And if you can't help then we always need people to read the thing! So keep up with that job, there is no point in the rest of us doing our bit without you.

In this edition, you can find the answers to these questions:

1. Who cleaned the beach in Weymouth?
2. How many orchards does the Parish Council own and manage?
3. Which organisation made it to 108 but won't make it to 109?
4. What is the proper name for the flower heads of cow parsley?
5. Who finds shrimps in the Cerne?

**Francis**

**Dates for submissions for our July edition - 5th June 2026.**  
**[Editor@charpilot.com](mailto:Editor@charpilot.com)**



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## CHARMINSTER WI MARCH / APRIL

The March meeting was our birthday party, marking 108 years of Charminster WI. We celebrated with excellent food, a challenging quiz, and amusing entertainment provided by the committee. Celebration of our busy,

varied programme continued at the Annual Meeting in April, with reminders of a wide range of interesting speakers and reports from several activity groups, including the book group, crafting and walking groups. Scrapbooks were on show for reminiscing, and there was a brilliant display of work by the current watercolour group.

But the business part of the Annual Meeting presented us with a difficult decision. The National Federation has introduced new rules for membership of the WI. Membership is now open only to biological females and everyone renewing their membership must sign a form declaring that they were registered female at birth. All who were preparing to serve on the Charminster committee for the year ahead – and many others – were extremely unhappy with the move away from inclusivity and felt unable to sign the new membership form. Nobody at the meeting was willing or able to sign the form and



serve on the committee: a vote was held, and of 37 attendees, 32 voted to suspend the group. Representatives of the Dorset Federation who came to the meeting said how sad it was to close after 108 good years, and indeed, everyone

was very sad to come to this decision – none more so than those who had been looking forward to serving on the committee going forward but felt genuinely unable, on principle, to sign the membership form.

As the group is suspended, the Federation holds our funds for the next 3 years – if the policy changes, maybe we will rejoin. For now, regular activities such as teas at the Charminster Fete and our summer garden party will go ahead and several of the groups (open to all!) will continue. In the months ahead a new, inclusive women's group may be formed – watch this space!

**Julie Kates**



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Dorchester Trefoil sections have enjoyed tea and a wander round Goulds Garden centre and also skittles at the Colliton Club recently but we have also been on a beach clean on Weymouth beach where we found all sorts of rubbish. It was mainly small pieces of plastic, fishing nets and glass - all dangerous for wildlife - but we also found several pieces of ladies' tights and other unexpected items which perhaps I'd better not mention, plus some empty cans and bottles. Overall, we were impressed by how clean the beach was. It was part of our SWEEP challenge. (South West England Ecological Project)

We also held our County Annual Meeting - in St Leonards and St Ives Village Hall - about as far east in the county as we could go. Next time it will be more central! Each guild provided entertainment and had a mini market stall if they wished in the morning. The afternoon was the AM and an interesting speaker from Foxlease Park, an activity centre

in the New Forest. The raffle was for Teenage Cancer research. In a sketch based on the poem The Owl and the Pussycat, I was the pig, and had to wear a pig's snout!

Trefoil is open to anyone over the age of 18 provided they support Girlguiding, Scouting and also the community. For more information please contact me, Judy Thompson, email:- jct19336@gmail.com or Tel:- 01305 263783.

**Judy Thompson**  
**Dorchester Trefoil**



### Charminster Brownies

Thursdays 5.30pm in Charminster Village Hall

We made telephones with plastic cups & string & they worked!

We have had a great time this term.

We have been thinking about different ways of communicating.

We had a visit from Kat who taught us to say our names and Hello in Sign language

We cooked pancakes & ate them all up - they were yummy

We made pop-up Mother's Day cards - They were really pretty.

We played games, and made a Show & Tell speech in front of each other

We had a great Bingo & raffle night with our families

Some Brownies moved to Guides - but we have some lovely new Brownies to be friends with. They had a special night to make their Promise in front of their parents.

We made beautiful Easter bonnets & chocolate egg nest cakes

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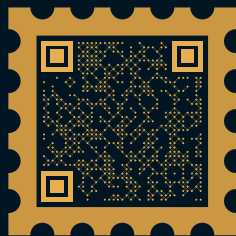
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## PROBUS CLUB OF DORCHESTER

The Probus meeting in April was held, as usual, at the Gamekeeper in Charminster where 12 members sat down for lunch before the formal presentation from the Guest Speakers talking about the MV Freedom. Our speakers, Peter York and Mike Walsh explained that the MV Freedom based in Weymouth is a boat owned and run by a charity that offers sea trips to disabled people and the carers and supporters. It is crewed by volunteers and can carry up to 12 passengers including up to 6 in wheelchairs. The vessel operates under all relevant legislation, and its governance is specifically aimed at the type of passenger being carried. The charity was set up 40 years ago and is now on its 3rd vessel, but this one was specially built for its purpose. They explained that it was a real privilege to be able to see the benefit the passengers obtained from their trip – the broad grins on their faces and the excited chat that goes on. More information can be obtained from the charity website [mvfreedom.co.uk](http://mvfreedom.co.uk)

For the rest of the year the Club has some interesting speakers lined up covering a wide

variety of topics. The Club is also planning a number of social events during the year each of which are open to member's wives and partners.

Probus Club of Dorchester is part of the international Probus Organisation and is a group of retired or semi-retired men who meet on the second Thursday of each month for lunch at the Gamekeeper in Charminster. At most of the meetings we have guest speakers and a wide range of topics are covered.

**We are keen to welcome new members and if you are interested in coming along please in the first instance contact either Barry White at [flintcombe1@gmail.com](mailto:flintcombe1@gmail.com) or Chris Hutton-Penman at [chris@ossl.biz](mailto:chris@ossl.biz) or on 01305753611**





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THIS TERM RECEPTION HAS BEEN LEARNING ABOUT THE LIFE CYCLE OF A BUTTERFLY. ALSO, THEY HAVE BEEN LEARNING ABOUT THE STORY OF THE HUNGRY CATERPILLAR. THEY ARE HAVING FUN LEARNING ABOUT THIS BOOK. IN MATHS, THEY HAVE BEEN LEARNING ABOUT WAYS TO MAKE 5. IN THE MORNING, THEY DO PHONICS WHERE THEY HAVE TRICKY WORDS AND OTHER TYPES OF WORDS. THEY HAVE BEEN LEARNING TO WRITE IN 'DRAWING CLUB'. CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY IN THEIR CLASSROOM, THEY HAVE WRITTEN SENTENCES WITH THEIR DAILY OBJECTIVE WHICH WE CALL A SLIP.

IN YEAR ONE, THE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN DOING SOME AMAZING WRITING ABOUT A PUG CALLED PIG. THEY HAVE BEEN LEARNING ABOUT WHAT SCHOOL WAS LIKE IN THE PAST AND COMPARING IT TO NOWADAYS. THE CHILDREN HAVE LOVED BEING OUTSIDE AND MADE A GREAT BUG DISPLAY DURING ARTS WEEK.

THE YEAR TWO CHILDREN HAVE BEEN VERY BUSY. THEY HAVE BEEN WRITING STORIES BASED ON A BOOK CALLED 'THE DARK'. IN MATHS, THEY HAVE BEGUN TO LEARN ABOUT FRACTIONS WHICH THEY ARE REALLY ENJOYING.

YEAR THREE HAS BEEN LEARNING ABOUT THE INTERESTING TOPIC OF THE ROMANS, LIKE HOW THE EMPEROR CLAUDIUS INVADIED BRITAIN! TO FOLLOW THIS, IN ART THEY HAVE BEEN DOING WONDERFUL, BEAUTIFUL ROMAN MOSAICS TO GO WITH THEIR HISTORY. HOW FUN!

IN YEAR FOUR WE HAVE BEEN READING THE BOOK RUNNING WILD. IT INCLUDES LOTS OF DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS SO WE'VE BEEN USING IT TO INSPIRE US TO WRITE SENTENCES USING FRONTED ADVERBIALS. WHILE IN MATHS, WE'VE BEEN LEARNING ABOUT DECIMALS. WE ALWAYS HAVE LOTS OF FUN IN YEAR FOUR AND ARE SAD ABOUT OUR TIME IN ST. MARY'S IS COMING TO AN END. HOWEVER WE ARE ALSO LOOKING FORWARD TO STARTING MIDDLE SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER.

BY DYLAN, HARVEY, HOLLY, CARYS, RUBY, EDIE AND ZELIE (YEAR FOUR PUPILS)



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# CHURCH SERVICES

## CHARMINSTER AND STINSFORD - JUNE 2026

### **7 June - First Sunday after Trinity**

11.00 am Parish Communion (Charminster)

11.00 am BCP Communion (Stinsford)

### **14 June - Second Sunday after Trinity**

8.00 am BCP Eucharist (Charminster)

9.30 am Songs of Praise (Charminster)

11.00 am BCP Matins (Stinsford)

6.00 pm BCP Evensong (Charminster)

### **21 June - Third Sunday after Trinity**

11.00 am Parish Communion (Charminster)

11.00 am Holy Communion (Stinsford)

### **28 June - Fourth Sunday after Trinity**

8.00 am BCP Eucharist (Charminster)

9.30 am Holy Communion (Charminster)

6.00 pm BCP Evensong (Stinsford)

**For services at other churches in the benefice, see the website**

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Closing date: 7 June 2026 (extended by 10 days for readers of The Pilot)



# CHARMINSTER FETE

SAT 6TH JUNE 2026  
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# CHARMINSTER FETE

We are getting ready to welcome you to our afternoon of fun, laughter and activities in the beautiful grounds of Charminster House, West Hill DT2 9QL.

We are deeply indebted to all our sponsors and volunteers who have been working hard to make this event possible.

Now, we'd like to call on readers to help the stall holders by donating good quality items to fill their tables.

Please see the table below for items needed and where to drop them off. We thank you all for helping to make our village fete be as amazing as possible, and we look forward to seeing you there.

| Stall                | Items                                                                                               | Contact                                                  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Books & Jigsaws      | Only good condition & complete sets please                                                          | Church Porch                                             |
| Bric a brac          | Good condition linens, lace, kitchenalia, garden tools, watering cans, ornaments, etc               | <b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill<br>07818 508011        |
| Cake stall           | Cakes accepted from Friday 5th June or on the day                                                   | <b>Linda Jeffrey</b> - 9 Charlotte Close<br>07811 000649 |
| China & Glass        | All things china & glass in good condition                                                          | <b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill<br>07818 508011        |
| Children Adopt a Toy | Good clean condition soft toys                                                                      | <b>Ali Barlow</b> - Caddy Shack<br>07354 309595          |
| Plants               | All plants accepted from Thursday 4th June or on the day                                            | <b>Tina Scott</b> - 5 Greenacre<br>07858 235062          |
| Tombola              | In date bottles of drinks, food packets, tins, cosmetics, unwanted gifts, candles, toileteries, etc | <b>Susan McCrea</b> - 1 West Hill<br>07818 508011        |

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2026**

After a relatively stable period within the village during 2025 the new year has brought the complete opposite. A winter which has seen the biggest flooding in the village for a decade or more was followed more recently by considerable development pressures in Charminster.

2025 has seen continuing change in Charminster with the ongoing development and completion of Phase 3 at Charminster Farm. The attractive development has added new residents to the village, and they are most welcome. Alongside the development are the popular new allotments now owned by the Parish Council and managed by the Allotment Association. These are a great asset. The last year saw the new play area completed, with the Parish Council taking on the ownership and management.

Development continues in Charminster village with phase 4 of Charminster Farm progressing swiftly. This controversial and unwelcome hillside development is changing the landscape on the side of the valley. However, the recent application for yet more houses on the hillside under the guise of Phase 5 has met considerable local opposition and a strong rebuttal from the Parish Council. We await the outcome of this application. At the same time a speculative application for 96 houses behind Ellerslie Close has also been submitted. Furthermore, Bellway Homes are starting community consultation for yet more housing on Charminster Farm beyond the depot. This situation has been considerably exacerbated by Dorset Council producing a draft local plan with a large number of housing sites but not taken the work forward to consider which sites should go forward. Charminster certainly is under siege.

Fortunately, things are a bit quieter here in the north of the parish.

The year for the Parish Council has been a productive one, with much of its work being

maintenance as it holds a considerable amount of land and property. This includes several play areas, community hall, 2 orchards, natures area, open space, 2 lots of allotments, cemetery etc. The recent refurbishment of the nature area at Charlton Down (which we are going to hear more of soon from Jessica), an earlier makeover for the Charminster orchard and also Princes Plot have all proved to be successful and popular.

However, as always, the elephant in the room for the parish is the outstanding proposal to develop 3000 homes to the north of Dorchester, at Norchester as it is known. Whilst the local plan is being considered it is likely that this will still be Dorset Councils preferred location for development for the wider Dorchester area.

The parish council is supportive of positive change. Recently it agreed to have EV charging points installed both at the Community Hall at Charminster and Herrison Hall at Charlton Down. These both are now complete.

A review of the year wouldn't be completed without mention of the Community Hall owned by the Parish Council. This well managed building continues to not only provide an office for the parish council but also a popular venue for locals and those from further afield, now doing well and balancing its income and expenditure whilst being a great asset. It's hosting an open day soon which hopefully will be well attended organised by our new hall manager.

So, whilst in reality much does change, Charminster, Charlton Down and Forston still remain delightful places to live. Long may that continue.

Finally, a big thank you to our very professional parish clerk, without whom we wouldn't be nearly so productive and effective.

**Mark Simons**

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## STINSFORD NEWS

**It is the early days of May as I write with ongoing sunshine** though at times often a brisk nor'easterly wind but all things are growing particularly prolifically, the weeds as well as the fruit and flowers, and the grass seems to need a constant cut. The tomatoes and cucumbers are now in grow bags in the greenhouse and I have to set up the watering system this afternoon.

**Recently one of the horse chestnuts in the park** shed a very large branch which in coming down, took out a section of the fencing surrounding our garden. Would you believe the following day, thirty heifers arrived, all of 12 months old therefore very inquisitive as to the pile of wood plus chippings and the tarpaulins that cover the resulting log pile. Fortunately the fence, although badly bent, was still intact and they have not managed to disrupt the logs. I have regularly enjoyed watching them and what's going on. We have not seen cattle since the College parted with the Stinsford Farm herd years ago, when in that day our water supply also came via the College supply and we found that the herd could consume copious volumes of water to such an extent that if we used water during the course of the day our house tank would empty and not refill until the night hence we had to install a second tank. That all seems a long time ago.

**It's swarming time** and the lower garden over the Stinsford House wall from the churchyard has interested the bees which took up residence in a baited box set up by Les and his wife Helen and now the latest arrivals have settled in. It's fascinating to see the photographs sent over of how the bees, prior to entering the box, started to build comb underneath. No doubt they will take it down and use it within the box to extend their building pattern; we wait and see.

**May's last Sunday will bring a wonderful Evensong** and a joint benefice service with our regular congregation plus members of the Hardy Society, it being the author's Birthday Weekend event. The service will be supported by Ian Davis and choristers. There will be readings of Hardy's poetry and the annual wreath laying at the grave followed by an evening recital performed by Natalie Burton.

**June's services commence** with three morning 11.00 am services, a BCP Communion, a BCP Matins and a Common Worship Eucharist followed on the fourth Sunday by a BCP Evensong. Other than the Matins which will be taken by Shirley Churchill we are not aware at this stage who will be taking the other services.

Looking forward to both the Summer Solstice and Mid Summers Day, the former being the longest day and the latter marking the midpoint in the growing season, a time to celebrate the abundance of nature and the warmth of the sun; the day also being the feast day of St John the Baptist.

**Michael Clarke**



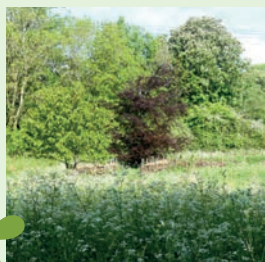
## NEWS FROM THE CHARLTON DOWN NATURE AREA

White blossoms dominate the Nature Area in early May, sharply contrasting with the vibrant hues of emerging foliage on the 28 species of trees and shrubs that grow around the site. Delicate white umbels of cow parsley sway over large stretches of the ground while patches of wild garlic are scattered beneath the trees. White blossoms proliferate on the wayfaring, hawthorn, and whitebeam trees while the spindle, oak and field maple flowers mimic the green of the newly emerged leaves. Small numbers of native bluebells and red campion provide pops of bright colour - as do the fresh deep pink and purple leaves of the three copper beech trees.

By June we should see a greater variety of colours when the central wildflower area develops after the scything and re-seeding activities of this last autumn and spring. Already you can see the leaves of oxeye daisies, knapweed, wild marjoram, toadflax, and lady's bedstraw plants breaking ground. It will be exciting to see what this rejuvenated area will look like over

the summer months – hopefully attracting large numbers of butterflies and other insects. This last month brimstone, orange tip, and peacock butterflies have been noticed and large buff-tailed bumblebees.

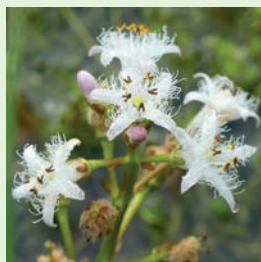
In the pond, the yellow flag iris is in bud, and fresh red waterlily leaves are resurfacing after winter dormancy. White fringe-petalled bog bean flowers are out. More aquatic plants, both oxygenators and marginals, will be added this year to even the balance of the vegetation. Ramshorn and great pond snails are returning and building abundance. Large predatory diving beetles come up from the depths occasionally as do newts and tadpoles from this year's spawning. Whirlygig beetles and pond-skaters are frequently seen on the surface. We are hoping that many dragonfly nymphs have again survived the winter and will emerge in the warmer weather - like the broad-bodied chasers and emperor dragonflies we have recorded in the past.



May view of Nature Area



Whitebeam blossom



Bog bean flowers



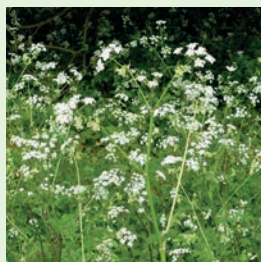
Hawthorn blossom



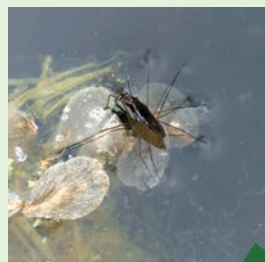
Spindle blossom



Wild garlic flowers



Cow parsley flowers



Pond skaters

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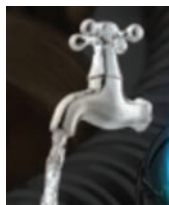


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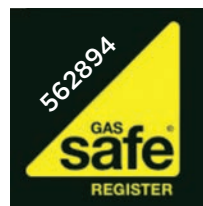
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# THE IMPORTANCE OF SAXON CHARMINSTER

Many of you probably remember archaeologist Professor Mick Aston from the BBC's *Time Team* with his stripey jumpers and flowing white hair. In 2000 his



partner Teresa Hall published her thesis *Minster Churches in the Dorset Landscape*, in which she expertly identified Dorset's Saxon minster churches and their immediate localities. These primary minsters were usually founded on royal estates shortly after the Saxons arrived in Dorset. As Charminster merited further research Mick Aston kindly agreed to visit though sadly died before it could be arranged. Hall related the *parochiae* (ecclesiastical district) of minsters with units of royal estates as a means to identify various layouts of minster settlements. Churches were often not stone buildings with cloisters etc, but rather religious groupings founded between the Saxon conquest and mid 9th century.

Hall suggested the usual characteristics Dorset minsters were:

- a waterside site, often at a confluence or bend in river
- central church within rectilinear (not round) area, aligned on the church, (possibly wooden) with rounded corners. The kinks in Charminster roads at the top of East Hill suggest this is where they met the rectangular boundary.
- east-west / north-south alignment of roads & boundaries, over large area up to 300m (E-W) by 400m (N-S) as at Charminster.
- presence of a fixation line along what may have been a precinct enclosure, perhaps a ditch or hedge.
- presence of suburbs and/or market outside walls.

Using this criteria Hall identified Charminster as a primary early Saxon minster settlement, on land donated to the bishopric (Sherborne) from royal demesne. Possibly

founded in the first half of the 8th century (700-750), it controlled lesser churches or chapels with a pastoral role. Such minsters usually had a large graveyard

- as in Charminster - where the church bounds extended further to the south. She concluded minsters generally had river-derived names. Charminster's originates from Cerne, (pronounced chernel or shernel) a Celtic/Old English river name for a heap of stones.

Hall identified Roman associations with minster sites. Charminster had a Roman villa at Walls just 2km from the probable minster site, and the only Roman by-pass in the country runs through the village from Puddletown Forest to Ilchester. Some Roman building material was repurposed locally and mosaic tesserae discovered during field walks. The bodies excavated close to the church in 2000, all facing east, were believed to be Charminster's early Saxon Christians though positioned on a slightly different alignment to the present Norman church. Aware of the village's significance archaeologists are now increasingly looking into its Saxon origins and evidence of the minster.

After the endowment of the bishopric of Salisbury, Charminster formed a prebend of the cathedral jointly with Bere Regis. It had chapels at Pulson, Stratton and Forston, possibly at Frome Whitfield and an oratory at Wolfeton. So Charminster's early history is as a highly important substantial Saxon settlement, still reflected in its road layout today. This significance meant by Domesday in 1086 it was in the hundred of Dorchester, positioned in the top 20% of recorded settlements nationally. In 1091 Charminster and Bere Regis combined their prosperity resulting in the Golden Prebend bringing great wealth to the lord of the manor - the bishop of Salisbury - until the Dissolution under Henry VIII.

**Gwen Yarker**



## Pet of the Month ...

We would like to nominate Olive our yellow labrador for Pet of the Month.

Olive is a very loyal lab and always loves to be around people.

She loves lying in the sun, playing in the garden and eating cheese!

The one thing she loves most of all is running. She and my dad run for miles together, you may have spotted them running around Charminster. 😊



**By Poppy Gough**



## RIVERFLY PARTNERSHIP

Is anyone interested in helping to sample the river Cerne where it passes the church as part of this national project to monitor and protect the water quality of local rivers?

This partnership considers that monitoring the number of larvae - caddisflies, stoneflies, and shrimps etc - is the most accurate way to assess the water quality. Volunteers across the country are provided with a standard kit, including a small net and identification information to monitor points in their rivers, usually once a month from April to September.

In West Dorset this activity is coordinated by the Dorset Wildlife Trust and last year a number of members of Dorchester U3A started monitoring places on the River Frome, including at Hangman's Cottage and Blue Bridge, but we would like to use the sets of equipment to monitor more local sites if possible.

As a village resident I have a concerned interest in the water quality of my local river. My plan is to test where the River Cerne passes through our village, a mid morning each month starting in April. If

you are interested in being involved with this important project and can spare about an hour and a half as time is needed to identify and count the small larvae (see photo), please e-mail the Pilot Editor so that I can then get in contact with you.

**Richard Coode.**



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Cllr David Taylor 07905 352710 [cllr david.taylor@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:cllr david.taylor@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

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