



The Voice of our Community, Marsh & Meadow

THIS ISSUE

ROXY VS. BITTER-BILL: NEWSROOM FEUD BOILS OVER

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INVESTIGATION

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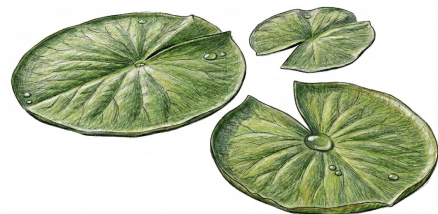
CIVIC CHAOS

“No Wake, No Splash” Zone Vote Ends in a Cannonball Protest



ALSO INSIDE

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The Voice of our Community, Marsh and Meadow

Editor's Splash

The truth isn't always pretty, but as long as there is mud in the pond, we will dig through it!



Where to find us

Pin your comments to The Old Willow and we will collect them!

BOARDWALK BACKLASH BOILS OVER: COUNCIL'S EMERGENCY "RE-MUDDING" PLAN SLAMMED AS "TOO LITTLE, TOO SLIPPERY" BY FURIOUS ELDERS

QUACK-CIDENT COVER-UP? PARISH COUNCIL ACCUSED OF HIDING SLIP-AND-SLIDE INJURY TALLIES AS LILYPAD LANE PETITION TOPS 200 WEBBED SIGNATURES

"NO WAKE, NO SPLASH" ZONE VOTE ENDS IN CHAOS: YOUTH STAGE SYNCHRONIZED CANNONBALL PROTEST ON NORTH SIDE

ROXY VS. BITTER-BILL: RIVAL COLUMNIST DECLARES "THE OLD QUACK'S TIME IS UP" AS RESIGNATION WATCH ENTERS FIFTH ROUND



***Grumbings from the
Ruffled Feather***

By Barnaby Bitter-Bill

Today is the first of September, which the calendar insists is the official start of Spring across the Midlands — though you wouldn't know it from the state of my desk. The marsh has woken up loud, wet, and entirely too pleased with itself. Every reed bed from Lilypad Lane to the north canal is suddenly rustling with courting displays, and I have had pollen up my bill for a week from all the willows flinging it about in celebration. Back in my day, Spring arrived quietly. A duck noticed the water warming, gave a single nod, and got on with his morning. Nobody organised a parade about it.

Then there's the parish council's idea of "Spring Readiness," which apparently means sending a work crew through the reed beds at dawn with rakes, upending three generations of perfectly good nesting material in the name of tidiness. I returned from my morning constitutional to find my favourite loitering log relocated forty feet downstream and repurposed as a "Welcome Feature" for the tourist ducks. If the parish

wants to welcome the new season, they can start by leaving a tired editor's log exactly where it was.

And don't get me started on the courting. The lily pads are so thick with preening bachelors this week that an honest duck cannot get from the Old Willow to the Print Office without wading through somebody's elaborate wing display. I am told this is romantic. I call it a traffic hazard. We have, at last, found one use for it: our new Sports Commentator, Duke Featherweight, has taken up residence at the water's edge with his stopwatch, timing wing displays like heats at a regatta and calling them out to anyone within earshot. First sensible thing to come out of this whole spectacle, and I never thought I'd say that about a grown drake narrating a courtship ritual. To the young drake who nearly knocked my proofs into the canal attempting a showy flap on Tuesday: Spring or no Spring, decorum does not go into hibernation. Sort yourselves out, Waddletown, or the next thing you read from this desk will be my resignation letter, pressed between two willow leaves for the occasion.



Boardwalk Backlash Boils Over

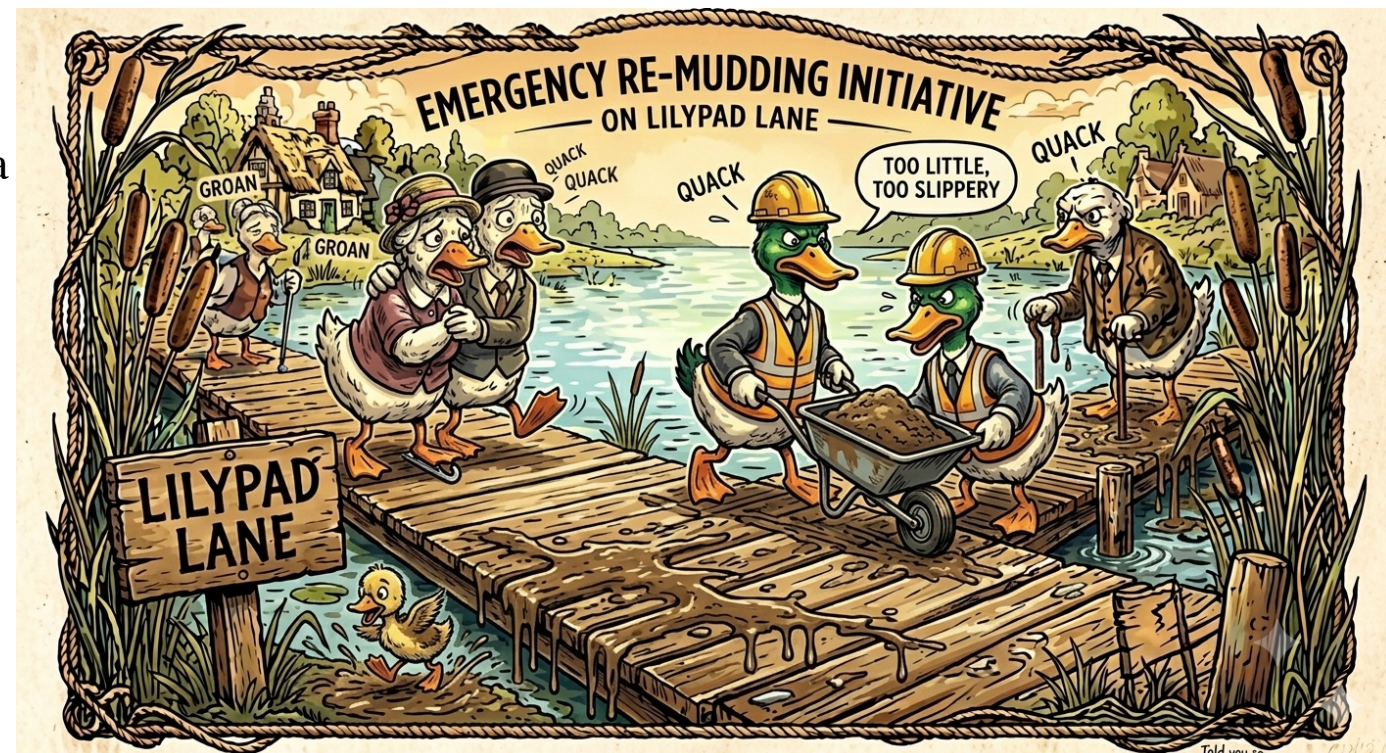
By Quillan Swamp-Scribe

The parish council's hastily announced "Emergency Re-Mudding Initiative" arrived on Lilypad Lane this week with all the fanfare of a marching band and, as it turns out, about as much traction. After a month of mounting complaints — and Barnaby Bitter-Bill's now-legendary editorial threat to resign over the matter — council workers were spotted at dawn dragging wheelbarrows of fresh silt onto the very planks they installed only weeks ago, troweling thin brown streaks across the boardwalk in what one onlooker called "putting a bandage on a broken wing."

Right in the center of the scene, the same elderly duck couple from last month's disaster can be seen once again clutching each other for balance, this time skating gently backward on a patch the council's crew had, by all appearances, missed entirely. Further along the pier, a senior resident's walking cane sinks clean through the new mud layer and comes up dripping, to a chorus of groans from the gathered crowd. "Too little, too slippery," declared one furious elder, refusing to give her name but not her opinion, as she watched a passing duckling attempt — and fail — to cross the same stretch without a running start.

Council representatives maintain the re-mudding is merely "phase one" of a broader traction strategy, though residents along Lilypad Lane remain unconvinced, with several muttering that the old paths never needed fixing in the first place. Bitter-Bill, for his part, has yet to comment beyond a single line scrawled across this week's proofs: "Told you so." With the boardwalks now somehow both wooden and muddy, Waddletown's oldest ongoing complaint shows no sign of drying up.

**TOO LITTLE, TOO
SLIPPERY! - Local Elders**



A Bureaucratic Wipe-Out on Lilypad Lane

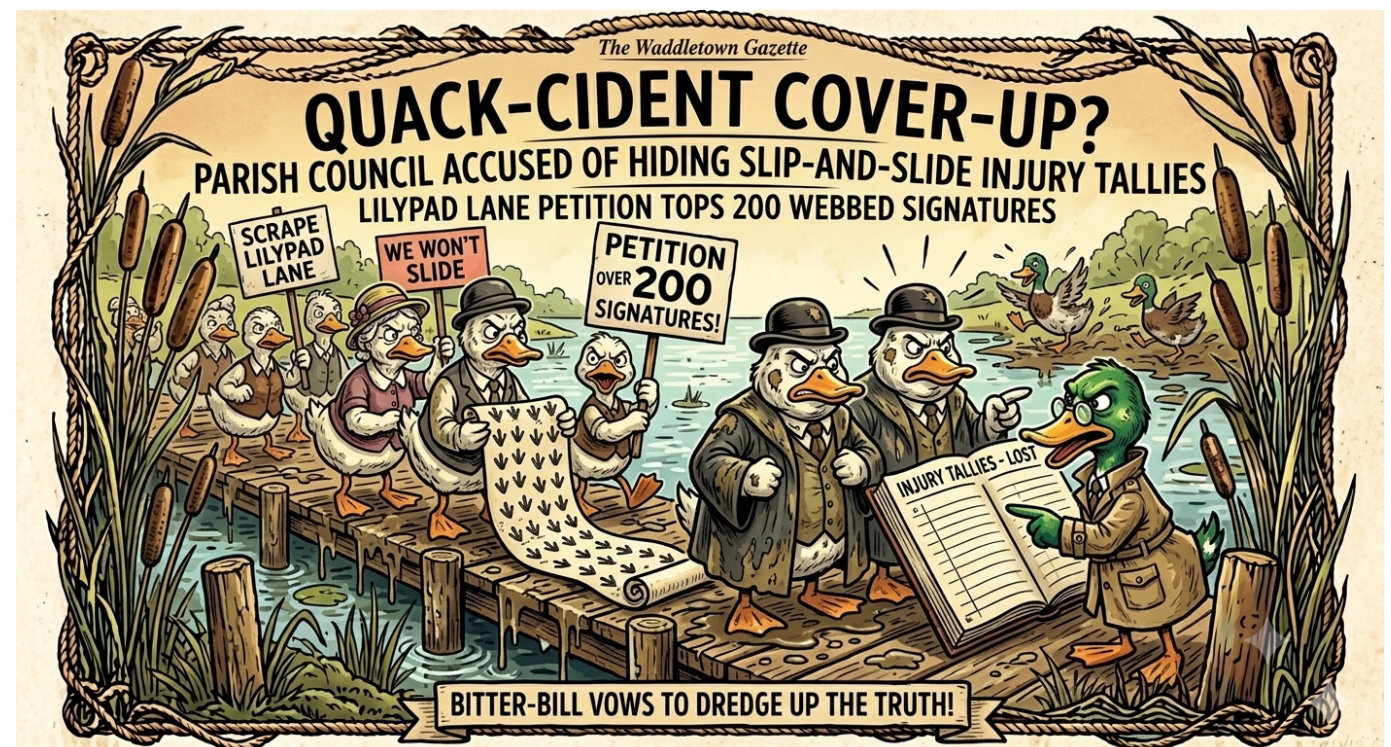
By Barnaby Bitter-Bill

In what local activists are calling the most blatant cover-up since the Great Duckweed Embargo of '22, the Waddletown Parish Council stands accused of actively suppressing injury figures following its disastrous "Emergency Re-Mudding Initiative." Rumors sweeping through the reeds suggest council officials quietly expunged dozens of tail-feathers and sprained-flipper incidents from the public register to preserve the narrative of their "successful" traction strategy. Meanwhile, public outrage reached a boiling point as a citizen-led petition demanding the immediate scraping of Lilypad Lane surpassed 200 webbed signatures, easily breaking the town's historical record for civic protest.

The controversy deepened yesterday afternoon when leaked council memos revealed that the newly applied silt layer—intended to provide grip over the infamous smooth timber—actually reduced surface friction by a staggering 40%. Onlookers reported seeing entire families of mallards sliding helplessly into oncoming reed traffic, while senior residents found their walking canes sinking directly into the subterranean sludge before coming up dripping. When pressed on the mounting injury toll during a heated hall meeting,

council representatives refused to confirm or deny the existence of a secondary incident log, instead insisting that the current "sideways phenomenon" is simply a temporary adjustment period for local waterfowl.

Chief investigative editor Barnaby Bitter-Bill, whose scathing editorials first ignited the boardwalk scandal, released a brief statement from his desk at *The Waddletown Gazette*: "When governance turns to quicksand, the truth inevitably sinks to the bottom—and we intend to dredge it up." With local anger showing no sign of cooling and the petition gaining fresh signatures by the hour, parish leaders now face an ultimatum from their feathered constituency: clear the slick, or prepare for a full-scale vote of no confidence at next month's Town Pond summit.



Spilling the Algae
Roxy Ripple Maker

ROXY VS. BITTER-BILL: RIVAL
COLUMNIST DECLARES "THE OLD
QUACK'S TIME IS UP" AS RESIGNATION
WATCH ENTERS FIFTH ROUND

By Roxy Ripple Maker

There is a distinct, suffocating smell that fills a newsroom when a legacy collapses. It isn't stale coffee or aging newsprint. It's the rank odor of pure, unadulterated vanity.

If you walk past the corner office on the third floor, you'll smell it. You'll also hear the frantic, rhythmic *clack-clack-clack* of an ancient manual typewriter—a noisy, performative relic operated by an equally noisy, performative relic.

We are now entering Round Five of the "Bitter-Bill Resignation Watch." Five rounds of high-level board meetings, five rounds of tearful union back-channeling, and five rounds of Bill stubbornly barricading himself behind his oak desk while the rest of this institution burns around him.

Let's drop the polite professional protocols. We all know why we're here.

Last month, Bill didn't just miss a story; he fabricated a narrative out of thin air, refused to check a basic source, and dropped a nuclear libel risk onto the publisher's lap because his ego couldn't stomach being scooped by someone under the age of fifty. Any junior reporter would have been escorted out by security before lunch. But because the name "Bitter-Bill" has been slapped on top of

Page 4 since the pond was just a puddle, management handed him a velvet cushion and a golden parachute.

And what did Bill do? He spat on the parachute, waddled back to his corner, and demanded another decade to keep ruffling everyone's feathers.

He sits in his corner office like a relic in a museum nobody visits anymore. Holding a newsroom hostage because your ego can't handle the tick of the clock isn't principle—it's vanity. The old quack's time is up, and everyone in this building knows it except him.

Journalism isn't a feudal monarchy. You don't get to inherit a column for life, and you certainly don't get to run a modern news organization into the ground just to preserve your fading mythology. The readers have moved on. The city has moved on.

Put down the ribbon, Bill. Sign the papers, take the golden watch, and let the rest of us clean up your mess.

Other Local Scoops

A Spring in Our Step: Mysterious Freshwater Source Discovered Behind the Boardwalk; Council Forms Emergency Tasting Committee

Twig Heist: Prize-Winning Nest Stripped Bare Overnight; Muskrat Family Maintains "Solid Alibi"

Scum Shortage, Round Two: Pond Clarity Hits "Suspicious" New High; Gideon Grumple-Gizzard Denies Stockpiling Again

Cattail Commons Collapse: "Luxury" Nesting Timeshare Buyers Report Suspiciously Damp Paperwork; Developer Unreachable for Comment

Local Legend: Sports Desk's Duke Featherweight Teaches Free Swim Lessons to Nervous Ducklings; Turnout "Exceeds All Expectations"

**"NO WAKE, NO SPLASH" ZONE VOTE
ENDS IN CHAOS: YOUTH STAGE
SYNCHRONIZED CANNONBALL
PROTEST ON NORTH SIDE**

By Barnaby Bitter-Bill

Back in my day, when a civic board met to conduct the public's business, the only thing hitting the table was an honest debate. Yesterday, it was fifty gallons of murky, weed-choked lake water and the raw, unwashed arrogance of forty teenagers who think a municipal ordinance is just an invitation to act like feral otters.

If you haven't heard, the Harbour District Board's vote on the long-overdue "No Wake, No Splash" ordinance was officially washed away by a synchronised cannonball assault. Yes, you read that right. A tactical strike team of neon-clad hooligans lined up like cheap circus performers, blew a whistle, and launched their collective dead weight off the boardwalk, soaking elected officials, destroying public records, and short-circuiting thousands of dollars in city audio equipment.

And what do we hear from the peanut gallery? Laughs. Snickers. Certain **unnamed** columnists across the aisle are already hailing these aquatic agitators as modern-day folk heroes fighting for "summer freedom."

Rubbish. Pure, unfiltered rubbish.

What happened at the North Side Pier wasn't a harmless prank or a vibrant display of youth culture. It was an assault on basic decorum. When a seventeen-year-old with a waterproof megaphone can barge into an official proceeding, drown out the democratic process, and float away without so much as a night in central holding, the rule of law hasn't just drifted—it's sunk to the bottom of the bay.

These property owners didn't spend their hard-earned life savings on lakefront homes just to have their morning coffee spiced with harbour algae and juvenile defiance. The shoreline is eroding, the tranquility is shattered, and the pier has turned into an open-air asylum for kids who clearly lack parental supervision and a basic understanding of property values.

Six citations for jumping off non-designated structures? That isn't a penalty; that's an entry fee.

If this city still has a backbone, here is what needs to happen before the rescheduled vote next month:

- **Implement Mandatory Community Service:** Every single teenager involved in yesterday's stunt should be handed a squeegee and assigned to 200 hours of manual labor drying off city property.
- **Enforce Heavy Municipal Fines:** Don't fine the kids—fine the parents. Let's see how long the "Splash-In" movement lasts when mom and dad have to foot the bill for damaged city microphone systems.
- **Permanent Bans:** Anyone caught diving off the North Side Boardwalk should face an immediate, season-long ban from all municipal parks.

If we let forty teenagers with goggles dictate harbour policy today, don't be surprised when the city council is taking orders from the local skateboard park tomorrow. Put the barricades up, hand out the summonses, and show these kids that the law doesn't care how big your splash is.





**REGATTA SEASON OPENS WITH A
SPLASH: A SCORECARD FOR THE
MARSH'S WILDEST WING DISPLAY
YET**

By Duke Featherweight

Ladies, gentlemen, and everyone currently preening on a lily pad near the Old Willow — welcome to the first ever full coverage of Waddletown's Spring Courting Circuit, and what an opening heat it has been. Stopwatch in wing, notebook in the other, I have spent the week at the water's edge, and I can report: the field is deep, the form is patchy, and one drake very nearly took out the editor's proofs doing it.

Let's get to the numbers. Down by the reed bed nearest Lilypad Lane, an unnamed young drake clocked a wing-flap display lasting eleven full seconds — a new personal best by marsh standards, though judges (myself, alone, on a log) deducted style points for wobbling on the landing. Further along, near the north canal, a veteran competitor showed real composure: a slow, deliberate preen followed by a single, unhurried nod to a passing hen, who was, by all accounts, unimpressed. Efficient. Understated. I liked it.

Not every performance held up to scrutiny. Tuesday's now-infamous "Print Office Incident," in which a showy flap sent our own editor's copy skimming toward the canal, will not be scored — largely because Bitter-Bill has asked, in writing, that it never be mentioned again. Consider it noted, and immediately disregarded, in the fine tradition of this desk.

Early standings after Day One: the field is wide open, the willows are still flinging pollen with reckless abandon, and this commentator has never had a better excuse to sit by the water all day with a stopwatch and call it work. Heats continue through the week. I'll be here. Try not to knock anything into the canal.





From Plot to Pot - The ultimate guide to growing your own marsh greens and turning them into a five-star lakeside feast.

Marsh Berries - How to Start!

Let's face it—waiting for the current to wash a decent haul of berries downstream, then racing every heron on the bank to get there first, isn't a viable long-term strategy for anyone with a jam habit. If you want a steady supply worth setting aside for preserving, it's time to stop foraging and start planting.

Growing your own berry patch right at the marsh's edge is easier than it looks, and — as with everything worth doing around here — you don't even need fingers. Here is how to get your webbed feet wet.

To start your own marsh berry patch, look for the drier, sun-warmed banks just above the waterline, where the soil stays damp but never floods. Take a few runners or a handful of ripe berries, crushed lightly to loosen the seeds, and press them into the soft earth with your bill or the flat of a webbed foot. Clear back any overhanging reeds so the young canes get a full afternoon of sun, and ring the patch with a low barrier of woven twigs — otherwise you'll find the whole crop stripped bare by opportunistic songbirds before it's had the decency to ripen.



The Muddy Chef: Mrs Mallards' Snail Jam

Market Day's most requested, most argued-about, and most fiercely guarded recipe — **until now**. Mrs. Mallard has finally allowed it into print, on the condition that we note it is "not as easy as she makes it look."

Ingredients:

- Two dozen plump pond snails, shelled and rinsed twice (Mrs. Mallard insists on twice)
- A generous handful of wild marsh berries, crushed
- Three bill-fulls of clean pond water
- A slow drizzle of wild honeycomb, foraged from the willow hive
- A pinch of pondside salt, to balance the sweetness
- **Patience. More than you think you need.**

Instructions:

1. Render the snails: Simmer the shelled snails gently in a hollowed gourd set over sun-warmed stones until they soften and release their liquor. Do not rush this — Mrs. Mallard has **Opinions** about rushed snails.
2. Build the base: Stir in the crushed marsh berries and pond water, and let the mixture reduce slowly, stirring with a smooth reed until it thickens .
3. Sweeten and set: Drizzle in the honeycomb a little at a time, tasting as you go, until the mixture is glossy, sweet, and clinging stubbornly to the reed.
4. Cool and jar: Spoon the finished jam into a scrubbed acorn cap or shell, and leave it to set on a cool, shaded rock until it holds its shape.

Chef's Tip: Want a bit of spice? Forage a leaf of wild watercress from the shoreline,

The Daily Preen

By Penelope Pinfeathers, Fashion Editor

Where High Fashion Meets High Flying

Darlings, it is Courting Season, and might I say — about time. There is nothing so tiresome as a marsh in the depths of winter, all sensible brown feathers and nobody bothering to accessorise.

But the moment the willows start flinging pollen about like confetti, my postbox floods with the same desperate question: what does one wear to out-dazzle every preening bachelor on Lilypad Lane? Darling, I am so glad you asked.

The wing display, if we are honest, has grown terribly unimaginative this year — the same tired flap, the same three feathers fluffed at the same tired angle.

Elevate the whole performance, or simply watch it happen from a superior log in something that photographs

beautifully. Either way, your devoted correspondent has done the fluttering so you don't have to

The Courting Season Collection

Dew-Catcher Wing Cuffs

Sedge-Side Stoneworks

· 12 Curled Willow Thorns

Sun-Warmed Amber Bib

The Pond-Bottom Geologist · 20 River Shells

Pressed Willow-Catkin Combs

Lakeside Lutra Leathergoods · 6 Fat Water Beetles

Quill-Tip Opera Glasses

Quill's Personal Atelier · Editor's Own



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**Nesting Season Chaos: Prime Real Estate War
Breaks Out Along the North Canal**

**Photo Finish or Fowl Play? Duke Featherweight's
First Scandal as Judges Question a Disputed Regatta
Result**

**Market Day Meltdown: Mrs. Mallard's Snail Jam Sells
Out in Under Ten Minutes, Riot Narrowly Avoided**

**Council Unveils 'Grippier' New Boardwalk, Promises
This One Definitely Won't Be Slippery**

**Ink Wars: Roxy Ripple-Maker and Bitter-Bill Trade
Barbs in Print as Newsroom Rivalry Boils Over**