



**MARDEN ANNUAL PARISH
MEETING**

TUESDAY 5TH APRIL 2022

**MARDEN CONGREGATIONAL
CHAPEL, WEST END,
MARDEN**

**(IF YOU WOULD LIKE THIS HANDOUT IN LARGER
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PLEASE FIND ATTACHED REPORTS FROM:

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By Alison Hooker

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

By Cllr David Burton (will be added following the meeting)

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

By Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid

KENT POLICE

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COMMUNITY WARDEN

By Mira Martin

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Safe Anaesthesia

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

By Cllr Kate Tippen, Chairman, Marden Parish Council

After 2 long and difficult years it is wonderful to once again be able to hold a face-to-face Annual Parish Meeting. The Parish Council was finally able to meet in person from 11th May 2021. Until recently we have had to hold all our meetings at the Memorial Hall as our Council meeting room is very small and can be very cramped if we have a full complement of Councillors and members of the public present. From this month we will resume using The Allens meeting room for Full Council and Amenities meetings and continue to use the Hall for Planning meetings, as we need access to a projector screen to review planning applications.

We held a virtual Annual Parish Meeting in April last year when we reported on activities in the previous year, and I can report that the Council has been even busier in the last 12 months working on your behalf to achieve the best outcomes we can for Marden.

We responded to the Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan Review Regulation 19 in December 2021. As many of you will be aware the draft Local Plan allocates a further development site of 113 dwellings for Marden at land adjacent to Albion Road and Copper Lane. We raised concerns about this site in our Regulation 18b feedback in December 2020 and whilst some of them have been taken on board in the latest draft we still have reservations; but the matter is now out of our hands and MBC's hands, and we wait to see what the Government Inspector has to say later in the year.

We have continued to liaise with Redrow about the allotment site at Highwood Green. Redrow are determined that we should take on the parking spaces adjacent to the site as well as the allotments. We have made it clear to them that we do not want responsibility for the parking spaces, and we only want the allotment site. The ball continues to bat back and forth, once we achieve an outcome that is satisfactory to the Parish Council, the Allotment Association and the residents of Highwood Green we will let residents know.

We were very pleased that at long last the rather tatty hedge next to the Library has been removed and we have had the path levelled and re paved. Last week Cllr Boswell and I planted up the flower bed and it is now a much more attractive and welcoming space.

We were delighted that we were once again able to hold Marden at Christmas and, judging by the number of people who attended, so were residents. We were less than impressed by the Christmas lights that we had arranged to have erected by a contractor. They were not what we wanted, and we will no longer be dealing with that contractor. We are in the process of sorting out lights for the village that will be much more festive and whilst we can't please all the people all the time we hope we will please the majority.

Highways issues continue to be a cause of concern for residents. I am pleased that the mobile speed indicator device has finally been installed and it is in place at each location for a maximum of 8 weeks. We have also developed a Highways Improvement Plan which currently has 24 outstanding items on it. Kent Highways are supportive, but lack of funding means it is doubtful that many of the identified issues will be resolved in the near future. The Parish Council will continue to push for funding to get some of the key issues dealt with.

We have continued to produce the newsletter 3 times a year and we are grateful to Cllr Anne Boswell who does such an amazing job compiling it and to Deputy Clerk Rachel Gillis-Coates who

typesets it and gets it ready for print. Thanks also to Councillors and volunteers who hand deliver to all properties in the village centre and Chainhurst, we post to properties in the rural parts of the parish. I hope you find the newsletter useful - we have received very positive feedback about it. We are also very active on social media and regularly use Facebook to update on events, road closures and many other issues. We know that many people do not use social media and we have introduced a weekly e-newsletter that is delivered via e-mail to recipients on a Friday, this contains all the information we have posted that week on social media. If you haven't signed up to receive it, then please let Deputy Clerk Rachel know.

We have just held our Spring litter pick and thanks go to the 43 adults and 30 children who turned out to do a dirty job, all the normal bottles and cans were found plus some rather more interesting items! I'm sure you'll all agree the parish looks better for the clean-up. I also would like to thank the many residents who regularly litter pick our village roads which helps to keep our village looking beautiful.

Marden will be celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in style. Along with towns and villages throughout the country we will be lighting our beacon at Southons Field on the evening of Thursday 2nd June. On Saturday 4th June we will be holding a Jubilee Fete at Southons Field, Rachel and Hollie are hard at work organising what will be a wonderful event – I hope you will all join us there to celebrate this momentous occasion.

The world has been shocked and saddened by the recent events in Ukraine. The Parish Council has been pleased to support a collection centre here at the Congregational Chapel for donations and Marden has been truly magnificent. Two very large van loads of vital supplies have already been sent and at least one more will go soon. Thank you, Marden, for however you have supported people suffering in the most unimaginable way almost on our doorstep here in Europe.

Parish Council elections were held in May 2021 and all who stood for the Parish Council were elected unopposed as less than 11 people stood, we were joined by 1 new councillor, Theresa Gibson. We were 2 councillors short and therefore co-opted new councillors, Matt Burton and Matt Besant in June. All 3 of them bring valuable knowledge and experience to our Parish Council. 3 councillors stood down in May, Maria Brown, Lesley Mannington and Mick Jones and we are very grateful for all the effort they put into their times as councillors, Maria and Lesley clocking up an amazing 43 years service between them. I am indebted to all the Councillors for their hard work and diligence and for giving up so much of their time for the benefit of Marden.

Finally, a huge thanks to our office staff, without whom we could not function. Deputy Clerk Rachel has truly thrown herself into Parish Council work and her energy and enthusiasm for the role shows itself every day especially in her commitment to communication and all the work that goes into managing the work of the Amenities Committee. Ali our Clerk steers the ship and it's not been easy over the last 2 years but she has ensured that however we are meeting, be it remotely or face to face, that nothing slips through the gaps. We were delighted to welcome Hollie Savory to the team in September who joins us as Administrative Assistant and has very quickly taken to the many and varied duties of the role. All of us here tonight are grateful to all of you for your hard work, dedication and constant good humour.

We are also extremely grateful to our two caretakers – Ian Jones who looks after the Cemetery so well and who celebrates 35 years with us later this year, and Chris Prince who looks after all our open space and many other jobs that need doing around the village as well.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

By Cllr Anne Boswell, Chairman of Amenities

The Amenities Committee oversees the lovely green spaces in the village - the Playing Field, Napoleon Play Area, Southons Field, as well as the Cemetery and Public Toilets. It is also a discussion forum for Climate, Sustainability & Biodiversity and Health & Wellbeing issues.

Southons Field is a beautiful dog-free haven with a plethora of trees for residents to enjoy and children to run around in a safe and peaceful environment – so important for health and wellbeing. It is where most of the large village events take place. The Parish Council has added six additional picnic benches and another litter bin near the entrance. A bay of swings was installed last Summer - a basket swing, toddler swing and a flat swing - for both children and adults near the Play Trail and this facility has proved a great success.

As part of our sustainability responsibility, the Parish Council held a Tree Charter Day last November when a 'Roots of Remembrance' tree to acknowledge those who have been affected by Covid in the Parish and a Memorial tree for H.M. the Duke of Edinburgh were planted in Southons Field and blessed by The Rev Nicky Harvey. Saplings, which were provided by the Woodland Trust, were also planted on various new developments in the village as well as on the boundary of Southons Field.

The Wildflower Meadow which Marden in Bloom has created is a lovely addition and a bench will be placed next to the meadow by the 'Bloomers'. The Beacon will be lit on the evening of Thursday 2nd June as well as a village fete on Saturday 4th June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event.

Opening times: April-August 7am to 8pm, September-October 7am-7pm, November-January 8am-4pm, February & March 8am-6pm (or dusk if earlier).

Marden Playing Field and the children's playgrounds in Napoleon Drive and the Playing Field are popular and well-used, but unfortunately not always in the way we would like. It's important that any anti-social behaviour is reported to 101 in order that our PCSO, Nicola Morris, can follow it up. More CCTV will hopefully be installed shortly to monitor these areas.

As part of our Health & Wellbeing responsibility, six pieces of adult gym equipment have been installed in the Playing Field and we hope residents are utilising this facility. More benches and litter bins have also been placed around the Playing Field for residents to sit and enjoy the open space.

A Dog Bag Station is now in position to help dog walkers pick up their dog waste. We are very grateful to those dog owners who are fastidious about collecting their dog's poo, but unfortunately there are number of dog owners who are irresponsible and spoil the pleasure of the field and surrounding footpaths. Marden Minors Football Club utilise the field to play matches once or twice a month.

Chris Prince our Caretaker spends many of his working hours keeping our green spaces in good order. It is unfortunate that some of these hours are spent removing litter and graffiti.

Marden Cemetery is a tranquil place of rest with a plethora of wildlife and is kept immaculate by our long-serving caretaker, Ian Jones. In July Ian will have completed an astonishing 35 years of service and we are very grateful for all his efforts in maintaining the Cemetery to such a high standard. Cllrs Boswell & Tippen also help with a bit of weeding, planting and pruning from time-to-time and Cllr Newton has helped set up a few bird feeders.

Section 4 is now in use but only headstones are permitted in the new burial areas. For ease of maintenance, tended, fencing or the placing of other items on plots are not permitted. A separate area is also being created for the scattering of ashes.

If you are visiting a loved one, please do remember to remove any plastic wrap from flowers and think sustainably about your tributes. We would also like to remind cemetery visitors that when there is a funeral taking place, we would appreciate you visiting another time.

Public Toilets – The Parish is fortunate that the Parish Council is able to maintain this important facility and we are lucky to have a contract with an excellent cleaning company who check them regularly and keep them cleaned to a very high standard.

Parish Council Trees – the Parish Council is very proud of its trees on our open spaces and has a duty of care to protect them. Our Tree Management Policy has recently been updated and strengthened to incorporate sustainability, hedges, zoning, risk assessments etc. Our caretakers observe them monthly, a more detailed survey will be carried out twice a year by the new Tree Warden Charlie Edwards on a voluntary basis and a detailed Tree Audit is undertaken every three years by an external contractor.

The Amenities Committee carries out site visits to all these areas on a regular basis and in between our caretakers keep us posted.

Many thanks to our Clerks, Ground Maintenance staff and Amenities Councillors for their hard work and continuing support.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Cllr Andy Turner, Chairman of Planning

At the beginning of 2021, in response to the continuing challenges posed by the Covid pandemic, Planning Committee meetings were online via Zoom. Due to Government legislation not allowing Parish Councils to continue with virtual meetings we had to then start meeting face to face in May 2021, firstly at the John Banks Hall and at their current location in the Old School Room in the Memorial Hall.

One of the main tasks of the Planning Committee this year has been formulating a response to Maidstone Borough Council for the Maidstone Local Plan Review. This has involved widespread discussion and I would like to thank all my colleagues, both on the planning committee and elsewhere, for attending meetings, seminars and formal discussions. This has allowed the Parish Council to formulate, detailed informed and comprehensive responses on behalf of the Parish in regard to this important review process. The sheer volume of information has been quite challenging at times, but I firmly believe your Parish Council has responded as thoroughly and as comprehensively as possible.

In the autumn of 2021, it was agreed that the Marden Neighbourhood Plan should also be reviewed to ensure it continues to be effective. This work has begun, and the Parish will be looking to formulate a steering group to carry out this essential task.

The other major task undertaken by the Planning Committee is reviewing and commenting on planning applications within the Parish. This year 93 planning applications have come before the Council, some of which have been controversial. I hope that all resident's views have been considered - we endeavour to listen to all concerns in formulating a response to the Borough.

As always, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors on the Planning Committee, who bring passion and drive to do the very best for their community. These Councillors bring a vast array of knowledge and skills to all meetings. In particular, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, Alison Hooker. It is not an easy job translating a range of Councillor comments into a coherent and concise format. I know that Ali puts in a huge amount of preparation time, and for this we should all be grateful.

PARISH CLERK'S REPORT

By Alison Hooker

After working from home from March 2020 to June 2021 it was good to return to office working albeit under a different set up. Rachel and I both worked from the office but unfortunately members of the public were not permitted into the building and we had to speak to them through the window. Masks etc were provided if residents wished to speak confidentially. However, as we progressed out of restrictions we were able to meet with residents more openly.

The return to office working and the prospect of holding a Summer play scheme this year meant that we were busy with organising staff, a new venue and undertaking risk assessments for the children. It turned out to be a very successful scheme, albeit slightly wet on several days, and we look forward to holding this year's with less restrictions and better weather.

As soon as play scheme had finished we went into arranging the Autumn village litter pick as we were unable to hold one in March along with planning Christmas 2021, again hoping to hold the Marden at Christmas event again this year – planning contingencies if this wasn't able to go ahead.

As everyone will know we were able to celebrate Christmas "Marden style" and had a brilliant day with excellent weather singing carols, enjoying the Silver Band and Morris Dancers at The Allens followed by a busy craft fayre and visits to Father Christmas in his grotto. Children were able to leave their Christmas wish list and the letters were passed to Father Christmas with the elves delivering a reply from the man himself during the lead up to Christmas Day.

In September we welcomed Hollie Savory into the MPC fold as Admin Assistant working five hours a week – she has stepped into the role brilliantly and is a great asset to the team.

We are now starting to plan the Queen's Platinum Jubilee events, Summer Play Scheme and Christmas as well as the normal Parish Council work of managing open space, assisting the bereaved with funeral arrangements, parish finances along with weekly agendas, meetings and typing of minutes along with liaising with outside bodies for external work and assistance – to name a few things. We have also started to hold our "Meet the Clerks" mornings on the fourth Thursday of each month - 10-12 at The Old Post Office Café – pop in and say hello. We will be there to help

answer any questions or signpost you to the correct authority if we are unable to provide an answer to you.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rachel Gillis-Coates and Hollie Savory for being great work colleagues and friends; and to Ian and Chris for looking after the village open spaces and ad hoc work that is required. My thanks also to the great team of Cllrs that Marden has – it is a pleasure to work for and with them.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

By Councillor Burton

Verbal report given on the night and will be added to this handout following the meeting.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

By Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid

KENT POLICE (PCSO)



**Kent
Police**



By PCSO Nicola Morris
01622 604392 / nicola.morris@kent.pnn.police.uk

Apologies off sick – a report will be added once received.

COMMUNITY WARDEN

By Mira Martin

Verbal report will be given and added to this report following the meeting.

MARDEN ORGANISATIONS AND SOCIETIES

LITTLE FISHES TODDLER GROUP

A group for babies and toddlers and their carers – was started in September after trial sessions in July. This group has met each week during term time in the Vestry Hall and continues to be a very busy session of play, craft and story time. On average 25 children attend this session weekly during term time and it is proving to be a great supportive atmosphere for mums in the village.

MARDEN BOWLS CLUB

By Ray Lane (Chairman)

Unlike the previous year when we had a very curtailed year of bowls due to Covid, we had virtually a full season of matches and competitions, albeit with some restrictions.

In May, after much planning and support from some local businesses, we had an Open Day to attract new members. This was very successful, and 14 men & ladies applied to join. Many were new bowlers, but they all received coaching and played in our matches.

In July we had planned to celebrate our 50th Anniversary but with the COVID restrictions on numbers, we had to postpone the event until August. Fortunately, it was a warm, sunny day and we were able to invite former players, relatives of founder members and many good friends. Over 100 people had a buffet meal and then sat around the green chatting and drinking whilst watching a friendly game amongst some of our members. It was a memorable day, and much credit goes to our President Mick Collins for organising the event.

Our season ended in September, and we continued to celebrate our Anniversary with a Carvery lunch for over 60 members at the Weald of Kent Golf Club which was most enjoyable.

Here's hoping for a normal season of bowling this summer. Anyone interested in joining us please contact our Secretary Brian Cooper on 01622 744850 or just come along on any Tues or Thurs afternoon.

MARDEN BUSINESS FORUM

By

MARDEN CHILDREN'S CENTRE

By

MARDEN COMMUNITY CIO

By Kate Tippen

Marden Community Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
Registered with the Charity Commission 1183743

The Marden CIO was formed in June 2019 but it wasn't able to start operating until 2020 when all the finances were in place. The charity is fully funded from the income from the investments made

by the benefactors of the original village charities, which have all now been transferred to the CIO. Hence as a charity we do not need to fund raise to support our work.

The objective of the charity is the relief of financial hardship, either generally or individually, of people living in Marden Parish by making grants of money for providing or paying for items, services or facilities.

There are 3 strands to the charity:

- Support individuals who are suffering financial hardship by making grants of up to £100 available towards the purchase of specific items
- Grant of up to £500 to village organisations to assist with specific projects for the benefit of the people of Marden
- Grant of up to £100 towards the support of education and training of the children and young people of Marden.

Working in conjunction with the food bank we have made a number of grants to residents who are suffering severe financial hardship. We have also made several substantial grants to the food bank. Several village organisations have also benefitted from grants.

Full information about the charity can be found at:

<http://www.mardenkent-pc.gov.uk/community/marden-parish-council-13394/marden-cio/>

MARDEN CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL

By Jean Robertson

MARDEN CRICKET & HOCKEY CLUB

www.mardenchc.co.uk

Queries: membership@mardenchc.co.uk

Chair: Henry Robinson

Despite the numerous challenges of Covid, the club has seen strong growth over the last 2 years.

The Marden Russets hockey section celebrated its 100th last year and fields no less than 8 men's teams and 4 ladies teams, with skills ranging from novice over 50s to national squad players. There are over 400 juniors playing regularly with busy coaching sessions and camps. It's good to see so many youngsters enjoying a good run around at the busy Sunday morning sessions.

Cricket has seen success with the Men's 1st XI enjoying back-to-back promotion. Interest in junior cricket has soared by over 100% to well over 150 last year. Various local primary schools have come along for taster sessions and the club launched an inaugural Maidstone & Weald Primary Cup. Hard working coaches run sessions on Sunday mornings during the season, starting late April. The Saints is a long-established informal team, popular with those seeking more 'leisurely' cricket. Anyone is welcome to come along for a net without obligation to join.

Tennis has seen strong growth of 170%, with informal social sessions and junior coaching being especially popular. Anyone can come along for a couple of taster sessions and see if it's something they would enjoy.

There are plans to create a footpath from the Maidstone Road which would complement the existing

path accessing the club from Howlands Road. We are working to find a solution and have been promised an access point to the road by the owners of the land, but this is dependent on planning issues.

Finally, the club is hoping to bring Padel Tennis to Marden. One of the world's fastest growing sports, it's easy to play and exciting to watch. This will be available to anyone who is a club member (£30 pa) and who then pays a court booking fee. The club is partnering with Game4Padel, a specialist who will install and maintain the court/s at Marden at their expense. All is subject to planning permission.

DEMENTIA GROUP

By Rachel Chacon

At last, we are allowed to be out and about more freely, and we are pleased to say that we have been able to organise events and bring people together at last.

The Marden Village Club has been extremely supportive in helping us and thanks to them we are now offering one event per month.

Our next event is Saturday 2nd April when Bing Lyle will be returning to entertain us with songs from the decades, accompanied on his accordion.

On Saturday 14th May, the beginning of Dementia Action Week, the Virtual Dementia Reality Tour Bus will be at the Library. Please email Rachel (rachel_chacon@hotmail.co.uk) to book a place.

Each session will be followed by a discussion group to share this experience.

On 26th June K20 will be supporting us again with a Cycling Sportive and we will be organising tea for them in the Scout Hut. Anyone is welcome to drop by for a cup of tea and a chat.

We have so much more in the pipeline, please keep an eye out here, in the Parish Magazine and at the Village Club.

For those of you who would like more information/help in relation to dementia, please come along to these events and I will have some very useful leaflets available. I am happy to talk to you too, of course, either at the events or telephone 01622 831941.



HISTORY GROUP & HERITAGE CENTRE

By Lesley Mannington (Chairman) history@mardenhistory.org.uk

With the Library & Heritage Centre having been closed all through the pandemic, like many organisations, our meetings were either put on hold or Zoomed.

We started meetings again in June 2021 when we met in David MacFarland's garden when I took over as Chair of the History Group and David was appointed President.

As soon as the Library re-opened, after its internal refurbishment, the Group started up its regular Steering Group meetings in September 2021 with the aim of re-opening the Centre on 1st February 2022, a deadline which we happily met.

Sadly, we lost David last November and we are hoping to raise a plaque or something similar in his memory.

Having been inactive for the best part of two years, we had a lot to do to get going again, not the least of which was updating the computer systems on which we rely for storing all our historical archive information. Thanks go to Ian Newton for his help on this important asset for the Centre.

The good news is that we are more or less back to normal and open to the public on Tuesday to Friday and Saturday mornings. We have a wonderful group of volunteers who look after all our archive information and help with enquiries, both from home and abroad.

We were successful in obtaining a KCC Covid Recovery Grant via our local Cllr Lottie Parfait-Reid, which means we can renew some of our ageing display equipment, etc. We were very grateful for this generous help.

Sadly, the Friends of Marden Heritage have not been able to continue with their fund-raising work for the Church and Heritage Centre, so we are having to be inventive in raising the necessary finance to meet the operating costs of the Centre. We held two evening viewings of the wartime films produced by Phillip Day which were well attended in our local Church, thanks to Rev Nicky Harvey. We will have a presence at the Platinum Jubilee celebrations at Southons Field and there will be other fund-raising activities going forward.

My thanks go first to David, whose inspiration with others in the village, got the whole heritage idea moving; to Eunice Doswell who does so much in connection with all the archive work and which makes the Heritage Centre the amazing asset we have both for the village, Kent and elsewhere; and to all our volunteers who give us so much time for the benefit of the heritage cause.



HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

By Sue Pennicott

It goes without saying that Marden Horticultural Society (MHS) experienced the same covid-related challenges as other clubs and societies in 2021. While it certainly wasn't business-as-usual, we were able to continue in the general absence of physical meetings. We had sufficient resources to offer members a programme of events without charging the usual membership fee. The first six of our monthly meetings were, of necessity, held on zoom but, using the internet's power to shrink distance, we were able to enjoy talks from speakers who were a little further afield on subjects ranging from roses to winter colour in the garden to invertebrate life in our gardens.

We also held informal coffee mornings on zoom so that we could stay in touch with each other.

With careful planning to keep everyone safe, we were relieved to be able to hold our annual plant sale in May. As usual, this proved popular with both MHS members and others in the village being an excellent opportunity to buy plants propagated by people who love plants!

While the going was good over the summer we were able to get together as a group for garden visits which certainly lifted our spirits. Meetings proper resumed in September although, sadly, the emergence of Omicron resulted in cancellation of our Christmas celebration.

We continued to send out a monthly illustrated newsletter with blogs on anything and everything garden or horticulture related – including wildlife and bee-keeping. Anyone (not just members) may subscribe to this newsletter so those in the village who are not in a position to join the society can still benefit from gardening information and advice written by local gardeners.

Our membership remains strong, although inevitably some have decided not to renew - for the time being at least. We are encouraged by the new applications we continue to receive.



MARDEN IN BLOOM

By Anne Boswell (Chairman) & *all the 'Blooming' team*

Despite the Covid restrictions in 2021, Marden in Bloom (MinB) managed to complete most of their normal activities including holding an AGM.

Fund Raising – the Bulb Sale in September raised £500 and thanks to Barbara, Heather & John and Lucy for organising.

Sponsorship – Once again Golden Hill Nursery kindly supplied most of the Summer plants for the planters. Peter Hall, Liz Stanley and Marden Village Club sponsor 3 of the planters in the village, Marden Parish Council sponsor the troughs/bike rack in the High Street, Marden Horticultural Society have now taken over the planter at Highwood Green as the planter in Chantry Road is being dismantled due to theft of plants and disintegration of the planter itself.

Bulb Planting – MinB managed to plant over 5,000 daffodils in the Autumn in Southons Field, the footpath leading to the Cockpit in the West End and in Thorn Road where residents kindly helped. Over the last few years, MinB have managed to plant over 25,000 daffodil bulbs as well as crocus, snowdrops and bluebells in various spots around the village.

Planters – There are now 23 planters around the village including one at Chainhurst and 4 in the school garden. A new planter was placed by the telephone box at the Library area for the Dementia Group to make the village more 'Dementia Aware'. This Summer we will go with a red, white & blue theme to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Watering is always an issue and we do struggle with this task, but we were very fortunate to have Dom Miller help water all the planters on a weekly basis as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award.

Projects – the flower beds at both the Memorial Hall and Library area continue to be tended and MinB tries to keep the small area in Plantation Lane free of pernicious weeds.

Wildflower Meadow in Southons Field – this was created in lockdown in 2020 and made an amazing display last year mainly ox eye daisies but after flowering, not much else came out. Bloomers are trying to remove many of them to allow other wildflowers to have a chance. A bench is being placed by the Wildflower Meadow out of MinB funds.

Activities planned for 2022: Plant sale and cocktails at the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee event on 4th June, Garden Safari on Sunday 26th June, Bulb Sale on Saturday 10th September and a Scarecrow Safari on Saturday 1st October. We may plant a few more bulbs in the Autumn but want to focus more on the wildflower meadow.

We always need help with our projects, so if you can spare a little bit of time, even if an hour or two, please email: anne.boswell@ymail.com or call Anne on 07828 868703. Also check out our Facebook page.

Anne Boswell & the “Blooming” Team

MARDEN LIBRARY (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL)

Marden Library, High Street, Marden TN12 9DP 01622 831619 Fax 01622 831619

Email: mardenlibrary@kent.gov.uk

Marden Library underwent a refresh in August 2021, ready to reopen following a prolonged closure due to the pandemic. The library now has moveable shelving so events can be held that benefit the community.



Statistics

Since Marden reopened, loans and visitors have been lower than this time two years ago. However, they are in line with the rest of the county as we have all been hit by the impact of the pandemic. We are pleased to see that they are improving, with December being hit hard again due to the covid surge, but things starting to look brighter now. We are hopeful to see continued improvements.



Since reopening we have engaged with the Summer Reading Challenge, where we had 23 children take part in the challenge. Being open for less than one month of the challenge, rather than nearly three, this was not a bad result.

We have reintroduced Rhyme & Stories on Fridays, which have proved incredibly popular. We have had the most wonderful parent volunteer help us with this and are now looking for more volunteers to keep this group going. We are also looking to introduce Storytimes and recruit volunteers for our home library service. Once this is done, we shall set up additional activities in the library, and advertise the wonderful home library service, which is where we can deliver books to those who cannot get to the library.

We do displays every month which direct customers to important initiatives, like mental health awareness week, or particular stock genres, like national non-fiction month.

Recently we have engaged with the school and will be resuming school regular school visits. We have lots of new stock, with lots of customer requests being met.



Staff information

We said a sad farewell to Lucia Marsal during the pandemic, as she transferred to Tonbridge library to be closer to home. We now have Gillian Allardyce and Laura Mullan, who share the working week. Ann Woodberry is the new Marden manager and brings with her a wealth of knowledge from looking after children's centres across the county.

Looking forward

We have some Jubilee plans in progress – although closed on the day, we intend to decorate the library and hopefully offer a children's event around the time.

We are building on our promotion, all help with this is greatly appreciated.

MARDEN MEDICAL CENTRE

By Dr Neil Potter

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www.mardenmedicalcentre.nhs.uk

Challenges for the Medical Centre continue into the third year of the pandemic in common with the whole NHS as well as the social care sector. The combined pressures of managing Covid itself, working with a team affected by the disease, keeping everyone safe and managing the backlog in demand has been exhausting. It has challenged the resilience of a team which is rightly regarded as outstanding by the Care Quality Commission and thankfully still receives praise and gratitude from the majority of our patients.

Regardless of Covid the housebuilding and the slow fill of properties has further added to the list size which stands at 7211 from 7000 this time last year. Marden has always had an above average older percentage with more complexity of healthcare, but new houses bring new families and a continued baby boom.

Our team has slowly expanded over the years. We now have 6 GPs working over several days each as well as Dr Wilford working all day Wednesday until April at which time he will retire after 5 years at Marden. We have recently appointed a second Paramedic Practitioner Josh Smith to work over 3 days in addition to his work for Secamb. We are still smaller than the national average practice but the trend to enlarge and also to merge practices is gathering pace. The smaller practices are not favoured by the contracts and regulations we are given and so the personalised care that we have always tried to offer is harder to deliver.

The nursing team is now three. Alison Tinsley has taken her Diabetes skills to the local service and happily we recruited Kaye Rickards all the way from Devon. Reception team is still 5 but has need lots of temporary recruitment and with the retirement of Fiona Kite as a Manager we have appointed two to fill her shoes and promoted Mary-Jayne Bournes to overall Practice Manager.

Dispensary team of three are doing more prescriptions than ever and we have seen Tash Styles retire after many years and her replacement starts soon. The Secretarial team of two are unchanged but have a really complex role now that secondary care and waiting lists are so stretched.

New ways of working have included some real innovations in the use of IT and system change. Most of this has been popular and convenient for patients. Prescriptions have become electronic and paperless as have referrals and correspondence. We have used text messaging and email as well as e consults to deal with many issues that previously would have needed a phone call or encounter with one of the team. This also allows us to send reliable information and record what has been done. We also ask receptionists to "signpost" patients to other sources of help and advice

We continue to triage the majority of encounters with GPs in line with BMA guidance and a February/March surge in Covid cases has reaffirmed this. The ability to manage many cases unseen

or relying on self-checking of blood pressure weight etc has been empowering. We have been able to see most cases face to face the same day if urgent.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we opened our new Cabin at the end of the carpark. This has become invaluable in allowing us to provide infection control while seeing patients with suspected covid, allowing us to help keep both staff and patients safe. The main room has been used for meetings, the distribution hub for the Weald covid vaccination booster campaign and for “remote consulting” where members of team have had to isolate, but has enabled them to keep working.

The backlog in secondary care has been significant. We are seeing patients later in their journey and even then we must hold their needs and risk for longer. This can be heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, or potential cancers. The increase in mental health cases in all age group has been a notable challenge and we sometimes look to “social prescribing” as well as medication and talk therapy

The emphasis from the centre continues to be Primary Care Networks to working together. Our local Cluster with practices in Yalding, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Staplehurst and others is still very active and has for instance coordinated to offer Covid vaccinations in the third wave and achieved equal highest for West Kent. Marden’s role in this group includes leading on training for the GPs as well as the Nurses and Paramedics

We are very grateful to the Patient Reference Group for their support for what we do and representing the needs of patients to the practice and to the Clinical Commissioning Group. They have also provided great numbers of enthusiastic volunteers for the Flu and the Covid clinics. We are also grateful to the Friends of Marden Medical Centre and those patients who donate money to them for the purchase of equipment. This allowed our creation of a new teaching and consulting room in the main building which we dedicated to the late Ken Weeks of the Friends committee, as well as equipping the cabin.

On a final positive note, we are just now starting another sponsored event this year as the Marden Medical Marchers in which we will be aiming to walk, run, cycle and swim the virtual distance from Marden to Kyiv and back in 4 weeks starting March 14th: 2842 miles. We are supporting the Marden based charity Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide (SAWW) Ukraine Appeal. The target to raise is £3320 to purchase a portable anaesthetic machine to be sent to the war-ravaged Ukraine. For details or for sponsorship search on [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) We love a challenge as long as we are working together.

MARDEN MEMORIAL HALL

By Ian Newton, Chairman

With the continuing Covid restrictions in the early part of 2021 the hall bookings were still low but the Trustees were able to apply for grant funding from Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council for grants to help keep us afloat. Thanks to these grants the Hall was still able to undertake some work including laying of a new footpath and repairs to the rear entrance ramp. (The Trustees met on 10th February 2022 to discuss the grant income and how this could be spent on refurbishments and new purchases as hiring was now increasing allowing the accounts to become more affluent for the forthcoming year.

The three members of staff, Hannah Cale (Facilities Manager), Shaun Edwards (Caretaker) and Debbie McKenzie (cleaner) still remain the only employees of the hall.

The hall flat is still rented out to one tenant on a rolling contract and no major problems have occurred over the past year on the property.

The majority of regular hirers have returned but unfortunately have lost the ballet booking and a children's dance class but have received new regular bookings by additional yoga classes.

Parties and weddings continue to increase and towards the end of the year the bookings seem to be very much on a par with previous years pre-Covid.

Thanks are expressed to all the Trustees for their hard work and commitment during the year. Trustees would also like to thank the staff for their continued work.

Going forward, as mentioned above, Trustees are looking to refurbish the pre-school toilets, provide additional storage for the Parish Council, repaint the remainder of the halls, replace the chairs (with a KCC grant for majority of the cost) and replacement of the rear entrance door. Grants are still available and it is hoped that these can be considered in the future for additional works such as new heating system.

Regular inspections continue with safety gas checks, Pat Testing, fire alarm and CCTV systems.

It is hoped that coming out of restrictions more regular Committee meetings can be held.

Finally, my personal gratitude to our Treasurer Alison Hooker who despite her tremendous workload as Parish Clerk manages to process the hall accounts, obtain funding from MBC and remember all that has happened in the last year so as to prepare the majority of this report.



MARDEN MINORS FOOTBALL CLUB
Affiliated to the Kent County Football Association

MARDEN MOTOR CLUB
By Andy Copas (Chairman)

The first 4 months of 2021 with the country in lockdown all our meetings were conducted via Zoom and email.

The Club is very grateful to Clive for organizing the Zoom software which enabled us to at least keep in touch, but however it was organised it wasn't the same as a normal meeting. It wasn't until May that the Lockdown eased, and we were able to resume proper meetings. However, these were held in the garden of West End Tavern (WET) and we were restricted to tables of 6 which made it difficult at times to conduct business in an effective way.

In October and November and June we were able to run 3 Night Rallies

In March, April and August we ran some quizzes which took place as part of the monthly meetings

Great Tong 18th July 2021

After some concerns regarding the safety aspects of running this meeting due to existing Covid restrictions it was decided to go ahead with this meeting. Very careful planning took place to minimize the chances of infections being spread and thankfully all people who attended the meeting were very obliging in conforming to the rules laid out.

As usual the weather was bright, sunny and warm and the meeting was well attended.

We decided before hand, because of the logistical problems, not to provide the usual ploughman's lunch but we arranged for the WET to provide hot dogs and hamburgers in its place. A big thankyou to them. Although profits were down it was still thought very well worth while putting on. There were many complimentary comments made by the attendees.

Marden Car Show Southons Field 4th September 2021

This is the 2nd Marden Car show that has been organised by Nick. The Parish Council have strict rules that hirers of the field have to comply with. As a result, there were complicated details to organise. All due credit to Nick and his helpers as the event went without a hitch. The meeting was very well attended. There over 140 cars present. The show was very profitable and club funds were given a huge boost.

Social events

On Saturday 12th April breakfast was organised at Queen's Inn at Hawkhurst. There was high turnout, and everyone had an enjoyable morning.

Another breakfast was organised on 20th November at the Milk House in Sissinghurst. Again, the turnout was good, and a good breakfast was enjoyed by all.

Chairman's Run 2021

The Chairman's Run which normally takes place in August was postponed this year until 7th September. A run was organised to the Woodcock Pub in Iden Green. An outside table was booked, and an enjoyable meal was had by all. Again, a well-attended event.

"The Great British Picnic", held at Lynx Park

On Sunday 25th July some members attended "The Great British Picnic", held at Lynx Park, Unfortunately, the weather was poor - such a shame as the event was well organised and well attended.

Christmas Dinner Sunday 23rd January held at The Plough Langley

23 people attended the lunch, and a good time was had by all. The food was excellent and reasonably priced.

Teal Café Breakfast

A breakfast meet was organised for 26th February which again proved successful and well attended. Needless to say, the food was of a good quality.

A Tabletop Mapping Challenge was organised by two club members for the March monthly meeting where we had to hone our map reading skills. An enjoyable exercise.

The Truck

The London to Brighton run was again cancelled due to the Covid Restrictions but is hoped to be run in May 2022. When the truck was returned to Brattle Farm after the Marden Motor Show some very awkward reversing had to be done to drive the truck into the garage. It proved very difficult as the steering was extremely heavy. It was agreed that it shouldn't be driven again until the steering faults are rectified. A working party was organised for 30th December to dismantle the front suspension to identify what the problems are. The dismantling was completed by about 12.30 in the morning. It now remains to source new parts as required. Obtaining spares required to affect repairs has proved very difficult and some of the existing components had to be refurbished rather than replaced. It is hoped that we can take part in the annual London to Brighton run organised by the HCVS provided, of course, we have been accepted for the run and the truck is ready to go.

Club Membership

For 2022 we have 20 paid up members

MARDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Update By Cllr Andy Turner

MARDEN PARISH CHURCH

By Revd Nicky Harvey

It has been a challenging time for the church, as it has for many other organisations, but the church is open for our normal pattern of services. 8.00am Holy Communion using traditional language and 10.30am services which alternate between Morning Worship on the 1st and 3rd Sunday's and Parish Communion on the 2nd and 4th. We continue to hold Evensong on the 1st and 4th Sundays at 6.30pm.

It is lovely to be able to worship together in person. We continue to live-stream regular services during the week for those unable to attend. The church is also open each day, for anyone who would like to spend some time in reflection or prayer.

Do keep an eye on the church website www.mardenchurch.org.uk and Facebook page @churchinmarden for our services and events. Messy Church is for all ages and explores a theme or Bible story through art, craft, and activities and is a wonderful way to engage with families and children. We have a short act of worship too and then we have tea. If you would like to receive our weekly newssheet, please email office@mardenchurch.org.uk. Sunday Club for primary school age children runs on the Sundays on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. We also run the Little Fishes playgroup on Wednesday mornings, during term time, in the Vestry Hall.

The church has been able to resume most of its community activities as we are able to use the Vestry Hall again. These include the Craft Club on Mondays, Come and Sing on Thursdays and Village Café. Bellringing practice takes place on Thursday evenings and Choir practice on Fridays. With the lifting of restrictions, we are open for the happy occasions of Baptisms and Weddings so do please get in touch if you would like to plan any of these special events. We are also here for those who sadly need to plan the funeral of a loved one. These services can take a variety of forms and we are here to help you plan the right service for your loved one when the time comes.

Although the churchyard is closed for burials, we are still able to inter ashes for those who live in Marden.

Like many organisations the pandemic caused financial hardship for the church due to loss of income from collections at services and lettings. We were able to complete the essential work on

the stained-glass windows thanks to the generous fundraising by the Friends of Marden Heritage, and a grant from the Friends of Kent Churches. The upkeep of the fabric of the church and the churchyard are always a struggle and we will be looking at ways to address this. The next major project will be the much-needed refurbishment of our 8 bells in order that they can continue to be rung in the future.

Please don't hesitate to get in contact with us if we can help in any way. Ring the Vicarage on 01622 831379 or email vicar@mardenchurch.org.uk

MARDEN PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

By John Haddow

(John was due to speak to the meeting about the PPG but unfortunately had to give his apologies. Report is as follows:)

Can I apologise for being unable to join you this evening? Thanks to Kate Tippen for offering to present and the MPC for allowing us to present.

Following Ray Morris's talk with an update on the activities of the Marden Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) – *in these strange & challenging times* - was never going to be easy. There is a link between the presentations - getting outside into the countryside is good for our health and wellbeing. The PPG is all about helping improve our health and wellbeing. Getting outside into nature and caring about wildlife is good for our physical and mental health. We all need to do it more often – especially in and around our lovely village.

I want to state that we are incredibly lucky to have Marden Medical Centre and its professional, resolute, and caring staff. In tough times – having these GP's and staff in the village is invaluable. I know you will join me in thanking them for their dedication and support over the years and especially in the last 2 years.

The covid pandemic experience has shown up some gaps or cracks in our NHS, it has also widened economic & health inequalities in the UK. It has however shown us all that front line NHS staff are dedicated and an essential resource – to be supported. It has also shown that where communities get together – good things can happen. Community and voluntary groups were critical in getting the health message out in the early days of the covid pandemic. Today – we are in the 'new normal'.

What does this mean for us all?

I want to cover briefly – Who we are, What we do, and Why join the group – if you are not already a PPG member.

Who We Are

Since 2010 the NHS requires every Medical Practice in England to have a PPG – a patient or public consultation group. The purpose is to create an open two-way dialogue between patients, GP's, and medical staff to help the Practice work as well as it can for both the patients and the professionals. Effectively it ensures that the Practice meets the local patient's needs and the GPs are held accountable to demonstrate that they try to do this.

The Marden PPG was set up in 2011 – is active, meets at least four times a year and overseen by a committee of fourteen patients (*many practices in the UK and the Weald have dormant or inactive*

PPG's) and is supported by the GP's and medical staff. Dr Julie Morgan and Mary-Jayne Bournes, the Practice Manager, are actively involved in what we do.

The PPG has around 290 members registered to receive email updates – which is around 4% of the MMC patient list (7200 approx.) – which has been growing for a number of years – as the village grows. If you are not already a member- please join. All Practice patients are welcome to join – but you need to ask to join the group. You will find some application forms available this evening.

What We Do

We form a link between patients and the Practice with a view to making a useful contribution to improving local services. We are the 'critical friend' of the Practice. We support the Practice with volunteer help – if needed. We raise general issues that cause patients concerns. We send out regular updates on activities, share Practice news and useful NHS information.

If you are keen to be more involved in the local community, meet people, are interested in improving your health and wellbeing, interested to volunteer or give back and be more aware of issues relating to the Surgery – you should consider joining the group.

Over the last year – The PPG has supported many of the flu and Covid Clinics (20+) – providing car park and waiting room assistance. Thank you to the forty or so members who gave up their time to stand in a yellow vest in the wet and cold. And to Roy Latham who coordinated the volunteers rota.

*A note: The Surgery will **not** be providing Covid Spring Boosters to over 75+ year old patients and other vulnerable eligible groups @ the Surgery – eligible patients should wait to be contacted by the NHS, call 119 or book via the National Booking site – a booster at a nearby vaccination location. Housebound patients will be contacted by the NHS and vaccinated at home. This was a decision made by the Weald Primary Care Network (PCN). This is a similar approach to the first covid-19 vaccinations in 2020/21. The GPs hope to be offering covid boosters @ the Surgery later in the year – the Autumn programme.*

The PPG provided a medicine delivery service for some isolating and vulnerable patients who could not collect their prescriptions from the Surgery.

In conjunction with MPC, the PPG created the Health and Wellbeing Key Contacts list – and distributed (now twice) to all household in the village in the Marden Parish Council Newsletter – *which is a particularly useful, well prepared, and informative document.*

The PPG refreshed the directory of local community groups which is on the PPG website. Members have continued to support local groups (where they could) – the Come & Sing and Living Memories groups – both have a direct health and wellbeing benefit.

PPG members have attended the bi-monthly Weald and Kent Clinical Commissioning Group meetings for patient representatives and shared the activities with the PPG members and sought feedback, as appropriate. Over the last year most of the discussions has been around Covid vaccination plans, lack of access to GP's during the pandemic, the efficacy of remote consultations, and delayed hospital consultations & operations.

Finally, the PPG has helped organise a regular telephone call with various Marden community group leaders – which encourages cooperation, information sharing and partnership in the village.

This includes the local primary school, MPC, the Church, the GP's the community warden, the Pharmacy, the Food Bank and Involve (a local social prescribing charity). This has been particularly useful over the past year or so – to share information.

Our next PPG meeting and AGM is 7pm on 23rd June at the Vestry Hall & we will also have a presence at the Platinum Jubilee event on 4th June.

Why Join

The PPG ensures MMC develops services that meet Marden patients needs. Residents can make sure their 'voice is heard' by the doctors. *They do listen.* The PPG also encourages greater health and wellbeing awareness and promotes good health and wellbeing advice.

Some concerning data - Put aside the 6m+ national waiting list for hospital consultations & surgery - in Maidstone - data from 2019, 64% of adults were either over-weight or obese. This is about the national average. Children's obesity is also on the rise – 32% in year 6 in Maidstone. Adult and increasingly children's mental health is also a growing issue – especially post-pandemic. We all need to be more aware of these worsening trends. What can we do about this – locally? This will be a potential initiative for the PPG over the coming months in conjunction with the GPs, Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council Public Health, the NHS and various other stakeholders.

Being a PPG member keeps you better informed on health and wellbeing news and programmes. In times of emergency – being a member also means critical information can be better shared quickly with you and with others.

To wrap up - Being healthy is more than just the NHS and GP's – we are all responsible for our own health. Easy access to good GP's and the NHS is a part of the story – where you live, your community support, what you do, how much exercise (*150 minutes per week is the current NHS guideline*), your DNA, all contribute. Living in an attractive, clean & safe environment is also particularly important. *Keep up the excellent work MPC, Marden in Bloom and the community wardens.*

Stay safe, get vaccinated, self-isolate (if you can) when you need to, wear a mask in busy places, wash your hands regularly – but more importantly pay attention to your health and wellbeing.

MARDEN PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUP

By Hayley Schlosser (Manager)

Marden Memorial Hall, Goudhurst Road, Marden, Kent, TN12 9JX

Telephone: 01622 832857

Email: mardenpreschool@yahoo.co.uk

MARDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY

By

MARDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY P.T.A.

By

MARDEN SCOUT GROUP

By

MARDEN SHORT MAT BOWLS (WEST END)

MARDEN SOCIETY

By Steve McArragher

Sadly, the pandemic severely restricted the Marden Society activities in 2021, so we were unable to hold any meetings until September. This meant we also had to cancel a planned Strawberry tea in Southons field in June. We were able to hold three meetings once things opened up a bit. The first in September was on Captain Oates of South Pole fame, but we learned a lot more about his life. The second in October should have been on the history of Punch and Judy, but sadly the speaker got stuck in a traffic jam on the A21 and was unable to make it to Marden. Our third meeting in November was by Ray Morris of the Marden Wildlife Group and was a great success. It had taken two years to arrange thanks to COVID but was well worth the wait, with the highest attendance we had seen for a long time. It just shows the level of interest in wildlife in Marden.

We were able to hold an AGM in January 2022 when Mo Clayton stood down as Chairman and Steve McArragher took over, with Carol Hogg as secretary. Other committee members remained in place, but we do need to recruit an extra member. The first talk in February was a fascinating account of a 700km walk through the French Alps. A full programme of further talks is planned for the rest of the year, with a summer outing in June to Provender house, the home of Princess Olga Romanov who was recently seen in an TV series.

Admission to our meetings is free, and membership costs only £5 per year, including subscription to the “Parish Pump” which is published normally four times a year.

MARDEN STATION & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Update on South Eastern, Network Rail and consultations

By Cllr Richard Adam

MARDEN THEATRE GROUP

By Mo Gillis-Coates



MARDEN VILLAGE CLUB

MARDEN WALKING GROUP

By Steve McArragher

Marden Walking Group has remained active through the last two years and regular walks started up again in 2021. Members of the group have revised the Walking Guides in response to the estate developments and changed footpaths. A new set of six “Historic Walks” guides around the Parish

has just been published to join the existing set of guides. These walks vary in length and follow designated footpaths visiting points of local interest. The guides are available to purchase from “No. 47” and the library at £5 for the older set of guides and £6 for the new set.

We also hold regular led walks. There is one every Saturday, starting at 2.pm from the library; these are short walks of approximately an hour. On the first Sunday of each month there are longer walks. These start at 10 am from the Library and are between five to seven miles in length, often following a route selected from the published guides. Details of the proposed walks can be found in the Parish Magazine or on the Marden Society website.

During the Spring and Summer months, once a week, a section of a long-distance pathway is walked, typically 8 miles. So far the group has completed the Saxon Shore Way, in both directions, the Weald Way, the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk and the Greensand Way. This year the intention is to walk the South Downs Way from Winchester to Eastbourne, starting from Winchester on April 5th.

If you enjoy walking in a friendly social atmosphere, and would like to join us, please contact either Steve McArragher on 01622 831007 or Sian Burr on 01622 831106.

Remember always to respect the countryside and keep to the footpaths.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

By Jean Robertson, President



WILDLIFE GROUP

By Ray Morris

mardenwildlife@gmail.com / www.mardenwildlife.org.uk

Despite ongoing Covid restrictions, Marden Wildlife continued to expand during the last year, both in the sense of more people becoming actively involved, and because the list of plant, fungi and animal species found in the parish grew longer too. There are around six hundred people signed up to our Facebook page, and/or our WhatsApp group where members share and discuss more detailed information about what we are doing.

Recording wildlife across the parish is an essential part of what we do so that landowners and planners are informed on how to conserve and increase it. All records are entered into the national biodiversity database via local and national organisations. These include records from photos in gardens posted on Facebook and casual observations while walking the dog. Everything is important, even unimportant things.

We operate an open membership policy – membership is free and anyone on our Facebook/WhatsApp groups is considered a member. Equipment used for finding and recording wildlife is members' own or supplied by local farmers who also meet the cost of rings used for bird ringing.

Our 2021/22 farmland bird study was fully financed through a grant from Natural England (NE) to the Marden Farmer Cluster. With help from Marden in Bloom and Cllr Parfitt-Reid, we have acquired a KCC Covid Recovery grant for professionally manufactured footpath notices. As grant funding is normally only available to bona fide organisations with their own bank account, a formal constitution and committee have been created. We have several ideas under consideration for increasing our impact and can now seek funding to take them forward.

Although focused on the wildlife of Marden Parish, our activities are anything but parochial. Working with County Recorders, local and national wildlife charities, Local Authority officers and university researchers, the group has:

- Supplied hundreds of detailed records to the Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre;
- Contributed samples for research at Sussex University into microplastics in small mammal droppings, and agricultural chemical residues in birds' feathers;
- Participated in research conducted at Lincoln University into gut parasites in farmland birds;
- Collaborated in the development of landscape scale conservation through farming initiatives and woodland creation across the Low Weald;
- Worked with NE, Kent Wildlife Trust, and the expanding Marden Farmer Cluster in creating and evaluating conservation farming activity.

Members are conscious that wildlife conservation will only happen if it is understood and supported by wider society. Education – from pre-school to politicians, and everybody in between – is key.

Although we have limited financial and human resources, we encourage any activity that contributes to learning about, or changing attitudes to, the natural world. We provide volunteering and learning opportunities for young peoples' Duke of Edinburgh Awards, have facilitated a scientific study for an International Baccalaureate student, and involve young people on KCC's Restorative Justice Scheme in practical conservation work.

A copious supply of barn owl pellets is available for anyone wanting to delve into the digestive world of one of Marden's iconic birds – or to schools wanting to add a meaningful local connection to the science National Curriculum. So far, pupils at Key Stage 2 and students at A Level have enjoyed studying them.

As mentioned above, we are placing signs on public footpaths around the parish. Scanning the QR code (sample below) with a smartphone provides the walker with information about what can be seen close by. Twenty-five original signs are being replaced and a further fifty added.

As of this month we are beginning a series of walks and talks provided by members and friends, and open to anyone interested in finding out more about our local wildlife.

The year's highlight was receiving the national Wildlife Group of the Year Award from the NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Atlas Trust, presented by Professor Sir John Lawton, author of the report underpinning the Government's 25-year plan for restoring biodiversity. A sunny autumn day saw Marden at its best in a Meridian TV News slot to publicise it.

Please contact us if you are interested in becoming involved as an individual, or as a landowner in what we and the Marden Farmer Cluster are doing.



MARDEN YOUTH GROUP

By Rob Yorke

Open Access Team (Early Help Service)

Maidstone Youth Hub (Infozone), 3 Palace Avenue, Maidstone ME15 6NF

I would firstly like to thank Marden Parish Council for their support and passion for young people in Marden. We will be delivering our first youth group on Thursday 24/03/2022 and we have planned a number of activities from cooking, sports, arts and crafts, board games and within reason we will be able to cater for the interests of the young people.

Over the last few months, we have been doing detached youth work - meeting young people in the community, we have seen and heard from a number that told us they will be attending the youth group.

We have also introduced ourselves to local businesses to see what interactions if any they have had with young people.

RETAINED FIRE SERVICE

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

By Tom Stevens JP

SAFE ANAESTHESIA