



MARDEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

TUESDAY 4TH APRIL 2023

**MARDEN MEMORIAL HALL
GOUDHURST ROAD
MARDEN**

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PLEASE FIND ATTACHED REPORTS FROM:

PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

By Cllr Kate Tippen, Chairman, Marden Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL AMENITIES COMMITTEE REPORT

By Cllr Anne Boswell, Chairman of Amenities

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PARISH COUNCIL CLERK'S REPORT

By Alison Hooker

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

By Cllr (will be added following the meeting)

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

By Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid

KENT POLICE

COMMUNITY WARDEN

By Mira Martin

MARDEN ORGANISATIONS AND CLUBS

(some reports have been taken from the recent newsletter)

Little Fishes
Marden Badminton
Marden Bellringers
Marden Bowls Club
Marden Business Forum
Marden Children's Centre
Marden Community CIO
Marden Congregational Chapel
Marden Cricket & Hockey Club
Marden Dementia Group
Marden History Group and Heritage Centre
Marden Horticultural Society
Marden in Bloom
Marden Library
Marden Medical Centre
Marden Memorial Hall
Marden Motor Club
Marden Neighbourhood Plan
Marden Parish Church
Marden Patient Participation Group
Marden Pre-School
Marden Primary Academy
Marden Primary Academy PTA
Marden Scout Group
Marden Short Mat Bowls
Marden Society
Marden Station and Public Transport
Marden Theatre Group
Marden Village Club
Marden Walking Group
Marden WI
Marden Wildlife
Marden Youth Club
Retained Fire Service
Royal British Legion
Safe Anaesthesia

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

By Cllr Kate Tippen, Chairman, Marden Parish Council

The Parish Council is now back to all its normal meeting venues following the complete lifting of pandemic restrictions. Full Council is held on the second Tuesday of each month and Amenities on the fourth Tuesday at The Allens meeting room. Planning meetings are held on the other two Tuesdays of the month in the Parish Council meeting room. All our meetings are held in public and residents are welcome to attend. If there is a lot of resident interest in an agenda item then a larger room at the Memorial Hall is used. My grateful thanks to my council colleagues for all their hard work on behalf of our community. A Parish Councillor does more than turn up for a couple of hours on a Tuesday evening!

It has been a particularly busy year for your Councillors. We have responded to every planning application submitted within the Parish and any in neighbouring parishes that we are interested in. We have taken an active interest in the emerging Maidstone Local Plan responding where necessary to consultations, alongside this work we are reviewing our own Marden Neighbourhood Plan. We have also responded to many other consultations that come our way, most recently to the KCC Community Services Consultation which proposed the closure of Marden Children's Centre. Your Parish Council spent a long time reviewing this important consultation and unanimously agreed that we strongly opposed this proposal, sending a vigorous response to KCC. We are grateful to the support we have received on this matter from Borough Councillor Claudine Russell and County Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid.

We have continued to liaise with Redrow about the allotment site at Highwood Green. The saga continues but there may be some dim light in the tunnel now as Redrow have at long last accepted our position and are prepared to transfer the allotment site only to us. However, I have to report that the Redrow wheels continue to turn slowly and sometimes it feels like they are in reverse. We will persevere and maybe there will be better news next year.

Flooding continues to be a problem after heavy rain. You will all remember the extremely heavy rain we experienced in November, which seemed to go on for most of the month. This caused two notable problems and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The first was flooded and impassable roads. The good news is that KCC have provided us with flood warning signs that we can put out on road junctions where we know the road has flooded. I am indebted to the flood wardens who keep in regular contact when we are at risk of flooding and put out the signs when needed. We use social media to warn people of flooding and encourage people to find alternative routes.

The second problem is sewer flooding which occurs mainly on the path from Goudhurst Road to Maynards and in Roughlands Lane. Between the beginning of November and the beginning of January I contacted Southern Water no less than 8 times about sewer flooding. I called a meeting with Southern Water in early December to understand the cause of the sewer flooding and what remediation is planned. It was a positive meeting, which I have reported in the recent Parish Council newsletter. The main problem is that much of Marden's surface water especially from the older properties runs off into the foul sewer, which it shouldn't do, thus causing an overload at the pumping stations in periods of heavy rain. Southern Water assured us that they are very aware of the problem and that their engineers are looking at the best ways to mitigate. This all comes down to money and the hope is that Marden will feature in their 2025 strategic plan. In the meantime, those of us who are flood wardens will continue to monitor the situation and report all incidences to Southern Water.

The river and ditch drainage system around the parish is complex. The main rivers – the Teise and the Beult are under the management of the Environment Agency but all the streams and ditches that make up the drainage network are looked after by the Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board. We had a useful meeting with them as we are particularly concerned about the road flooding in Plain Road and Hunton Road at the Mill. Their main message is that climate change is alive and well and

excessive rainfall and subsequent flooding is now the norm and not the exception. They are looking at plans for natural flood management and wet woodlands to try and contain water higher upstream, but all these are long term ideas and could take many years to come to fruition.

Over the last year the Parish Council has been pleased to hold a number of public events. Marden at Christmas was as successful and popular as ever. Our Jubilee celebrations were very well attended and a great way of bringing the community together. Little did we know that only 3 months later we would be mourning Her Majesty the Queen. The Parish Council liaised very closely with Rev Nicky to ensure that Marden fully respected all the protocols during the mourning period. We now look forward to the King's Coronation and plans are well underway for Marden's own celebration, our Coronation Fete, on Monday 8th May at Southons Field. I hope to see you all there.

Highways issues continue to be a cause of concern for residents. We have developed a Highways Improvement Plan which currently has 23 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.

The Parish Council also has an Infrastructure Spend Plan, which identifies all the improvements we would like to see in the village. Some of the small items the Parish Council will be able to fund, but large, more ambitious plans such as a new pavilion at Southons Field are longer term and will require a greater level of funding.

We are committed to maintaining regular communication with residents through a number of different channels. 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. 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 email 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 also have a network of notice boards which are updated weekly.

We have just held our Spring litter pick and thanks go to all the people who turned out to do a dirty job. I'm sure you'll all agree the parish looks better for it although we weren't to know that 2 days later on bin collection day there would be high winds sending bins and rubbish flying.

We held a successful Summer Play Scheme in July at Marden Primary Academy. Jordan Manley, who has managed the scheme for a number of years, is unable to carry on due to her work commitments, but I am delighted that we have been able to recruit a new Play Scheme Manager for this Summer. Many of you will know Jen Ward, was Hindley, who grew up in Marden and has been teaching at Marden Primary Academy. We can now look forward to another successful Summer Play Scheme this year.

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 and font of all Marden knowledge steers the ship and it's not easy with 11 Councillors to contain, but she makes sure that we do what we have to and nothing slips through the gaps. Last September Ali achieved the incredible milestone of 20 years' service to the Parish Council. We were sorry that Hollie Savory, our Administrative Assistant, left us in March to return to the industry she had previously worked in. She is much missed but we wish her all success in her new role. We are now recruiting for a replacement. All of us here tonight are grateful to Ali and Rachel 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 celebrated 35 years with us last July, and Chris Prince who looks after all our open space and many other jobs that need doing around the village as well.

KALC Community Award will be announced on the night.

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, Rookery Path and Southons Field, as well as Marden Cemetery and Public Toilets. It is also a discussion forum for Climate, Sustainability & Biodiversity as well as Health & Wellbeing issues.

Southons Field

This 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. As well as the Play Trail - which presents a challenge for both adults and children - there's a bay of swings, football nets and several picnic benches. Two more benches will be added this year – one for children and one with wheelchair access. Marden Wildlife has installed two QR information codes explaining the wildlife, trees, wildflower meadow etc. which residents may find of interest. There are various memorial trees in the field including a 'Roots of Remembrance' tree to acknowledge those who were affected by Covid in the Parish and a Memorial tree for H.M. the Duke of Edinburgh. In the Spring, an oak tree, which was kindly donated by Golden Hill Nursery, was planted as a Memorial to HM Queen Elizabeth II close to the Duke of Edinburgh's – hopefully their roots will become entwined! The Wildflower Meadow which Marden in Bloom created looks wonderful in early Summer attracting many bees and butterflies and a bench has been placed next to the meadow by the 'Bloomers'. The gates leading to the field will need replacing soon and Councillors are investigating suitable options.

The field also hosts the Village Beacon and is where most of the large village events take place. This year the King's Coronation Fete will be held on Monday 8th May, the Marden Motor Club Show on 27th May, the Rude Mechanicals Theatre Company will perform on 23rd June and the Hazlitt Theatre will hopefully be putting on a family show on the 15th August.

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 Rookery Path

The children's playgrounds in Napoleon Drive and the Playing Field are popular and well-used. As well as the play equipment, there's an adult gym, sports wall, youth shelter and Dog Bag Station. Unfortunately, the picnic bench in Napoleon Drive has been damaged and reported as a crime and will be replaced with a new piece of equipment at some point. More CCTV will be installed shortly to monitor these areas.

Marden Minors Football Club no longer require the use of the field for football matches, so the old Changing Rooms are now redundant. Marden Parish Council still has \$106 monies left to spend at the Playing Field which cannot legally be spent elsewhere. We are currently undertaking a public consultation and are proposing refurbishment of the existing building with a small extension. The options that residents can vote on are: use as a dedicated youth provision with controlled supervision; demolish the existing building and replace with a small building for storage; or any other suggestions from residents. We are conscious that Marden does not have a dedicated youth facility and the continual expansion of the community means this has become increasingly important.

Chris Prince, our Caretaker, together with our contractors, spend many hours keeping our green spaces in good order. It is unfortunate that some of these hours are spent removing litter and graffiti.

Marden Cemetery

This is a tranquil place of rest with a plethora of wildlife and is kept immaculate by our caretaker Ian Jones (who completed 35 years' service with the Parish Council in 2022) and we are very grateful for all his efforts in maintaining the Cemetery to such a high standard. 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. We are in the process of creating a small area for the scattering of ashes and are trialling wildflowers here. A sign is being installed at the beginning of the permissive path in Maidstone Road by the bend leading to the cemetery.

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.

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. We have a robust and sustainable Tree Management Policy, and our caretakers check them on a monthly basis, a more detailed survey is carried out twice a year by the Tree Warden Charlie Edwards on a voluntary basis and a detailed Tree Audit is undertaken every three years by an external contractor.

As part of the Parish Council's biodiversity responsibilities and the Queen's Green Canopy campaign, we recently planted several trees at the Playing Field to help create a wildlife corridor and many whips/saplings were also planted in March. Sadly, the saplings planted in Autumn 2021 on several new developments have either died or been destroyed.

Public Toilets

The Parish is fortunate that the Parish Council can 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. Councillors have been exploring ways of installing a water refill station and have decided the easiest solution is to install drinking taps in both the ladies and gents' toilets for people to refill their water bottles.

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

Environmental Sub-Group

The Parish Council has now set up an Environmental Sub-Group and has been drafting an Estate Management Plan looking at realistic and manageable ways in which the Parish Council operates such as recycling, energy, purchasing and will be formulating a more sustainable mowing strategy e.g. '*No Mow May*'. We have also been investigating a Carbon Emissions Calculator to find out Marden's carbon footprint which shows the Parish's footprint is not only above the Borough of Maidstone's which is higher than the UK average!

Health & Wellbeing

Marden Parish Council strive to provide as much information as possible on health and wellbeing and in liaison with the PPG, maintain a 'Health & Wellbeing Contact List' which is updated on a regular basis. We are part of the Marden Community Engagement Group which is a very useful collaborative liaison group who link up and share information to try and tie up missing links. Members include Marden Medical Centre, the PPG, the Children's Centre, the Parish Church, Involve (Social Prescribing), the School, Village Community Warden, etc.

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

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Cllr Andy Turner, Chairman of Planning

2022/23 saw business as usual for the Marden Parish Council's Planning Committee.

Face to face meetings being held in the Parish office twice monthly and occasionally in the Old School Room for some of our larger applications or where large numbers of the public wished to attend.

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 regarding 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. This year will see the start of the Stage 2 Public hearings that are conducted by the Planning Inspector. Currently site allocation for Marden will be discussed on Thursday 18th May in person in the Town Hall.

The Marden Neighbourhood Plan review is still on going with members of the Parish reviewing and cross referencing any changes to the MBC's emerging Local Plan and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to see if the MNHP policies are still current and still in conformity with these two documents.

This work is being carried out in line with MBC Local Plan review. In May 2022 we held our first open day to kick start our MNHP review. Asking the Village about the Vision of Marden. It was fairly well attended and the Steering Group got some good feedback and suggestions. This work is ongoing and soon we will be asking for members of the community to come forward and help volunteer on delivering this vital document for the whole parish.

The other major task undertaken by the Planning Committee is reviewing and commenting on planning applications within the Parish. This year 115 planning applications have come before the Council, some of which have been controversial. I hope that all residents' 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

The role of Parish Clerk is a varied one, even after 20 years (*can't believe I have been here that long!*).

This past year the Parish Office staff have covered 12 Full Council meetings; 2 Extra Ordinary Full Council meetings; 8 Amenities Committee meetings; and 17 Planning Committee meetings along with many Neighbourhood Plan, Sub-Committee, Sub-Group and external meetings. These involve not just preparing the agendas, taking and typing up minutes but obtaining information and gathering papers ready to send to Cllrs prior to the meeting.

Along with the meetings we have organised the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Summer Play Scheme, village litter pick, Marden at Christmas and, with the help of Revd Nicky, the sad event of the Queen's passing in September last year.

One day is not the same as the next with having to undertake any actions raised at meetings, deal with the finance (and end of year accounts) of the Council, liaise with funeral directors and grieving families in regard to cemetery issues, review risk assessments and policies together with speaking and assisting residents with any issues and signposting to the correct person to speak to in regard to missing bins, housing issues, anti-social behaviour to name just a few.

Rachel, as Deputy Clerk, prepares and attends the Amenities Committee meetings as well as undertaking all the social media involved with informing residents of what the parish council is doing, advertising events and circulating information provided by other agencies. Rachel also prepares the weekly e-newsletter and newsletter, following the drafting by Cllr Boswell, ready for printing – a mammoth task.

At least one of us attends the monthly "Meet the Clerks" at the village café on the fourth Friday of each month where residents can come and find us to have a chat and raise any concerns they may have – why not come along and enjoy a drink and a cake at the same time.

My role would be even harder without the help of Rachel and, in the past 18 months with Hollie, as Admin Assistant, helping with organising the events etc. Therefore, it was sad to see Hollie leave us last month – she will be sorely missed.

My thanks to both Rachel and Hollie, along with Ian and Chris, our caretakers, who help to maintain the cemetery and areas of open space as well as any ad hoc jobs that we find for them. Of course, my job is made easier by the dedication and commitment of my Cllrs.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

By County Cllr Lottie Parfitt-Reid

It has been a real honour and privilege to represent the residents of Maidstone Rural South in County Hall for the last 2 years. This last year has seemed like a much more significant challenge than the first year. The rapid rise in inflation, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis all have had very significant impacts on our service delivery and our unit costs. "We have some very difficult decisions to make" is a phrase I have heard throughout all layers of Government for many years, but it has never been starker or truer than it is today.

I have written this report in two sections:

A more localised report relating to me and the division and then a section which goes into much greater detail of the more strategic issues affecting the whole of the county for those who are interested:

PART 1

As I have said budgetary issues have been significant and funding has been difficult and stretched across the board. I meet regularly with one of our division MPs Helen Whately and this is an

opportunity to express community concerns and express national issues that have an impact on us locally, a very simple example of this is poor Primary care, which leads us to problems downstream with adult social care.

Highways issues remain a significant concern for residents, across the Borough, However, we have spent around £1.8 m on potholes and patching alone.

Areas of concern are the closure of the Leeds Langley road for 6 months over the summer. I am still liaising with local councillors and officers for a safe and efficient diversion to minimise disruption but thus far it seems that the diversion remains at Willington Street.

New single lines will be put down in Pattenden Lane in Marden and double yellows at Gybbon Rise in Staplehurst.

Early in the year we got additional signage at the Hawkenbury bridge, but this does remain an accident hotspot.

Over the course of the year, I have worked with MBC to ensure that Section 106 monies totalling in excess of £324k for Staplehurst could be allocated to a possible scheme delivering an improved bus shelter and a pedestrian crossing over the Cranbrook Road approaching the Quarter. I think this would be an invaluable piece of infrastructure for the village.

Cameras at Plough Wents -These cameras are related to some work we're doing on freight movements and volumes, we've chosen Leeds/ Langley B2163 as demo area. The cameras have been commissioned for 1 week to observe the purpose of freight journeys within a zone area (hence the multiple cameras on the approaches) so we can better understand how many oversized vehicles are passing through the area for legitimate access. The technology is a more innovative version of the standard counters as the findings should be able to clarify the journey times from entry to exit in the area. This is a bit of a trial, as there isn't specifically a product on the market which meets what we've been looking to find out. We hope the results will be useful, either way these will be shared with the road safety team on our internal system for all Kent officers to review.

Collier Street residents approached me several months ago regarding a dangerous dog situation, this ended up encroaching into my role as a Borough Councillor. However, this enabled me to liaise with the Community Protection Team and Kent Police. It was a highly emotive situation and required lots of communication with residents, other councillors and the relevant authorities. What this highlighted is that sometime the law doesn't do what it should, or what we would want it to, but we worked with the powers we had, and the situation now appears to be under control.

There have been several flooding issues in Langley, Chart Sutton and the Boughton Monchelsea borders some of which remain on going but I am working on them.

I am delighted that after sustained pressure, meetings with KCC and our MP Helen Grant, Marden Primary Academy will be expanding in September offering 20 additional places. The capital works will be undertaken by the Leigh Academy Trust.

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) are often of interest and I have a rather detailed email including MAPS if anyone is interested (let me know) but see a brief summary - there are 196 issues currently in chain or requiring attention. Of which:

103 are allocated and in chain.

8 are awaiting allocation

15 in progress – ie being worked on currently

24 are subject to landowner action. Eg stile repairs, crop reinstatement and are live – ie they've been notified, requested to act and will be subject to follow up

2 have work scheduled – in both cases bridge repairs/ replacements

19 reports have been added to the forward maintenance plan. We tend to group works by type and area and send out works packages when there is sufficient to ensure that the work will be efficient and viable for our contractors.

25 relate to long term obstructions. These are usually matters that relate to past development – often outside of the planning process – for example permitted agricultural development pre-1992, for which no Public Path Order (PPO) was made to divert the affected PRow or orchards planted pre-1991 where no provision was made for PRow. Most of the orchard issues are resolved as they are grubbed and replanted, or the land used for other crops. Those relating to development are being resolved by means of PPOs. Usually prompted by the sale of the property.

Vegetation clearance - Boughton Monchelsea	1148 metres x 3 cuts
Marden	861 metres x 3 cuts
Staplehurst	2273 metres x 3 cuts

Applications to amend the Definitive Map or to divert PRow –: Currently 1 which is exceptionally low in comparison with the rest of the County although quite a few have been made historically. Number of surfacing schemes in the area awaiting funding: I believe it is three with a total estimated value of £20K (which isn't too bad considering but reflects local geography and use).

Graham Head of PRow is more than happy to come and talk to the Parishes to share and talk about the work he does if you promise to let him speak early on!

We have had 2 voluntary village green applications in Boughton Monchelsea go through our regulation committee which I was delighted to support.

Community Services Consultation (Jan – March 26th) Proposed closure of Marden's Children's Centre. Since the consultation launched:

I have met with MPC to listen to their concerns and views

I have met with ward Councillors

I have had meetings with KCC officers to express the impact this will have and to try and get answers as to what it will be replaced with.

I have worked with senior officers at Maidstone Borough Council to shape and formulate an extensive response to the consultation highlighting gaps in data and areas that have not been considered

I have then taken this response to our Communities Housing and Environment Policy Advisory Committee there I took feedback from fellow Councillors to add more weight and information to the response

I took the revised response to our MBC executive meeting on 22nd March where it was signed off and subsequently sent to KCC

I have submitted my own personal response as the County Councillor.

In short, I have, and will continue to, pull every democratic procedure lever available to keep our Children's Centre in Marden. I have also advised the leader of my position on this matter as it may end up being in conflict with what is recommended by the cabinet and subsequently to the full council.

I regularly assist individual residents with personal issues and concerns ranging from fighting to get SEND home to school transport reinstated, elderly residents having problems with bus passes, or advising parents on the Kent travel saver scheme whilst these are not big-ticket items, they are a vital part of what I do and if I'm honest one of the things I enjoy most.

Member Grants – Below are the monies I have spent this year. I allocate the money as evenly as I can to my 6 parishes if it appears uneven or unfair its simply that I had a lot of money unspent from the previous year, and I am carrying over more this year into next. Understandably due to the severe financial pressures our member grants have been cut from £10k to £3,600 for next year, my unspent

money will be carried over. To be honest I think we are exceptionally lucky to have any going forward.

CMG SPENT: £9920 CMG REMAINING: £7,350

Staplehurst PC - Youth Club start-up - £1000 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-8**

Slide Away – Website Renewal – £300 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-12**

Langley PC – Clock Restoration- £1500 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-13**

Sutton Valence PC – Platinum Meadow Scheme - £1820 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-15**

Staplehurst Under 5 Playgroup – Fencing for garden - £500 – **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-21**

Marden Parish Council - Marden Summer Play Scheme - £300 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-28**

RBL Sutton Valence - Sutton Valence & District Branch RBL 100 years anniversary event -

Reuniting people - £1000 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-38**

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council - Energy efficiency improvements to Boughton Monchelsea village hall - £3000 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-43**

Chart Sutton PC - Kings Coronation Big Lunch - £500 - **Grant Status: Completed ref 22-MA-53**

Finally, to finish on a lighter note, early in the year the leader advised us he had 2 nominations to make for the entire county for the Kings Garden Party. As members we were invited to put forward and make a case for 2 people. I am thrilled to say one of the people I put forward was chosen, and I can't think of a more deserving person to receive this honour, He is a very humble person and not a fan of the limelight so I shall keep his identity secret for now...

PART 2

The Budget - The budget was agreed at County Hall in February of this year, but the challenge will now be to deliver it and at the same time start work on the 2024-2025 budget. For the first time ever, we will have an overspend (estimated at around £53.7m at month 9 monitoring) although this is coming down, it will have to be met in part from the 25m risk reserves that we put aside, but anything over and above will have to be met from general reserves. The main factors were rapid increases in adult social care costs notably older people's residential care. Growth and increase in school transport costs in particular SEND students and sharply higher placement costs, reflecting the challenges in foster care recruitment and higher costs for more specialist placements, in children's services. On the capital side, we are seeing the impact of severe inflationary pressures.

Shortly before the Autumn Statement, the Leader of Hampshire and Roger Gough, Leader of KCC, wrote a well-publicised letter to senior ministers setting out concerns about the unsustainable financial position confronting councils such as ours. KCC have recently held a very useful meeting with Lee Rowley, a member of the DLUHC ministerial team, to investigate further the issues raised in our letter and look forward to these discussions continuing.

Help for Residents - We have a strong record in supporting our residents through the crises and pressures of recent years, which began with a commitment, ahead of much of the sector, to delivery of Free School Meals in the half term in October 2020. Since that time, government has brought forward a series of programmes, running from September 2021 as the Household Support Fund. In the first two rounds of funding, over 450,000 awards have been issued to Kent residents. This has covered areas such as food vouchers for Free School Meal eligible families, energy vouchers, support with water bills, funding passed to District and Borough Councils and more. The third round of the Fund is currently being delivered, while a £22 million fourth round (announced recently) runs for a full year to March 2024.

Alongside this, we have run our own Financial Hardship Programme, which includes and has built on the Helping Hands Scheme, launched in February 2021 with £10 million from the Covid Emergency Grant. The innovative schemes have included the Money Advice Hub, the strengthening of Referrals and Data Sharing between councils. Much of the focus is on ensuring that services and support are

available to the residents already entitled to them, and that we help residents build their financial resilience/

Migration, asylum and UASC - 2022 saw a large number of small boat crossings and as part of this the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) referred to KCC was a record 1,390. (There have been 266 so far this year). However, because of the agreements that we reached with government in 2020-21:

- Better financial arrangements mean that the Kent council taxpayer is not exposed to these costs.
- The National Transfer Scheme was made mandatory, and some 1,640 UASC young people have been transferred under this scheme since June 2020 to other councils.
- We have around 500 UASC in our care, just above the 0.1% level set by the 2016 Immigration Act and provide a Reception and Safe Care service for 120 UASC before they go to other councils.

The large overall number of asylum seeker arrivals, along with other schemes and the national backlog in processing claims, has meant that we have seen 5 hotels for accommodating asylum seekers, 3 'bridging hotels' for Afghan families and 2 UASC hotels open in the last year. This, coupled with concerns over how plans for increased asylum accommodation in the south east is to be reconciled with other duties such as homelessness, led all 14 Kent council leaders to write to the Home Secretary in November. KCC have since met the Immigration Minister, Robert Jenrick, and have worked with our District and Borough colleagues to oppose unsuitable proposals for use of hotels, in some cases with success.

Government has this week announced plans to end the reliance on hotels in accommodating both asylum seekers and those on the Afghan resettlement schemes. The Illegal Migration Bill, currently making its way through Parliament, will also raise important challenges, notably in relation to UASC.

Ukraine - Kent has welcomed the biggest number of refugees from Ukraine of any area in England. The initial tasks of carrying out checks, establishing systems and making payments were very challenging. In the year since guests started arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, 3,274 guests have come into the County (and all told 4,271 have been matched with hosts in Kent – not all have yet arrived). 1,506 'programme leavers' have moved on – 46% into rented accommodation, many of the rest returning to Ukraine or neighbouring countries – but at present there are 1,767 guests staying with 854 sponsors. There are 349 Ukrainian children in our primary schools and 234 in our secondary schools.

We have responded to the challenge of potential sponsorship breakdown, especially as many Ukrainian guests reached the six-month minimum sponsorship stage. Moving ahead of government and many other councils, we announced in October that, for the rest of the financial year, we would pay a higher rate to hosts and further increase payments linked to the number of guests. The ending of sponsorship arrangements, which was anticipated to be at around 60% of the total, came in at 9%. We have extended these higher payments for another year while working with our District council colleagues on longer-term housing options.

SEND - The Ofsted/CQC revisit in September produced a deeply disappointing outcome, with inspectors concluding that the Kent area had made insufficient progress in all 9 of the areas of weakness identified in the 2019 Written Statement of Action.

With new leadership on both the officer side (Sarah Hammond as Director of Children's Services, Christine McInnes bringing Education and SEND back together) and politically (Rory Love as Cabinet Member for Education with SEND leadership responsibilities), we have produced a comprehensive plan of improvement to address the long-running challenges in this service. We have also reached agreement with the Department for Education regarding the Safety Valve to address the accumulated deficit on High Needs Funding, estimated to reach around £142m by the end of this financial year. The agreement aims to bring High Needs Funding into balance by 2027-28,

with £140m of the cumulative deficit reached by that point (forecast to be £222m) covered by the DfE and £82m by KCC. This accompanies our plans to deliver major service change that can both serve children and families better and put us on a financially sustainable path.

The DfE published the latest round of Safety Valve agreements, including Kent's, on Thursday 16 March. A summary of the Safety Valve agreement is published on KCC's website and a letter was issued from Rory Love to all Members.

We are undertaking this programme of change, meeting the challenges of both the Safety Valve and the Ofsted/ CQC revisit, at a time when the government has published the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan. There are many features of the Plan that are welcome, though it is doubtful if it goes far enough in helping establish a sustainable system.

Buses and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - We had major challenges last summer over bus services; while we were still taking forward the £2.3m reduction in subsidies agreed in the 2022/23 budget, the bus industry was facing a crisis brought on by higher fuel costs, staff (especially driver) shortages and falls in usage. This was a national issue but had particular salience in Kent because of the high usage of commercial bus services for school travel and the usage of the Kent Travel Saver. Our Transport team did a remarkable job in working with operators to reduce the impact of route cancellations, especially on school journeys.

Members were briefed on 17 March on our Bus Service Improvement Plan funding award. After very long delays (we were first given our indicative allocation of £34 million over 2022-25 a year ago, we now have agreement to deploy just under £19 million (representing the first two years' funding) over the next year, with a roughly two thirds/ one third split between capital and revenue. While this has taken an inordinate amount of time and is not on the scale or in the form that we might have hoped for, it can deliver some real improvements and help protect and sustain the network, in particular school transport, as well as offsetting the proposed increase in the cost of the Kent Travel Saver. David Brazier has taken a semi-urgent decision to accept the funding, and we await decisions on the remainder of our allocation.

Nationally, the announcement in February of an extra £155 million government funding to extend support (such as Bus Recovery Grant) until 30 June buys time to establish a somewhat longer-term package, but the sector remains under severe pressure. We still have major questions to address about the best way to secure our network, and school transport in particular, and on that basis, established a cross-party Member group to review and advise on the way ahead. The group, chaired by Nick Chard, has held its first meeting.

Roads and potholes - Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/ January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; Residents will, I think, have observed the increased number of local road closures that reflect highway works. 14,000 potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square meetings of road has been patched. The budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition and we are looking to deploy it as quickly as possible.

Borders, Brock and External Entry System (EES) - We experienced two major incidents of disruption at the border last year, with the all too familiar impacts on traffic and travel, affecting our residents, communities and businesses. The first was an after effect of the P&O crisis and had a major effect around Easter; the second (in July) resulted from non-attendance at the port by the French border authorities, the PAF. After a period of greater calm, and with the Easter break being our second consecutive holiday period without the Brock barrier being put into force, we have now seen further disruption as PAF capacity has not matched the number of coaches needing to be processed.

This confirms that the threat of disruption is never far away; the biggest longer-term risk is the potential introduction of the EU's External Entry System. EES has been scheduled for introduction at various points, most recently this spring – but now delayed to at least the back end of this year and it is widely believed that it will not now be introduced until late 2024. But it remains a serious challenge and was recognised as such in the final communique after the Prime Minister's recent summit with President Macron.

Work continues with the Department for Transport on developing short, medium and long-term responses to the border issue and we expect reports back in the summer. In the meantime, an important first step has been our securing £45 million for improvements to the configuration and fluidity of the Dover port under round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund. (This successful KCC bid came alongside successful District bids; taken together, this brings £123 million in LUF funding into Kent). This is not a solution in itself, but can support greater resilience at the border, raising the threshold for when measures such as the use of Operation Brock are required.

Staying with longer-term plans for strategic road investment, the Department for Transport announced shortly before the budget that construction of the Lower Thames Crossing will be delayed for two years until 2026. Transport Secretary Mark Harper nonetheless stated that 'We remain committed to the Lower Thames Crossing.' Reflecting the same pressures on the DfT budget, RIS3 schemes including Dover access and Brenley Corner, have also been pushed back.

Environment and Waste - On 23 March DEFRA issued the long-awaited regulations and guidance implementing provisions of the Environment Act 2021, covering a range of issues from consistency in waste collection to responsibility for Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity. Most districts in Kent already have a separate food waste collection but the Environment Act requires that all councils must do this. KCC will be the lead authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and were expecting extra funding for this and for our new Biodiversity duties. We will be further assessing the implications of these regulations and delivering them.

KCC has won its bid for £1.83m from the latest round of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which is to part fund new heating systems, double glazing, LED lights and Building Management Systems at five KCC buildings. The grant is a real saving to KCC's hard pressed building maintenance budget and will also reduce ongoing energy costs.

KCC has launched a third round of the SolarTogether scheme which uses collective buying power to get a good price on solar panels and batteries for Kent households. The first two rounds of the scheme have been very successful. All Kent districts and Medway are joining with us to promote the scheme and registrations are open now. - <https://solartogether.co.uk/Kent/landing>

It is over a year since, following a big response to our public consultation, we confirmed that we would keep the booking system for our Household Waste Recycling Centres. Our surveys of customer satisfaction get a big response. The results are on the KCC website and show 96% are satisfied or very satisfied with their visit and 95% find the booking system easy or very easy to use. Same day bookings are increasingly popular and 65% of customers say they've booked on the day itself. KCC has been shortlisted for an LGC award in the Digital Impact category for the booking system.

Last May we opened our new HWRC at Allington, which is highly energy efficient and environmentally advanced. It is next to our existing Energy from Waste plant, which along with high recycling rates, ensures that only an irreducibly tiny amount of Kent's waste goes to landfill.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

By Borough Cllr Claudine Russell

It's been a busy year, both in terms of the ward and Maidstone Borough, as we entered the cabinet system and I was elected to be the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Arts.

The preceding year has seen me try to help ward residents with their queries on planning, housing, waste collection and other council matters as much as possible, speaking at MBC Planning Committee on behalf of residents such as the solar farm application and the White Hart application, battling with Golding Homes to try to get a number of house issues resolved and contacting the waste team to find out why a waste collection has been missed. I've been influencing South East Water through their consultation about future water supply issues and various online meetings and the police and MPs on rural crime issues that affect farmers via a meeting that I arranged that was well attended with good action points agreed, both part of the number of issues that affect our ward. In particular, I am still actively involved in opposing the Reed Court chicken farm in Chainhurst and the outline application for housing in Yalding, working with enforcement colleagues to prevent the further development without planning at Tanner Farm, opposing any KCC closure of the Children's Centre in Marden and I was pleased to see that a Community Protection Notice (CPN) had been finally issued in respect of the dog incidents in Collier Street.

In my Cabinet role I have managed to work with officers to secure funding and designers to develop a new gallery at the Museum, worked out a sensible timeline to re-invest in a new leisure centre whilst simultaneously gaining approval for a minor practical refurbishment to the current centre and opened the new visitor café and toilets at Mote Park. I have made various decisions along with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Engagement on how to distribute the UK Share Prosperity grant money that was awarded to bring life to Maidstone Town Centre and working with officers and partners have put on many different town centre events designed to promote pride in place and increase footfall in our County Town.

Within the wider council you may have seen that we have awarded a new waste collection contract, the Local Plan has passed the Stage 1 hearings and we continue to purchase both land and houses for our affordable housing stock for local people. Our town centre strategy is in its infancy but the aim is a bold one and now that it is being looked at as a cohesive place with some resourcing behind it, the strategy for how Maidstone exists and evolves into the future is starting to emerge.

As always, if you need my help, please do not hesitate to email me at:
claudinerussell@maidstone.gov.uk



KENT POLICE

Report given at the meeting by Maidstone Task Force/Community Protection Team.

COMMUNITY WARDEN

By Mira Martin

My role is extremely varied and has evolved throughout the 16 years that I've worked in Marden. Here is an idea of the kind of things that I get involved with:

Community Wardens address or signpost any issue that you may have if you are not sure who to go to.

I visit residents that have been signposted to us by other agencies such as Trading Standards:

Scam victims - I can talk someone through identifying the various types of scam so they don't fall victim and can supply window stickers and signage reminders to put by the front door and the telephone;

Social Services - I carry out initial visits/welfare checks and feedback to them about the support/assessments that may be required;

Hospitals/respite care - If someone is being sent home and the staff think the person will benefit from a visit, I will advise of local clubs and groups and if someone is nervous about going on their own, I can accompany them on their first visit. I find out information such as befriending services/telephone chat services such as Silverline *"Call free on 0800 4 70 80 90 The Silver Line Helpline is a free, confidential telephone service just for older people. We provide friendship, conversation and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week"* www.thesilverline.org.uk. For those with a disability, there is the Weald Club for Disabled People that is based in Staplehurst and has a minibus so that they can collect and drop off attendees. At least one Marden resident already attends and at present they have capacity for more.

I support and visit local youth clubs. It's good for young people to know who I am and that I am there to give them advice and support too. We forget how worrying it can be for this age group - they don't have a lifetime of knowledge and experience. I apply for funding for activities such as boxing lessons and football and sports activities in the villages. I've already been asked by several youngsters if we can hold these sessions again this year – so I'll be busy trying to fundraise/organise that too – luckily, I work with Rob Yorke and team (KCC Children's Services) – so we can work together to get this done.

Community wardens work flexible hours (mainly weekdays during normal working hours) but can work until 10pm and at weekends if there is an event or requirement to do so.

Our aim is to:

- improve community resilience
- support the elderly and vulnerable
- foster community cohesion and wellbeing
- assist with navigating community services.

If you would like to join a local club or group – or set one up – give me a call.

I can help you report an issue if you are not able to do or not sure who to contact.

Doorstep traders and scammers can catch you off guard – never give in to on-the-spot pressure. You are in control of who you speak to and answer the door to; screen your phone calls and don't answer the door to anyone you don't know and aren't expecting. If you need any work done or home help, ask for recommendations from people you know and trust. Get several quotes. If you pick up a phone call and start to feel flustered just put the phone down. I can talk to you about phone call screening and devices such as video doorbells that don't need a smart gadget or the internet to work.

For approx. £160, supplied and fitted, you can get a video doorbell connected by wire to a handset that has a video screen. When someone is at your door, you can see who it is and speak to them (if you wish) without getting up from your chair.

To reduce the amount of unwanted mail and telephone calls to landline and/or mobile phones that you receive, register with Telephone Preference Service and Mail Preference Service. They are free and it only takes a couple of minutes to register. If you need help registering, I can help you to do so. Your telephone provider should be able to activate call screening/blocking, if you aren't already using it - contact them. I can come along and help you to do this.

If you would like me to help you with a budget plan – whether you work or not – give me a call. I can help you calculate income and outgoing expenses. An appointment with someone who can do a benefits review can be arranged to see if you may be entitled to extra support. Not all benefits are means tested. People working from home part time or full time may be entitled to claim tax relief toward expenses. If you wear a uniform for work, you may be entitled to claim tax relief for laundry expenses.

If you, or someone you know, needs support, information or advice, please contact Mira Martin on 07969 84179 or mira.martin@kent.gov.uk and if I can't help, I will try and find someone that can.

MARDEN ORGANISATIONS AND SOCIETIES

LITTLE FISHES TODDLER GROUP

(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

All parents and carers are welcome to come along with their little ones. There is no need to book just turn up as and when you are able to. Suggested donation for each session is £1. For more info, please email Kathy: office@mardenchurch.org.uk or Rev Nicky: rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com

MARDEN BADMINTON

(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

Come and join us at Marden Badminton Club every Wednesday from September to May at 7.30pm to 9.30pm in Marden Memorial Hall - just £5 a session. For more information please contact Mark on 07941 790205 or email: markandjoagain@yahoo.co.uk

MARDEN BOWLS CLUB

By Brian Cooper

You probably don't realise it but you probably have one of the best lawn bowls greens in Kent right on your doorstep. It was Marden's best kept secret until now! The entrance to the club is next to Bowls Green Cottage, on the opposite side of the road to the rear of the Village Club.

We are looking for new members, particularly those living in Marden. Men and ladies will get a warm welcome. The summer season starts at the end of April and for those who may be interested we have an Open Day on 29th April starting at 2-00pm. All you need is a flat pair of shoes or trainers. We will supply all the equipment and coaching.

Bowls is a very social sport and you can participate in roll ups on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, friendly matches against other clubs at week-ends and competitive bowls all week.

During the winter from October onwards you can play short mat bowls in the clubhouse. We have 2 mats and there are sessions on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons.

All through the year we have various social events, tournaments, and a charity day. Last year we raised over £1,200 for the Heart of Kent Hospice.

If you want more details contact Brian Cooper 07801 594147 or visit our Facebook page. New website coming shortly www.mardenbowlsclub.co.uk

MARDEN BUSINESS FORUM

(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

The Marden Business Forum has been dormant for the past two years as nobody wanted to mix needlessly and risk Covid. Now we are getting your views and/or your help in getting it going again.

We will shortly be holding a much overdue AGM, but before we do, we need your input:

- Is there still a need for the Forum?
- Should we print another Directory?
- What events would you like us to run?

If you're in business, within the Parish of Marden, even a small one-person start-up, we would love to hear from you. Please email: committee@mardenbusinessforum.com or lizstanley@me.com

MARDEN COMMUNITY CIO

By Kate Tippen

Marden Community Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Registered with the Charity Commission 1183743

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.

Over the past year we have worked in conjunction with the food bank to make a number of grants to residents who are suffering severe financial hardship. We have contributed towards the cost of the new rear door at the Memorial Hall and supported the Youth Club.

Trustees are particularly keen to support village organisations and encourage any group to apply for a grant towards a specific project.

Full information about the charity can be found at:

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

MARDEN CRICKET & HOCKEY CLUB

www.mardenchc.co.uk

Queries: membership@mardenchc.co.uk

(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

As the days get longer, thoughts may be turning to sports and healthy activity. At Marden Cricket & Hockey Club we can offer a few ideas:

Tennis

We play all year round, with social tennis sessions being relaxed, informal and very popular (Sunday mornings & Wednesday evenings). New beginners coaching is offered on Saturdays from 1.30pm and there's Rusty Racquets on Tuesdays 7pm. For info please contact Malcolm on 07780 221563 or email admin@hotshotztennis.co.uk

Cricket

Outdoor nets should start around 15th April. Indoor nets at Cornwallis School have been taking place over winter. Come for a couple of free nets and see what you think. All levels, all ages welcome. See www.mardenchc.co.uk/cricket

Hockey

Russets Hockey Club always welcomes new members, especially beginners of all ages (we run special summer sessions for newbies and rusties - no charge). We have 12 adult teams and around 400 juniors all enjoying the exercise, fresh air and camaraderie at all levels. Why not try out a couple of free taster sessions (sticks can be borrowed)? To find out more, please visit: www.mardenhc.co.uk and contact membership@mardenhc.co.uk

MARDEN COMMUNITY DEMENTIA GROUP / LIVING MEMORIES

By Rachel Chacon

2022 has been a year of change, a year that has seen us evolve away from the twice monthly coffee mornings of Living Memories (LM) to something much larger than we ever envisaged. We could never have predicted the level of support we have received from this community. Marden Village Club and the K20 Cycling Club have both donated more than we ever imagined possible. And so we have had to change to match this overwhelming support. Happily, our number of volunteers has increased to help with this new direction.

Successful though it was, LM did not reach those with more advanced dementia. With this in mind we embarked on the Alzheimer's Soc Dementia Awareness project and last year became a DF Community. The main focus of the project was to raise awareness of dementia but also to widen people's understanding of it. Whatever the experience we each individually have of dementia, we can always improve it. No two cases are the same.

This was the focus of the Virtual Dementia Bus Tour in May last year. The feedback was very positive and many people have been asking if we will do it again. It's on the list! We produced a Marden DFC Leaflet which was delivered to every home in the Parish. We have produced envelopes for the surgery to hand out to those newly diagnosed with dementia, offering support and encouragement to stay/become engaged in this very active community and we have given a talk to the PPG. We have given financial support to Sporting Memories to help them to buy resources.

Other events were designed to enable people to pop in, have a quick chat, pick up a leaflet, ask questions, share stories, ideas, socialise, laugh, cry, have a beer while doing all those things! Latin for Sparrow, Kiwi Kate's Jazz, Bing Lyle, Easy Ed's Record Player Disco, the Memory Walk, breakfast at the West End Tavern. At K20's annual Sportive we produced a fabulous spread of food to welcome them back and invited Marden to come along and do the same. We had a table at the Jubilee fair and the Christmas fair to hand out leaflets and answer questions, raise awareness. We have established a firm link with the library to make the Alzheimer's Soc leaflets more easily available and twice a week coffee and chat to encourage people to connect.

This year we are setting ourselves up as a registered charity. Gail Hall has worked very hard on this and her legal experience has been invaluable. Once registered we will be able to award grants to our members to help them to finance extra care to either give carers a break or simply to help with daily tasks that are becoming impossible.

This year we will also be focussing on tackling the Loneliness Epidemic, now known to be a major contributing factor for dementia, particularly in rural communities. And let's hope we will also be executing our plans for a Community Garden! We look forward to reporting our progress in 2024.



HISTORY GROUP & HERITAGE CENTRE

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

The History Group has had a busy year in both operating the Heritage Centre in the Library, organising new fund-raising to underpin the operation of the Centre, negotiating a new rental and lease agreement with Kent County Council, staging specialist exhibits, and setting up a Donation section on the Group's website.

Hopefully we have finalised the rental increase requested by KCC. It has taken several months, emails and discussions to get a sensible level of rent for the next five years, to be followed, at this stage, by annual percentage amendments to the amount paid using KCC's preferred method of the Retail Price Index.

The Heritage Centre is now back to normal with operations undertaken by our wonderful band of volunteers. Eunice Doswell and her techie colleagues can, more often than not, be found in the back office uploading archive information and essential cataloguing onto the electronic internet system. We participated in the national Heritage Open Days event in September 2022 with the strapline, 'Inventive Marden' and displayed the work of Dr Roger Eltringham's Safe Anaesthesia; Edward Day's blackcurrant harvesting machinery; and specialist hop-drying equipment which evolved from Marden.

We will be participating again this year when the theme will be 'Creativity Unwrapped'. The Heritage Open Days festival will be held between 8-17 September 2023 on the days when the Centre is open.

During the year the family of the late Ida Fermor donated some of her stock of postcards, prints, etc. to the Heritage Centre to raise funds. We are extremely grateful for the family's generosity and various aspects of Ida's work can be ordered through the Centre.

On Remembrance Sunday 2022, Nigel Jenner and David Elphick sorted out firing up the WW2 warning siren and Mo Gillis-Coates was resplendent as he played the Last Post.

We will be celebrating the forthcoming Coronation on Monday 8 May at Southons Field with a Tombola which will hopefully raise funds for the Centre.

My thanks go to all our volunteers, speakers, my Steering Group colleagues, and everyone who supports our work for the Marden community, past, present and future.

And lastly, if you take a look at the home page of our website: www.mardenhistory.org.uk you will see an appeal for donations. Many thanks in advance!



HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

By Sue Pennicott
(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

We have a varied programme of talks booked for our Tuesday evening meetings this year - the second Tuesday each month except July/August at 7:30pm in the Vestry Hall. Coming up in March the subject will be "The Apothecary's Garden". In April the topic is "Bonsai" and in May "Climate Change". More information about all our talks is on our website.

We welcome new members – both gardening novices and those who are more experienced. We have been able to keep our annual subscription at last year's rates (£20) and prospective new members may come to one talk free of charge as a "taster" to see whether the society is for them.

As well as monthly talks there will be trips to local gardens organised for members over the summer. At the time of writing these haven't been finalised, but details will be on the website shortly. Our annual plant sale, open to all, will be held on Saturday 13 May - save the date as it's always a fun event and a great opportunity to acquire some interesting plants. For more information please check out <https://www.mardengardeners.uk>, email: info@mardengardeners.uk or telephone or text Sue on 07762 059412.



MARDEN IN BLOOM

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

Marden in Bloom had another busy and successful year both with its projects and fund-raising activities. The 25,000 daffodils that have been planted around the village gave another stunning display to welcome Spring as well as crocus, snowdrops and bluebells.

Fund Raising/Events

Our first fundraiser was a Fashion Show raising £500, the Pimms Palace Stall and plant sale at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event was very successful, the Garden Safari in June attracted many visitors from both the parish and other areas, the Bulb Sale in September raised a reasonable amount of funds and the Scarecrow Safari with a book theme in October was great fun with lots of residents entering. The Unicorn very kindly held a raffle and raised £400 for Marden in Bloom which we greatly appreciated.

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 now look after the planter at Highwood Green and the Marden Farm Shop ladies tend the planter there.

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 Marden Dementia Friendly group to make the village more 'Dementia Aware'. Last Summer the planting theme was red, white

and blue to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Unfortunately, the planter in Chantry Road was dismantled due to theft of plants and disintegration of the planter itself.

Watering

It is always an issue and we do struggle with this task particularly in hot dry summers like last year. 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. However, this summer we won't have his assistance.

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 another beautiful display last year attracting many insects, bees and butterflies. Many of the ox eye daisies were removed as they were overbearing other plants - it is a difficult and time-consuming task to balance the plants in the meadow. Bloomers have placed a bench by the meadow paid from their funds.

Activities planned for 2023

Pimms Palace stall at the King's Coronation fete in May, another Garden Safari on 2nd July, possibly a fundraiser in the garden at the Old Vicarage in July, a Plant Sale on 2nd September and Scarecrow Safari with a Disney theme on 7th October. We may plant a few more bulbs in the Autumn.

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 Also check out our Facebook page and give us a like.

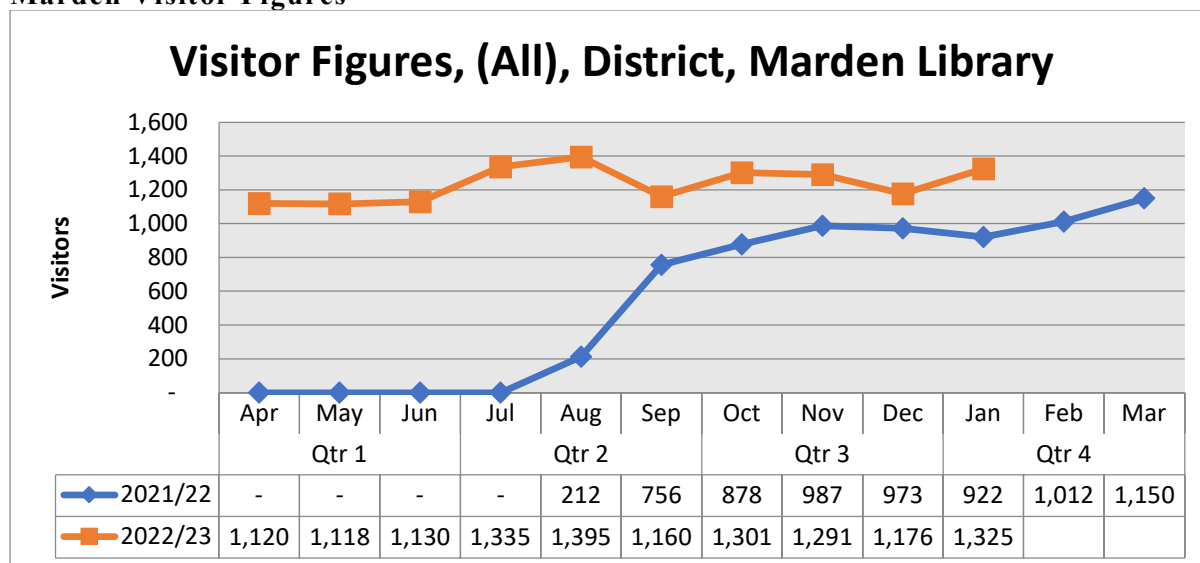
MARDEN LIBRARY (KENT COUNTY COUNCIL)

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

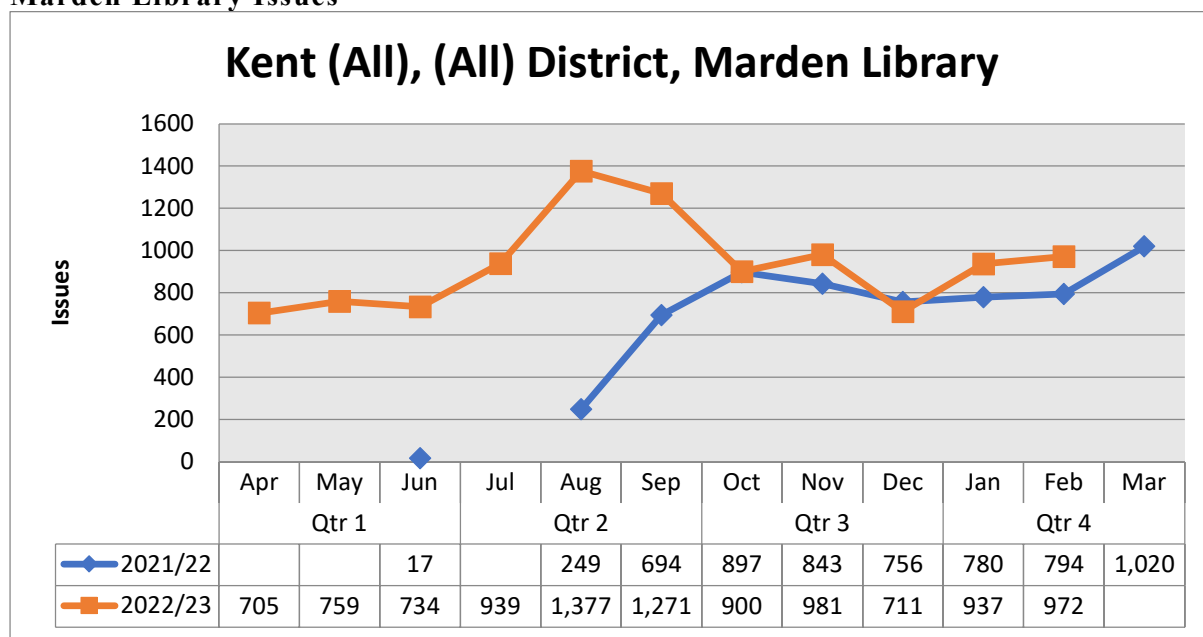
Email: mardenlibrary@kent.gov.uk

Marden Library has continued to see visitor figures improve following on from the closures during the Pandemic and we are delighted to welcome both new members and existing members back into the routine of regular visits to the library.

Marden Visitor Figures



Marden Library Issues

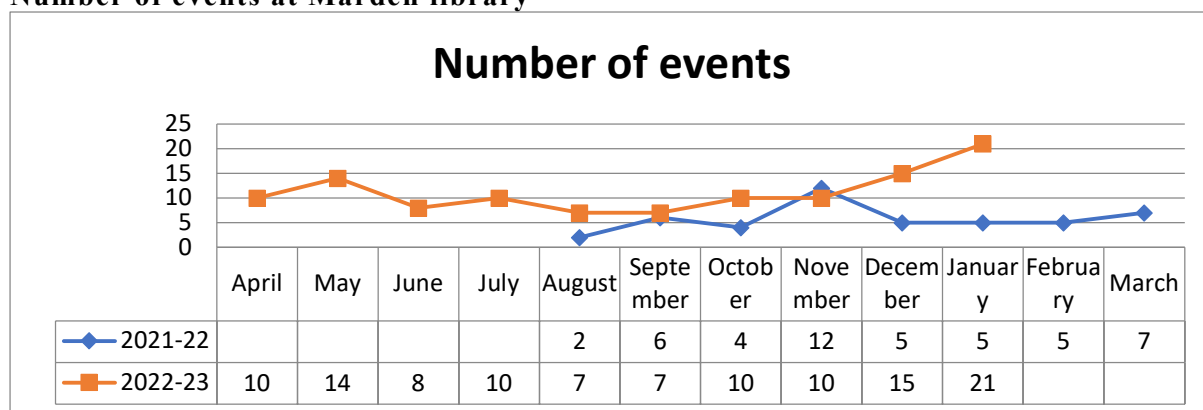


Our regular activities have been growing in popularity. With ‘Baby Rhyme Time’ on a Friday morning lead by our fantastic volunteer, this continues to be very successful and is enjoyed by both children and adults alike. On Tuesday afternoons we have ‘Time to Talk’ an enjoyable way to spend an afternoon playing ‘Upword’ and chatting.

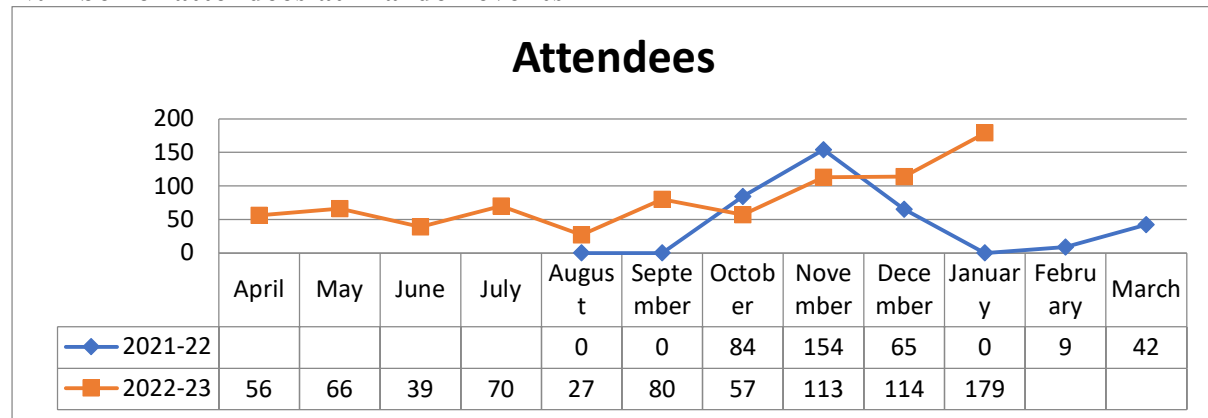
We have also just started a new ‘Stay and Chat’ group on a Thursday morning between 10:00 and 11:00am with the support of Marden Dementia Support Group and which is open to everybody, this is fantastic opportunity to pop in for a cuppa, meet friends and connect with new people.

As usual we will be having school holiday activities to keep our younger members entertained, further details can be found on our Facebook page in the coming weeks.

Number of events at Marden library



Number of attendees at Marden events



During the summer holidays last year, we ran our hugely successful ‘Summer Reading Challenge’ with the aim of attracting new members to the library and encouraging reading throughout the holidays with prizes and events. We will be looking to continue the success during this year’s summer holiday and more details will be rolled out closer to the end of the summer term. 76 children took part this year, in comparison to 23 last year.

Other plans that we have for this year will include, school visits, maybe a ‘Lego club’ and of course Coronation celebrations.

We are always looking at ways to offer additional support to residents in the village in the way of home library services and IT support and would be delighted to hear from anybody who would like to know more about these services and also those who would like to volunteer and help out others in the community.

MARDEN MEDICAL CENTRE

By Dr Julie Morgan

Church Green, Marden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 9HP

Tel: 01622 831257 Fax: 01622 832840

www.mardenmedicalcentre.nhs.uk

Challenges

We have heard the word unprecedented many times over the course of the pandemic, I don’t think it is a word that should be used lightly but we really are facing unprecedented challenges in GP.

We have never faced such incredible demand, pressure or seen the morale of those working in the NHS at such a low. It is now the norm for the GP partners to be working 12-13 hours days and to work on their days off.

Our list size is now 7449, this is a 28 % total rise in under 10 years. Although we are seeing a slowdown in this increase as the new houses have filled but there are new drivers including a rise in birth rate with the new demographic.

Demand for appointments is at an all-time high, this is partly driven by list size but also driven by the complexity of patient care, the huge backlog our patients are facing accessing hospital care and the higher standards of health care and access to treatment that we have grown to expect. the national trend that patients also consult more than they did 10 years ago by at least 50%.

Staffing

Our staff team is the largest it has ever been.

In terms of clinicians, we have 6 GPs, 2 paramedics, 3 nurses and an HCA (supported by a locum HCA who is a retired nurse). We have shared time of a clinical pharmacist one day per week. We are a training practice and have a GP registrar, visiting student nurses and paramedics. We hope to host medical students in the autumn.

Development of our team, recruitment and retention are high priorities but also a constant concern.

Estates

Our Portacabin, funded by S106 monies, continues to serve us well. It provides us with a meeting room and a clinical room. Over the pandemic we used this as a “hot zone” to isolate infectious patients from the main building. We have no plans to develop the building or relocate.

Improvements to the building over the last year include double glazing, loft insulation, improved security and interior decoration.

Access

The expectation for face-to-face appointments is steeply rising and we have reviewed our appointment systems to enable this. We also face Government pressure to reduce waiting times which will not be easy to meet.

On a positive note, at present if you phone reception for an appointment and do not mind which GP you see you will be offered an appointment within 2 weeks.

We are working with the PCN to deliver the enhanced access, the requirement from the 1st October to offer appointments 6:30- 8pm and 9-5 Saturdays. Some of those clinics will take place before 8am, after 6.30pm Monday – Friday and between 9am-5pm on Saturdays. The appointments will be delivered and supported by our multi-disciplinary team, a growing team which currently includes: General Practitioners, Physicians Associates, Paramedics, Clinical Pharmacists, Nurses, Health Care Assistants, Care Coordinators, Social Prescribing Link Workers, Childrens Health & Wellbeing Navigators, Pharmacy Technicians, First Contact Physio Therapists.

They will be held at several locations across the Weald a mix of face to face and phone appointments will be offered.

Additional services

We host the midwife, counsellors, and specialist nurses. West Kent dementia support services are now visiting us on a monthly basis. We host an NHS ultrasound service once weekly.

The emphasis now is on working to scale within a Primary Care Network, we are part of Weald PCN, which includes practices from Staplehurst, Cranbrook, Yalding, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst and Brenchley. The Practices share expertise, training systems, decision-making, and some clinical care.

The PCN gives us clinical pharmacists, Social Prescribers, Physiotherapists and in time Paramedics. This expanded skill mix needs space to work sometimes in the medical centre and sometimes elsewhere such as Staplehurst. The notion that your care will come simply from a GP or Practice Nurse at your own surgery is changing quickly as demand increases and this increased skill mix is often better placed to help has more time and is more methodical. In practice the team are now using most of the rooms all the time with a need to “hot room” for some, and to “work from home” for others in admin or even clinical roles.

Current priorities

We will be participating in the Spring Covid Booster campaign. Providing this service puts a huge administrative and clinical burden on an over-stretched team, despite the help of our excellent retired nurses and the PPG volunteers.

There is an emphasis now to reduce health inequalities.

The priority areas for us are:

- Patients with learning disabilities, severe mental illness, cancer (including access to screening).
- We have worked with the community forum to support the development of winter warm hubs: helping those who are at risk of fuel and food poverty over the winter months.

Retirement of Dr Neil Potter

Dr Neil Potter has decided to retire amicably from the partnership at the end of June this year. He will have done 25 years and is the longest-serving team member. He plans to work as a locum for local practices, including ours, which will shift his workload back to clinical care.

Happily, we have recruited Dr Rob Derrick who is already working for us and was a Registrar (GP in training) here in 2020. He has been in partnership in Tunbridge Wells since that time. He will formally take over the care of Dr Potter's regular patients from July.

He will offer much-needed support both clinical and administrative as well as having a special interest in training and supporting new clinicians. Marden Medical Centre will be ready to face future challenges with the same high standards.

Over the coming months we will be ensuring the smooth transition of Dr Potter's patients to Dr Derrick.

MARDEN MEMORIAL HALL

By Ian Newton, Chairman

During the summer of 2022 the Pre-School children's toilet area was refurbished with new cubicles, toilets, wash basins and flooring. Additional storage for the Parish Council was also incorporated into this. Thanks are expressed to Tom Stevens, one of the Trustees, who expertly project managed this to coincide with the pre-school summer break. Majority of the Covid-19 grants received were used for this refurbishment.

Further grants were received. One from the FCC Communities Foundation to fund a new rear door to the main hall. This has helped tremendously with security as hirers were struggling to lock the previous doors following use of the hall. The second grant was received from Kent County Council towards the purchase of new hall chairs. A number of the old chairs were sold on to recoup some of the expenditure.

The three members of staff, Hannah Cale (Facilities Manager), Shaun Edwards (Caretaker) and Debbie McKenzie (cleaner) continued to do exceptionally good work for the hall but unfortunately in December Shaun handed in his notice due to personal reasons. His last day was 16th January and the Trustees are currently advertising for a new caretaker.

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.

Several new hirers have started using the hall including new pilates and yoga classes and the pre-school have extended to four full and one half day per week.

Ad hoc bookings, particularly parties, have increased again following the pandemic and the hall is busy majority of weekends.

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

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.



MARDEN MOTOR CLUB

By Stefan Geisse, Chairman

2022 saw the 60th Anniversary of the Motor Club and proved to be another good year. The full lifting of lockdown restrictions meant that the club was once again able to run its full range of activities and events, without any limitations. There was a minor rebranding of the club, with a new, more modern “Steering Wheel” logo, branded Club Shirts, Car stickers, updated Website and a new club WhatsApp group. Two new positions for club Officials were created; “Membership Secretary and Event Organiser”.

Membership:

Club membership continued to grow during 2022, with around 28 fully paid-up members.

Club Finances:

The club finances are looking very healthy at the end of 2022, although members are conscious that one major expenditure on the Club’s 1929 Truck could substantially eat into the Club’s funds.

Rye Spring Outing & Treasure Hunt:

Members had a fantastic day out in Rye on Saturday 26th March. It started with breakfast and then involved a Treasure Hunt on foot around Rye, hunting for clues at points of interest around the town, with lunch arranged at the Ship Inn.

London to Brighton Historic Commercial Vehicle Run:

Unfortunately, despite everyone’s hard work, it was decided that the Truck was not ready for the 2022 “London to Brighton” run on the 8th May, so it was decided to withdraw from the event.

Marden Motor Show:

The Motor Show in 2022 took place on 28th May, on Southons Field. Once again it was a great success. The field was full with a wide range of fantastic vehicles, of all ages. The weather was fantastic, which added to the great atmosphere of the event. The feedback from visitors and exhibitors was 100% positive. This event is now becoming the Club’s major fund raiser.

Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Event:

The Parish Council organised a great event on Southons Field to mark our late Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, on Saturday 4th June. The Motor Club took part, providing a small display of members’ vehicles.

Great Tong Veteran, Vintage and Classic Car Meet:

This invitation only meeting, organised by the Club, took place on a blistering Sunday 17th July, during a heat wave. It was another very enjoyable event, with the club providing cakes and refreshments, whilst the West End Tavern kindly provided the BBQ and beer.

The cup for the “car most people would like to drive home”, was won by a fantastic Bugatti, which had great original patina.

Lynx Park:

A small number of members took part in the Lynx Park, Great British Picnic on Sunday 31st July. The feedback suggested that it was a relaxed and enjoyable day.

Chairman's Run:

This year's "Chairman's Run" took place on the 2nd August. The run involved a drive out to the "Halfway House" at Brenchley for dinner, good beer and conversation.

60th Anniversary Champagne Tea:

On Saturday 10th September, to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Marden Motor Club, members enjoyed a fun drive and treasure hunt, to the Stone House Country Estate at Rushlake Green, near Heathfield, for a Champagne Tea. This was a lovely way to mark the club's anniversary and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who took part.

Sprat and Winkle Historic Commercial Vehicle Run:

Following a lot of hard work and preparation by our members, the Club's 1929 Breakdown Recovery Truck was ready to take part in this year's Sprat and Winkle Run on Sunday 16th October. As usual the run started in Sevenoaks and finished at the Stade Car park in Hastings, where the vehicles were put on display. The Truck performed extremely well, making Hastings in good time. It was a great adventure, with fish and chips for lunch.

Breakfast Runs:

Members took part in three dedicated breakfast runs, all of which were well attended.

Quizzes:

5 quizzes were set during the year by different members; all of which were greatly enjoyed by those who took part.

Treasure Hunts / Evening Navigation activities:

The club managed to set two treasure hunts / evening navigation events, with a reasonable number of members taking part; plus a table top navigation challenge.

The Club's 1929 Ford Model AA Breakdown Recovery Truck:

A number of items on the Truck had been identified as needing improvement. Working parties were arranged throughout the year to rectify those areas.

The working parties were well supported and proved to be good fun, as well as hard work.

The gearbox is still proving to be an issue (jumping out of top gear) and will be investigated during 2023.

MARDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Update given by Cllr Andy Turner at the meeting

MARDEN PARISH CHURCH

By Revd Nicky Harvey

(taken from recent MPC Newsletter - Revd Harvey to be in attendance at AGM to provide a verbal report)

The church in Marden continues to hold a pattern of services in church each month. Every Sunday at 8.00am there is a service of Holy Communion using traditional language. 1st and 3rd Sundays are Morning Worship without Holy Communion. 2nd, 4th, and 5th Sundays are Parish Communion and there is Sunday Club for the children.

Services are live streamed on Thursdays at 9.15am and 8.00am on Sunday via the church Facebook page. The church is open every day during daylight hours, and you are welcome to go in and reflect or pray. Our prayer tree is in the porch if you would like to post a prayer there. Messy Church for all ages meets every 6-8 weeks in the Vestry Hall. Next ones are on 5th March and 30th April.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

The church is here for you at these different stages in life and here to help you as much as we can. The cost-of-living increases have put a squeeze on everyone's finances. If you would like to hold a service in church – for either a baptism (these are free), wedding or funeral - please do come and speak to Rev Nicky about all the options available to you for your service. Please also note that we are still able to bury a loved one's ashes in our churchyard. You can contact Rev Nicky on 01622 831379 or email: rev.nickyharvey@gmail.com

Village Café – Fridays 10.00am-11.45am – Vestry Hall

Go and enjoy a cup of coffee/tea and cakes and meet new people for a chat – old and young.

MARDEN PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

By John Hadow
(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

The Marden Medical Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) works in partnership with Marden Medical Centre to foster improved communication between the Medical Centre and its patients, help patients take more responsibility for their health, contribute to the continuous improvement of services and the quality of care & provide practical support for the Surgery and help to implement change. The group meets four times a year. We have approximately 300 virtual members of which 50 regularly contribute, volunteer and attend meetings.

Over the last year we have provided volunteers to support a number flu and covid-19 booster clinics, arranged the NHS Health & Wellbeing Bus to visit Marden in March, sent out a monthly News Update to members with the latest Surgery and other relevant health related information.

If you are a registered patient at Marden Medical Centre, you are invited to join the PPG. To learn more about us and join the group see our website www.mardenppg.org.uk, email us at membership@mardenppg.org.uk or contact the Surgery.

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.

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
(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

Marden Pre-School is situated in the heart of our community and we aim to provide a secure, caring and happy environment where children can flourish.

We care for children aged 2 years to 5 years and they are welcome whether they are funded or non-funded. We accept Childcare Vouchers and 30-hour funding and open 27 hours per week Monday to Friday.

We have an amazing staff team of 9 dedicated Qualified staff who love their job and are here each morning greeting the children with a smile and a warm welcome.

Marden Pre-School continues to grow year on year and this year is no exception. As we enter the Spring Term 2023, we as a Pre-School are coming to grips with the fine balance of servicing our ever-growing community, and ensuring we meet the needs of the children in our setting and the staff team. 2023 will continue to see financial struggles across the sector with underfunding and increasing overheads. With these challenges we are so proud that we can offer a wonderful environment for the children of Marden and surrounding villages.

Children that attend make such tremendous progress from their starting points, and by the time they leave us, they are very ready for school.

Our waiting list is growing daily and this is testament to the wonderful reputation and dedication of the staff and wider community to continue to ensure YOUR village Pre-School thrives and grows.

As a pre-school we have worked hard to establish and maintain local relationships to help connect the children to the area they live in.

The children have flourished from visits from several key services in the community and this is something we are looking to continue. If this is something you would like to be involved with going forward, please get in touch with Hayley Schlosser, the Pre School Manager on 01622 832857 or email: manager@mardenpreschool.onmicrosoft.com

MARDEN SOCIETY

By Steve McArragher

2022 was a much better year than 2021, so we were able to run a full programme of meetings.

At the AGM in January we had to say goodbye to chairman Mo Clayton, who has moved away from Marden after 13 years running the Society. I took over as chairman and Carol Hogg as Secretary.

Talks in 2022 covered an eclectic range of subjects including: Alpine walking, several kinds of detective work including Medical Detection Dogs, the Medway Hoppers disaster, Orangutans and Lighthouses. All meetings were well attended with typically 25-30 members present. Our summer visit in June was to Provender House near Faversham, guided by Princess Olga, a member of the Romanov family and a very interesting character.

Next year's programme will be similarly varied and cover: Flags, Hovercraft, the Bayeaux Tapestry, Titanic, a lost Kent village, the Old Vicarage and an unsung arctic hero. Our summer outing in June will be a guided tour of the Wildwood Trust near Herne to see the bears, bison and wild boar. We are aware that the primary purpose of the Marden Society is to monitor village developments and amenities, and that we have become less active in recent years. We will try and do more in this area this year, but really need to recruit some extra help.

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

MARDEN STATION & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Update on South Eastern, Network Rail and consultations

Report given at the meeting by Cllr Richard Adam

MARDEN WALKING GROUP

By Steve McArragher

The Walking Group has produced two sets of guides to village walks. There are six "Historic Walks" and six "New Walks" around Marden. These vary in length and follow public footpaths visiting points of local interest. The guides are available to purchase from "No. 47", the Farm Shop and the library at £5 for the New Walks and £6 for the Historic Walks.

We also hold regular led walks. There is one every Saturday, starting at 2.00pm 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 10.00am 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 <https://mardensociety.org.uk>.

Our group of Long Distance Walkers are also walking the High Weald landscape trail in sections and have got as far as Brenchley. The remaining four sections will be completed starting in early April. These walks are on Tuesdays and typically of 8 – 10 miles. The next Long Distance Walk is still under discussion but may well be the North Downs Way.

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
(taken from recent MPC Newsletter)

Marden WI is a very active friendly group which meets on the first Thursday of every month, in the Vestry Hall, from 7.45pm.

Our programme for 2023/24 is nearly complete and will include talks on Queen Elizabeth II - A Life of Service, Barsleys of Paddock Wood, The Body Shop, Great Dixter, Marden by Robin Judd and a Cookery Demonstration.

We also enjoy visiting gardens, theatre trips and pub lunches in between meetings. If you feel you would like to join us, please contact Barbara Hammond/President on 01622 831569 or email barbham50@gmail.com

MARDEN VILLAGE CLUB

Without a doubt, 2022 was the most successful year for Marden Village Club.

Winning National CAMRA Club of the Year for 2022, one of the highest accolades afforded to British Clubs, really was the icing on the cake, and continuing our winning streak by being named Maidstone and Mid-Kent CAMRA Club of the Year for 2023.

Another first was raising an astounding £12,600 through various charity events and our weekly meat and tote raffles in aid of our two charities for 2022, Living Memories and SERV Bloodrunners.

Our hope for 2023 is that we can raise even more for our two charities of 2023, the restoration of Marden Church Bells and Hospice in the Weald to whom we also made a £1,000 donation last year in honour of our late President, Mick Collins.

We have also made a £500 donation to both Chalkdown RDA and Dandelion Time, and will continue to work with both charities by offering our premises for meetings and events.

In March of this year, we teamed up with Atlas Eco Gym in Marden where we raised just over £1,000 for Parkinson's UK by cycling and rowing (virtually) over 1,200 miles supporting Owen, one of our bar staff, who is walking from Land's End to John O'Groats in honour of this charity.

We have also donated recycling bins for the Marden Eco Hub.

Since October 2022 we have been a major contributor to the Marden Village Warm Hub operation, offering free refreshments which in turn has increased our membership.

The club membership is continuing to grow, with 455 new members joining in 2022.

We have a very expansive entertainment programme for our members ranging from live music to wreath making to cocktail evenings, as well as our highly successful monthly quiz.

In the near future, we are hoping to take advantage of the Government's (local and national) Green Incentive by installing solar panels and possibly back up battery storage for the club.

We successfully came through the pandemic and we have built our resources to cover the necessary capital improvements to the club.



MARDEN WILDLIFE

By Ray Morris

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

During the last year the group's membership has continued to grow. More than seven hundred people follow our Facebook page, of whom a significant number (via WhatsApp) are actively engaged in our core activities: promoting knowledge and enjoyment of, and recording, Marden's wildlife; collaborating with farmers in conservation; and seizing opportunities to educate and inform a wider audience.

The impact of our work was recognised last September when we were presented with the BBC Radio Kent Make a Difference Award in the Environmental Category.

Guided walks and talks have taken place: birds, bees, flower and fungi walks led by Alan Pavey, Ian Beavis and David Newman were complemented by a night time exploration of the local bat population with Simon Ginnaw.

Routine bird ringing sessions on local farms have drawn passing walkers for unexpected close-up views of birds normally only seen as a distant blur.

Illustrated talks about our work have been given to local organisations. One given to the Marden Horticultural Society has resulted in a novel collaboration, with MHS members using their skills and knowledge to propagate scarce (and hard to raise) local plants so they can be planted out again in suitable sites to help re-establish local tree and wildflower species.

An important part of our work is recording the local plant, fungus and animal species on the database held by Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre – an essential tool for protecting biodiversity at a local and national level. Last year we submitted around six thousand records of eight hundred and twenty-three species. Many of these were new or scarce records for Kent and, in some cases, nationally. At a time when our economy and health are seriously threatened by viruses and micro-organisms, our ringers have also contributed to research into birds' gut parasites, recently published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Key to all this is cooperation with the local farming community. Along with Kent Wildlife Trust, members have been supporting the Marden Farmer Cluster – now expanding to cover more than three-and-a-half thousand hectares – in conserving and increasing wildlife on farmland. As ours is viewed as a unique partnership, the KWT Board of Trustees spent a day in Marden exploring how this has been achieved and how it can be further developed.

A direct benefit has been Marden's ongoing study of Turtle Doves; our local population is one of the largest of the UK's fastest declining bird. With KWT scientist Dr Kirsty Swinnerton, this year (subject to MW obtaining a licence from Natural England) we will be attaching GPS tags to doves to study their use of the local area, complementing work by the RSPB and providing important feedback on the effectiveness of the government's new farm payments scheme aimed at reversing declines in wildlife.

Our group is fortunate to have members particularly knowledgeable about moths. Moths are important pollinators but are highly vulnerable to loss of habitat and the impact of chemical and light pollution – a significant worry in a fruit growing area such as Marden. Records of rare species discovered here have attracted particular attention and have led to funding from KCC (courtesy of Cllr Simon Webb) being provided for the purchase of portable traps to study populations on farms in neighbouring parishes, and to encourage more participation of residents. The new traps will shortly be deployed at Clock House Farm in Coxheath and another in Hunton as well as in Marden.

Further collaboration this year with The Kent Weald Preservation Society and Rebecca Cassidy, Professor of Anthropology at Goldsmith's, will help to focus local interest in Weald specialities - the Chequer (Wild Service) Tree and traditional Kent orchards. Along with our iconic Turtle Doves, Marden is well-placed as a centre for celebrating its cultural heritage of the natural world. We would welcome ideas from other local groups and individuals for developing this idea.

MARDEN YOUTH GROUP

By Rob Yorke

Open Access Team (Early Help Service)

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



I was requested to provide an update regarding the Youth Group and I'm pleased to say it is going well.

We currently provide a mixture of activities from arts and crafts, pool, table tennis and group games with a specific focus on skills like teamwork and communication. We are also utilising the outside

space for sports like football and dodgeball, the group we currently have are a very active and loud bunch who enjoy running about and having fun.

We have also taken the opportunity to educate around different subject areas like alcohol which we have spent the last few weeks learning, specifically about - limits, crime and alcohol, safety we have also brought in our beer goggles, so they have experienced what it was like and how much harder it is to do things when under the influence.

We currently have in attendance around 20 regular young people with a mix of around 7 girls to 13 boys.

The group did approach me about using the field in Marden to run the group instead of the hall. I think when warmer and lighter evenings are here, I think this is something we will look to do.

Thank you for your support with the group, the parents and young people have all expressed their thanks the youth group is in Marden and running weekly.



SAFE ANAESTHESIA

Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide Registered Charity Number 1148254

Chairman: Mike Cox

Imagine needing an operation without anaesthesia. Worldwide five billion people have no access to affordable surgical and anaesthetic care, most in poor countries. Safe Anaesthesia Worldwide (SAWW) is a Marden based charity founded in 2011 that is working to improve anaesthesia services to ensure patients receive the treatment they need.

Our objectives are to preserve and protect good health by the provision of suitable anaesthetic equipment, research and education.

Safe anaesthesia is crucial for surgery to save lives and prevent disability from obstructed labour, injuries, cancer, birth deformities, and more. Investing in anaesthesia and surgical services is affordable, saves lives and promotes economic growth. SAWW has helped 76 different hospitals in 31 countries.

We donate equipment that works reliably and economically in resource-poor locations, giving anaesthesia providers the right tools for the job. In the past year, much of our focus has been on the war in Ukraine. Funds raised and generously donated mainly in and around Marden, enabled SAWW to supply portable SAWW also supplied anaesthesia equipment to hospitals in need in Kenya, Ethiopia, Burundi, and Cameroon during the year.

In poor countries there are very few professionally qualified anaesthetists. Towards the end of last year, SAWW established a new collaboration with the Global Anaesthesia Development Partnerships to support Zambia's first physician anaesthetist training program. So far, 30 anaesthetists have been trained by the program and a further 13 anaesthetists are currently in training, and it is anticipated that more will be joining in 2023. Increasing the trained anaesthesia workforce in Zambia is crucial to improving access to safe anaesthesia and surgery.

SAWW relies on the goodwill and generosity of people to help us provide vital equipment and training to those who need it most. To learn more and make a donation please visit our website www.safe4all.org.uk/anaesthesia machines and ventilators for mobile hospitals in Odessa, where many hospitals and health care facilities have been damaged in the conflict.

The photo below shows a donated anaesthesia machine and ventilator in a mobile hospital in Ukraine.



At the time of the AGM the following groups had not submitted a report (if a report is received at, or following, the AGM this will be added at a later date)

MARDEN BELLRINGERS

MARDEN CHILDREN'S CENTRE

MARDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY

MARDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY P.T.A.

MARDEN SCOUT GROUP

MARDEN SHORT MAT BOWLS (WEST END)

MARDEN THEATRE GROUP

RETAINED FIRE SERVICE

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION