

# News from Marden Parish Council

Spring 2015



[www.mardenpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.mardenpc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

## Letter from the Chairman of the Parish Council

Dear residents

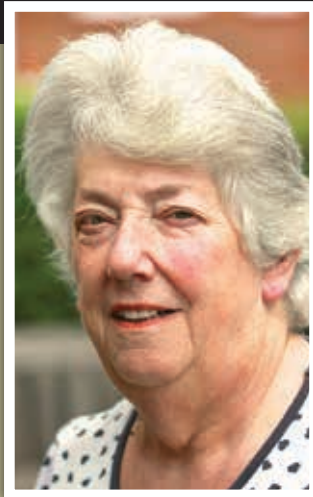
What a busy village Marden was in 2014 with numerous events including 'Marden at Christmas' (see report below). Spring is around the corner and as usual there's much to report as the village will be buzzing again with events throughout Spring and Summer.

Once again we have been reviewing parish finances and you will find an extensive report below. We are holding another Village Clean Up on Saturday 21st March and our Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 5th May 2015 at Marden Memorial Hall when everyone is invited to come along to hear more about the work of the Parish Council and other village groups.

Yours

*Dorothy Reed*

Dorothy Reed



## Parish Council Finances and Council Tax

The Parish Council receives funds from a number of sources the bulk of which comes from the Precept that is collected for us by Maidstone Borough Council as part of the Council Tax. The Precept is used to fund the majority of our activities including the upkeep of the public toilets, ongoing maintenance at the Playing Field and Southons Field, Cemetery maintenance, the Christmas celebrations, salaries and office costs. A full breakdown of our income and expenditure will be included in the summer edition of the newsletter.

Both the grants and funding we receive from Maidstone Borough Council have been cut dramatically over the last few years. Despite this, and if nothing else had changed, the Parish Council would have been able to set the Precept for the 2015/16 financial year at the same level it has been at for the last two years. This would have been achieved by actively seeking efficiency savings elsewhere in order not to raise the precept for general expenditure, whilst continuing to deliver everything it has done historically and hopefully a little bit more.

**What has changed?** The Marden Memorial Hall Management Committee approached the Parish Council towards the end of last year informing Councillors that after several years of trying to obtain funding for the hall roof replacement, it has been unsuccessful and therefore asked the Council to consider

the possibility of obtaining a Public Works Loan (PWL). A PWL is a loan for Parish Councils from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the repayments for which would need to be gained from the parish Precept. After reviewing the impact, the Parish Council proposed that the Precept be increased to £94,015 to cover the additional annual instalments for the PWL over the next 25 years – this equates to £63.00 per Band D property per year, compared to the current rate of £52.74.

Maintaining the Memorial Hall has previously been shown as a very high priority for residents (e.g. during the Marden Community Plan consultation in 2007 and during the ongoing Neighbourhood Plan work), but before the Parish Council can apply for the PWL we need to ask the residents of Marden to confirm whether they feel that an additional £10.26p per year per Band D property should be raised for the replacement of the hall roof - less than a pound per month per property in this band. Please can you email or write to Alison Hooker, Parish Clerk, Marden Parish Council, Goudhurst Road, Marden TN12 9JX / [mardenpc@btconnect.com](mailto:mardenpc@btconnect.com) with your comments, whether in favour or otherwise, before 6th March 2015.

### **Why is the Marden Memorial Hall so important to the village?**

The Hall is such an important village community resource and enjoyed by a large number of village groups. It is the only community-run venue in the Parish that is big enough to hold large events. The Pre-School Play Group meets every day in term time and currently has over 50 children on the roll, with others on a waiting list. This list will grow as the new developments are occupied. The Marden Theatre Group holds all its productions at the hall and many societies use it such as Brownies, Badminton, Short Mat Bowls, the Youth Club, the Marden Society and the Thursday Club. Public meetings and Polling Stations are held there, as are community events such as 'Marden at Christmas', the History Group has held exhibitions there and of course there are other activities such as the ever popular Zumba classes. It is also where the Parish Council has its offices.

**What happens if we do nothing?** The roof is not watertight and the longer it is left before the roof is replaced, the greater the risk of closure of the Hall becomes. It is vital that work is undertaken in 2015 to replace the roof, thus securing the future of the Hall as a key community venue. If nothing is done to replace the roof, the Hall will close – it's just a matter of how soon a severe weather event causes this to happen.

**Is there any other alternative to raising the Precept?** The Parish Council is satisfied that the Marden Memorial Hall Management Committee has done everything it can to explore other funding options, and that a loan is the only way forward in the present circumstances. The rate of interest on a PWL is far lower than any commercial loan or mortgage, and that is why this course of action is proposed. However, the Parish Council and the Hall Management Committee are both committed to exploring any future funding opportunities that may arise and which might help offset the cost to residents. If they do, the Precept will be lowered again. If they don't, at least we will have secured the Memorial Hall as a vital community facility for the foreseeable future at the lowest possible cost.

## Parish Councillor Vacancy

Due to the resignation of Cllr John Rawlinson, a vacancy has occurred on the Parish Council. Any person willing to fill this vacancy should contact the Clerk in the first instance on or before the 3rd March 2015. The applicant's name must appear on the current register of the Voters List or the applicant should, during the whole of the 12 months preceding the relevant date, have resided in or within 3 miles of the parish, or the applicant's place of work during the whole of the 12 months preceding the relevant date is in the parish. The applicant must not be debarred from standing as a Councillor. Public elections cannot be held until the year 2016 but for the interim period the present sitting Councillors may co-opt to fill the vacancy.

## Sewerage

As you will probably be aware from media reports, the Parish & Borough Council initially met with Helen Grant and the Chief Exec of Southern Water last November to discuss the sewage issues in Marden and Staplehurst. In January a further meeting, specifically focussing on the problems in Marden, was held with Southern Water who acknowledge the drainage capacity in the village is totally inadequate and problems occur when surface water leaks into defective soil drainage systems during periods of high rainfall.

The Parish Council have asked Southern Water to communicate more clearly with the public and explain the reasons why the sewerage system is failing. They ask that residents please continue to report issues to Southern Water to reinforce the problems Marden is encountering. Meanwhile the Parish Council continue to put pressure on Southern Water who have promised to come back with the various questions raised.

## Planning Update

There is currently not much to report from a Marden planning perspective, but there will be a formal public consultation around the end of February on Maidstone Borough Council's proposed Local Plan which will focus on new draft land allocations and we will be advised when the consultation commences. All of the components of the plan will be brought together in a single "Publication" version of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, and will be subject to a formal 6-week public consultation later this year prior to submission of the plan for public examination.

## Highwood Green

Please note there is a new site manager at the development and his email address is [Justin.brown@redrow.co.uk](mailto:Justin.brown@redrow.co.uk) and mobile is 07884738946. A show house is now open for the public to view.  
<https://www.redrow.co.uk/developments/highwood-green-marden>

## Local Needs Housing

**Highwood Green (MAP Depot) Development, Goudhurst Road, Marden** The development has allocated 44 affordable housing units available for affordable rent or shared ownership - 15 of these will be for local needs housing (ie people with a local connection to Marden) and Golding Homes has arranged an event in the John Banks Hall on Saturday 28th February 2015 from 10am to 1pm. Golding Homes officers will be in attendance to discuss your needs and to help complete register of interest forms. *Please note: this is not an event to be allocated a specific property. It is a consultation exercise to ascertain the size and type of housing which people with a local connection to Marden may have an interest in and to find out more about how to register your interest in a Shared*

*Ownership or Affordable Rent property. There will also be shared ownership sales staff at the event to assist you with your enquiries.*

Please see the information leaflet prepared by Maidstone Borough Council enclosed on Local Needs Housing at Highwood Green, the former MAP Depot site.

## Marden Neighbourhood Plan Update

The first draft of the Marden Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and the Steering Group are currently seeking advice from a planning consultant specialising in the production of Neighbourhood Plans.

## Marden History Group – Public Access Defibrillator

The Marden History Group would like to know if villagers would support them in equipping their K6 red telephone box on the Library and Heritage site with a Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) which will cost about £2,000. As such a facility is not available in the village, our aspiration has been welcomed by the Marden Medical Centre, Air Ambulance, St John's Ambulance, The South Coast Ambulance Trust and the Community Heartbeat Trust who are experienced in fitting PADs into red telephone boxes and were recommended by SECAMB. As this could be of value to the whole community we hope that, without a benevolent donor, we could raise the money by holding a community auction. If there is enough interest we would invite the Community Heartbeat Trust to a meeting in the village in order to give us details and answer questions about the scheme. Your interest would be appreciated.

*David McFarland - 01622 832295 - [marden@historymarden.org.uk](mailto:marden@historymarden.org.uk)*

## Marden Primary School

We are looking to appoint up to two governors from the local community who are not parents at the school. We are particularly interested in people with financial or business experience who could bring that expertise to our Finance and Resources Committee who oversee the school budget and premises development issues. Interested persons should initially have an informal discussion with Malcolm Goddard, the headteacher, by making an appointment through the school office on 01622 831393 or by email at [headteacher@marden.kent.sch.uk](mailto:headteacher@marden.kent.sch.uk).

## Speed Watch

The Parish Council has now purchased its own speed watch equipment. To try to curb the issue of speeding in the village, it would be helpful if we had more volunteers to help out with Speed Watch. If you are interested in being part of the team, please contact Alison in the Parish Office to arrange training.

## WW1 Centenary Event

The sun kindly shone down on Sunday 6th November 2014 for the WW1 Tree Planting Ceremony at the Cemetery to commemorate the WW1 Centenary, where a cherry tree was planted and a plaque laid to remember those brave souls of Marden who gave their lives in WW1 to leave a safe legacy for future generations. WW1 poems were read by Councillors followed by the 'Last Post' played by Mo Gilles-Coates who was resplendent in uniform. The 'Village Voices' led the WW1 songs with scattering of poppy seeds around the tree. All the children at Marden Primary and Pre-School were also given a packet of poppy seeds by Marden Parish Council to help them understand and remember the occasion.

This followed a special and memorable Remembrance Service at the church and the opening of the Heritage Centre's second



part of their exhibition on WW1 and the sounding of the 'Alert' and 'All Clear' on the newly installed WW2 siren. What an exceptional village occasion to mark the important centenary of WW1 and the people of Marden should be so proud of their unique village.



## Marden at Christmas

What a beautiful winter day the 6th December turned out to be – a brilliant blue sky and cold crisp weather. The festivities began with mulled wine at the Cricket & Hockey Club followed by carol singing accompanied by the Silver Band, led by Rachel Gilles-Coates of the 'Village Voices', and entertainment by the Weald of Kent & Boughton Monchelsea Morris dancers at The Allens. The Parish Council elves served warming refreshments and provided face painting for the children. Father Christmas made a brief appearance before his sleigh delivered him to the Memorial Hall. En route to the hall, there was a Christmas tree display at the Church with hot soup and the Scouts served 'Toasted S'mores' at the Vestry Hall. Whilst Father Christmas handed out gifts to the children, people busied themselves at the craft fair and refreshments were served by the WI to the lovely sounds of the 'Village Voices'. Thanks to Erika Lock and Alison Hooker for all their hard work in organising the event and everyone else who helped make the day so successful. Thanks also go to the Marden Business Forum for providing and wrapping Santa's presents in Lapland and to all other village organisations who were involved, particularly the 'Village Voices'. The date for this year's Marden at Christmas will be on Saturday 12th December - so please put the date in your diaries.

## Forthcoming Village Events:

**The History Group & Marden Library – Thursday 26th February**  
Their annual lecture will be held at the Vestry Hall at 8.00pm on Thursday 26th February and will be an illustrated talk by Graham Tippen on "Wheels in Motion".

**"Keep Marden Beautiful" - Village Clean Up Saturday 21 March**  
Last year we had a really successful Village Litter Pick so the Parish Council have decided to organise it again. We would like as many of you to help out, so if you would like to come along and volunteer your services on Saturday 21st March in the morning, please either email Alison at [mardenpc@btconnect.com](mailto:mardenpc@btconnect.com) or call 01622 832305. It would also be helpful if both businesses and residents could take the time to clear any rubbish/weeds from the front of their properties. Let's all do what we can to 'Keep Marden Beautiful'.

**Marden Pre-School Open Days at the Memorial Hall**  
Marden Pre-School is holding Open Days on Wednesday 18th March and Wednesday 1st July from 9am to 11am. Please come along and see what the village Pre-School do and meet the staff - even if you don't have children/grandchildren attending you are still welcome to pop in for a coffee. There will be stalls selling gifts, jewellery etc and a cake stall. If you are selling items and would like a stall please telephone 01622 832857 to book.

**Annual Parish Meeting - Tuesday 5th May 7pm Memorial Hall**  
This is an ideal opportunity to learn more about the role of the Parish Council and the work that has been undertaken over the

past year. Organisations will shortly be contacted to provide a report of their activities in 2014 and these reports will be available at the evening and on the website following the meeting. Tea and coffee is served at 7pm and the business begins at 7.30pm. After the meeting everyone is invited to stay to meet Parish Councillors over cheese and wine. Speakers are currently being booked and if you have anything of interest you wish to hear about that is relevant to the village, please let Ali know.

**Marden's Big Musical Picnic is Back - Saturday 6th June in Southons Field Again.** Yes its back - last year's Big Musical Picnic was such a success it's going to happen again and this year we promise even more for your money. We are putting together an exciting and varied entertainment programme with more acts, more style and more fun. Watch this space for further details and if you missed last year's event, make sure you don't miss this year's! We are still looking for local acts and performers who would like to be part of the picnic. If you are interested in being auditioned, whether you're an individual or group who want to perform, then please call Mo Gilles-Coates on 01622 831733 during the day who would love to hear from you

**Marden Fun Dog Show – Sunday 14th June.** Maidstone Borough Council will be holding a Fun Dog Show at Marden Playing Field on Sunday 14th June (times to be confirmed). Not only will it be a fun day for all, but will include stands and information regarding responsible dog ownership, health and behaviour as well as a dog show and entertaining staff. The main contact is Louise Duke at Maidstone Borough Council and she can be contacted on [louiseduke@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:louiseduke@maidstone.gov.uk) or speak with Alison at the Parish Office in the first instance.

**Summer Play Scheme – Monday 27 July to Friday 7 August**  
Marden Parish Council is planning to run the Summer Play Scheme again which was such a resounding success last year. It will run for two weeks from 9.30am to 3.30pm from Monday 27th July to Friday 7th August for 5 to 11 year olds (please note that children have to have reached their 5th birthday by 1st September 2014). Further information will be available in our next newsletter and registration forms can be picked up from the Parish Office or Primary School from 1st June.

## Amenities Report:

**Marden Public Toilets** - General consensus in the village including a questionnaire at a Neighbourhood Plan Open Day concluded that the public toilets are an important village asset and should be kept open. As a result, the Parish Council who maintain the toilets (Maidstone Borough Council own them) have gone ahead with the long-awaited refurbishment which has recently been undertaken, but costs have been kept to a minimum. The electronic locking/unlocking of the doors, which frequently cause an operating problem, is now being organised manually by the Cemetery Caretaker to coincide with the opening hours of Southons Field as follows: November-March: 8am-4pm; April-August: 7am-8pm; September-October: 7am-7pm. If you need to report any problems, please contact Alison at the Parish Office.

**Southons Field** - The Parish Council are currently exploring the possibility of installing a Play Trail in the field for both adults and children ensuring it blends in carefully with the natural environment of this beautiful field. Whilst usage of the field has increased considerably, we are hoping a Play Trail will add an entirely new and fun dimension.

**Marden Cemetery** – another memorial bench is being purchased to allow families to place plaques in memory of their loved ones.

**Rookery Path** – a couple of vulnerable and unsafe trees have recently been removed and/or trimmed back to ensure the safety of parishioners.

**Village & Cemetery Caretakers** – special thanks once again to Ian and Colin our village caretakers for all their hard work in

maintaining our village open spaces. The Parish Council have agreed to purchase a new strimmer and leaf blower from the 2015/16 budget.

**Marden Play Area** – new signs will shortly be erected at the Play Area at the Playing Field. The new equipment is for 14 & under. Please be aware that dogs are not allowed in the play area and should be kept under control in the playing field.

## Dog Fouling in Marden Playing Field

As always we need to mention the ongoing disgusting problem of dog fouling particularly in Marden Playing Field. Sadly a football match had to be abandoned recently because of an exceptionally large amount of dog faeces on the pitch and surrounding area. It is the responsibility of Maidstone Borough Council Environmental team so please be vigilant and help to tackle this vulgar and irresponsible issue. If you see any dog fouling problems and manage to take a photo or description of the dog and/or owner, please advise either via email to: [enforcementoperations@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:enforcementoperations@maidstone.gov.uk) or call 01622 602202. **It's such a shame that just a few uncaring dog owners spoil things for others.** Please pick up after your dogs – this is a health hazard as well as looking unsightly.

## Youth Club for 16+

Believe in Youth', led by Natalie Penfold, has established a new Youth Club on Tuesday evenings in the John Banks Hall from 6.30pm-8.30pm for the 16+ group which is proving popular. Sadly Sam, who runs the Wednesday youth club sessions for the 11-16 group, is leaving and there are also changes afoot in the youth service. Fingers crossed both clubs will be able to continue to operate in the future.

## Kent Library Services

Kent County Council (KCC) is transforming the way it delivers the library, registration and archive services in Kent as well as reducing costs. These services are highly valued by communities and KCC has explored a number of different ways to run the service and their preferred option is to establish a Charitable Trust. KCC believe this option will give greater flexibility, more financial freedom and better opportunities to improve services and offer residents more input and influence over decisions. A consultation is currently underway and, to help keep our library up and running, we would like as many of you to take the opportunity to complete the questionnaire either online by visiting [kent.gov.uk/lraconsultation](http://kent.gov.uk/lraconsultation) or pop into Marden Library for further information. Closing date for responses is 8th April 2015. Unfortunately the roadshows have already taken place around the County at the time of going to press.

## The Cockpit Play Area

As you may be aware, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) recently held a public consultation about the future of outdoor play areas in the borough and the children's play area at The Cockpit has been designated as a 'non strategically important' one and it is likely that the equipment will be removed by MBC over the next year or so, but they will continue to mow the grass at the green. The Parish Council delivered flyers to the residents of the Cockpit play area last year to give them an opportunity to give their feedback/ideas on the Play Area's future. Although there were very few responses the Parish Council have decided to pursue this issue and have recently held a meeting with MBC, Borough Councillors and Golding Homes to establish the possibility of whether it would be feasible for Golding Homes to take over responsibility of the play area and we are currently awaiting their response.

## Marden Memorial Hall

The Hall needs new blood! Have you got time on your hands and looking for a new project to do in your spare time - if so,

would you like to get involved with the management of the Memorial Hall? If you would like more information, then have a chat with Alison at the Parish Office on 01622 832305 or email [mardenpc@btconnect.com](mailto:mardenpc@btconnect.com)

## Trees in the Village Competition 2014

Marden has been placed as one of Kent's Top Ten Villages by the charity 'The Kent Men of Trees' and has been awarded a tree of our choice. We were commended on possessing an outstanding array of trees, both native and exotic. The Parish Council are hoping to replace a tree in the High Street with the voucher and the positioning of the tree has had the agreement of Kent Highways.

## Village Mounting Block

The old village Mounting Block, which is located on the corner of the High Street and Maidstone Road, has over the years gradually disintegrated by numerous vehicles hitting it and a recent incident has finally knocked off the front portion. Providing there is no issue with the positioning of utilities, Kent Highways have kindly agreed with the Parish Council to look at moving and rebuilding it a few yards further along the footpath where it should be less vulnerable. The Mounting Block is a treasured part of our village history and is a reminder of when the people of Marden would have to mount a horse before the days of taking the bus, train or car to travel any distance. As some people were not up to leaping, it provided a step up into the saddle. Hopefully it's successful re-positioning will go ahead soon!

## Kent Resilience Forum "What Should I Do in An Emergency"

The Kent Resilience Forum has collated together information on preparing for emergencies in Kent and Medway which includes guidance on numerous circumstances such as flood, fire, high winds, heavy snow and extreme cold, summer heatwaves, infectious diseases, loss of power and water, security incidents, how to make a household emergency plan, health advice etc. There's a copy of the document at the Library, or you can find the link to the document 'What Should I Do in an Emergency' on the Parish Council website <http://www.mardenpc.kentparishes.gov.uk/>

## Police Surgery

Your local officer PCSO Nicola Morris will be holding a police surgery at Marden Library from 11am-12 noon on Saturday 7th March, 4th April and 6th June. Please speak to Nicola on a first-come/first-served basis to discuss any concerns you may have on crime and anti-social behaviour.

## Parish Office Opening Hours:

If you would like any info or advice on a Parish matter, please feel free to call into the Parish Office. Opening hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10am-12pm.

## Useful information:

**Parish Clerk:** Alison Hooker – 01622 832305 – [mardenpc@btconnect.com](mailto:mardenpc@btconnect.com)

**Assistant Parish Clerk:** Erika Lock – 01622 832305 – [erika.mardenpc@btconnect.com](mailto:erika.mardenpc@btconnect.com)

**Parish Council website:** [www.mardenpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.mardenpc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

**Police Contact:** PCSO Nicola Morris – call 101 for non-urgent crime or to make an enquiry or email:

[Nicola.morris@kent.pnn.police.uk](mailto:Nicola.morris@kent.pnn.police.uk) or 999 if your life is in danger or a crime is in progress. If deaf or speech impaired text 'Police' and your message to 60066. For more info on 101, visit [www.kent.police.uk/101](http://www.kent.police.uk/101)

**Community Warden Contact:** Mira Martin – 07969 584179

**British Transport Police:** Freephone 0800 405 040

