

**MARSTON ST LAWRENCE  
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
ON TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025 AT 7.30PM  
IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr Gale (Chair of Marston St Lawrence Parish Council), Cllr Coningsby, Cllr Goodwin, Cllr Moller and Cllr Skermer

Christine Coles (Parish Clerk), Cllr Rosie Herring and two villagers

**1. To receive apologies**

Cllr Scott (personal), Cllr Mallace (work), Joyce Scott, Jill Beaumont and Keith Preston

**2. To receive a report from West Northants Council**

Cllr Herring noted there is a newly formed authority. She is one of three Councillors covering between 13 and 15 villages. Ward boundaries are changing and there will only be two for our area in future. She then gave the following report.

WNC has delivered a balanced budget for the fourth year. Despite increases in demand from Social Care, housing and Children's services and despite the fact that at least 20 councils are officially bankrupt and about 30 more on the brink, West Northants has managed the budgets prudently and steadied the ship. This is whilst retaining the existing single person council tax discount.

Children's services were failing under the old County council but now fostering and adoption services are rated GOOD by Ofsted and leadership Outstanding. Social Care has moved from inadequate to requires improvement and we are waiting for the next inspection to chart the onward improvements. 8 SEND units were commissioned attached to existing schools and the new Special Needs School at Tiffield is due to open in September. This will accommodate many children who at the moment have to make long journeys out of the area to attend a special school.

A new initiative called the Family Hub has opened in Towcester and there are 2 more planned for Daventry and Northampton. Unlike the family centres they will offer help and advice in one place for all age children not just 1-5 year olds.

10 million has been spent on roads and potholes and 1 extra million is in the budget next year for footpaths.

Free parking has been maintained in Brackley and Towcester to keep the high streets vibrant and a specialist consultant is working with the council to this end.

The recycling centres have been kept open and is under a new contract at Farthinghoe. I know Rebecca Breese is hot on the trail of fly tipping and protecting our green spaces. 8 sheds were broken into in Thorpe Mandeville. It was a co-ordinated attempt and was overlooked by the local HS2 compound which has 24 hour security.

From the floor Mr Scott spoke about Men In Sheds which were previously in Buckingham. This is a place where men of all ages go along to take part in activities. There is no new staffing for South Northants Volunteer Bureau and Brackley Volunteer Car Service do not have a permanent member of staff.

The Chair noted the positive report from Cllr Herring and good progress is being made with children and SEN. He asked how planning is going? The department is still recovering.

**3. To receive a summary of the Parish Council unaudited finances for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

The accounts were presented. Expenditure is higher than previous years as the CIL money was used to pay for the new fence at the village hall. There is one years of reserves in the bank. A VAT reclaim will be submitted.

#### 4. To receive an update on 'The Marston Inn'

The Chair of the Parish Council and Cllr Moller met Hook Norton Brewery two months ago. Their position has changed in that they are trying to sell the whole site including the pub and they have not received any good offers. The pub on its own is not a viable option. Planning permission for the houses expires in November. The Chair of the PC has tried to renew the pub as an Asset of Community Value.

#### 5. To receive village reports from:-

- Village hall

The village hall is an important part of the local community. From dance groups to Dolly Mixtures, birthday parties to pilates and chiropody to carol singing, there really is something for everyone. The hall is occupied most weekdays and/or evenings during school terms, and at least twice monthly at weekends. We are proud to promote and support the groups who regularly access the hall, and to encourage new faces to come along to enjoy the fabulous facilities.

Management of the village hall is overseen by a dedicated team of volunteers generally unseen by the scores of visitors who walk through the doors each week. The skills and experiences trustees bring to the table is varied and valued. Members share a commitment to provide the best possible community facility, and we are delighted with the improvements made in recent years to that end. Securing a number of local grants has enabled us to install new insulation, refurbish and redecorate, combine an air source heat pump and solar panels to reduce our energy bills and environmental footprint, create a patio space and entrance, build additional storage and, most recently, introduce safe pedestrian access and secure outdoor space.

We are always looking to improve and fresh ideas (and indeed personnel) are most welcome. Our AGM is Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm. Please come along to contribute to the next 12 months of activity.

- Dolly Mixtures

Once again the Dolly Mixtures had a good year, with our numbers increasing slightly during 2024. Members enjoyed a variety of interesting and informative talks including Millinery, the Ability Bus Service, a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), The History of Morris Dancing by ex Headteacher at Greatworth School, Stephen Wass, English Heritage Conservation Works and an interesting and entertaining talk entitled "80 years and still dreaming" by Mick Scott and Rosemary Goodwin, which gave some history of the village and its inhabitants over the years they both remember. We had a delicious meal in June at the "Crewe Arms", Hinton-in-The-Hedges. October saw us eating and drinking again at our now annual Harvest Supper, where Nige Barratt gave his first solo performance. Well done Nigel!! November was a Christmas craft evening, and to end the year in December we held a social evening, again with more eating and drinking of mulled wine! We continue to support the Poppy Appeal and the Star and Garter Homes – one of which we hope to visit this year. This year, as last year, we supported the Brainhouse Academy in the slums of Naoribi. Joyce and Brenda Hewison, along with 11 other guiding friends, visited there in July 2024. The school had been flooded in May and it had devastated their classrooms, dormitories, Science Lab etc. The plan was to try to help them to get the enthusiasm to put things right as best they could & also lift the morale of everyone, teachers & pupils alike. We painted dormitories and bedsteads, all affected by the flood. Luckily no one in the school was injured or worse, but many in the slum were. We hope for another successful, interesting and enjoyable 2025.

- Cricket Club – Dave Scott

There are two adult teams in the Cherwell Cricket League. The first 11 are in division 5 and there is silverware in the trophy cabinet. The 1<sup>st</sup> team were promoted in 2025. It's a great opportunity to develop sports skills and personal wellbeing. At the 2024 AGM there was a change in personnel. Sponsorship funding has been received and a new scoreboard was purchased. A new ride on mower was funded by HS2 money.

- Billiard Club – Read by Chris Skermer on behalf of Maurice Skermer

Maurice Skermer is not present tonight due to a billiard league cup competition final taking place. Maurice is Chairman of the league and needs to be present. The cup final is for the Terry Annable cup – named after a Marston player. Though not the best season in terms of results, Marston players have had some notable individual successes. One player, David Wiggins will contest the individual final and holds

the highest break total for this season. Marston A won the Ron Jackson cup last night. We hope to continue enjoying the games in the room which club members and supporters actually built. A solid addition to the hall and a solid club.

- Table Tennis Club – Sue Gale

The club meets on Thursdays between 8.30-10pm. There are two tables. The club is open to adults and children have to be supervised. The cost is £2 each. The club has maintained a steady balance and welcomes new people.

- Church – Read by Richard Gale on behalf of Mick Scott

2024 was the year our Quinquennial Survey was due, and as usual a number of issues arose. Some of the more major issues were – the Electric Distribution Board requires updating, there are a number of splits in the leadwork and general stone repairs. Once again we are making an effort to install a toilet and servery and Dave Scott has offered to help push this forward. A number of lamps at high level were upgraded to LED and this has helped with better lighting. Thanks go to all who help in any way to keep the Church looking in good shape and supporting the services, especially the flower arrangers, refreshment servers, and especially to Sue Gale and Philip Walker for looking after the churchyard. Attendance numbers have slowly increased especially the Family Service. Thanks must go to all who arrange and lead this service.

- Bell Ringing – Richard Gale

10-12 people attend every Monday. The club alternates between Marston St Lawrence and Greatworth. There is one junior member which is positive news. Cheese and wine is available each week after bell ringing. They are part of the Culworth branch. Local partners went to Lundy last September.

## **6. Guest Appearance – Thomas Pymfrey MDCLXXXIV (1684)**

Thomas Pymfrey is well.

In 1886 “Old Pymfrey” was sold by a temporary possessor (believed to be a Belcher) for £500 to a Banbury Dealer, but the whole village ‘rose in arms’ and energetically rescued their ancient friend.

It was returned to the Marston Inn in the care of the landlord and hung on a chain attached to the beam in the bar.

It is recorded in 1955 that Frank Gillett – Landlord, undertook to home “Pymfrey”, as it is now known, after it was discovered in Mr Belcher’s Wagon Hovel!

It was returned to the Parish Council in 1988, when Frank Gillett retired as landlord. It was returned in 1991 into the care of Paul Parker – the new landlord. Eventually, after various Landlords, it was returned to the Parish Council in September 2002 and into the care of Mick Scott – Chairman and kept at his home – “Culkein”, Marston St Lawrence. It is presented each year at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Pymfrey is now 340 years old, in slight need of repair and is kept at the village hall.

## **7. Other matters to discuss**

There were no other matters to discuss.

## **8. Open Forum**

The pads and battery were recently replaced in the defibrillator together. This is an old unit and should be replaced in the next few years as the pads will not be available.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.30pm.