Issue 67

NOV 2026

South Marston Community News

It Only Took 30 Years!

by Colin McEwen



Our village centre roads aren't suitable for today's traffic. The question of how to make Pound Corner safe has long vexed the Parish Council.

In the 1990s, we organised a major traffic survey and a village consultation on whether to get Highworth Road closed entirely to stop the rat running from Highworth to the new Sainsburys store. In the 2000s the proposed village expansion led to village meetings and various traffic calming proposals eventually set out in a Borough-funded report that considered everything from a one way system, traffic lights, zebra crossing and even moving the Pound Corner junction further west, through the Rec. play area.

The final proposal, adopted after overwhelming support in a major consultation in 2012, was for speed limits with chicanes and signage that largely match what is now being implemented. But with seemingly endless delays in the housing development from 2013, the PC looked to fund a limited scheme just protecting the village centre. We thought that we were there in 2015, but the administration expenses doubled the cost and we were sunk.

Continued overleaf

Contact the Editor: editor@southmarston.org.uk

Subsequently, a school safety scheme and Borough schemes were stymied by planned road layout changes but now we are finally there, with a 20mph zone funded by central government, designed and installed by the Borough Council. Higher tech solutions have finally reached South Marston with the installation of our first vehicle activated signs on the approaches to the Pound Corner. Some issues such as the Bends on Highworth Road need further attention, but at least we can see some result from our 30 years' work!

Quiz Night at the Carriers

by Rachel Case



A great fundraising pub quiz was held at the Carriers Arms on the 9th of October and thanks to all those who paid to enter a team and bought raffle tickets.

12 teams of up to 6 people crammed into the Carriers for the event, enjoying the atmosphere, liquid refreshment and the brilliant charcuterie boards served for each table at half time. The winners were Reptile Dysfunction, with Sofa King Smart second and the Stay Benders third, with the Grizwolds honoured with the Wooden Spoon. Thanks to the Carriers Team for hosting and catering and Andy Meenan for running the quiz itself.

A fantastic total of just over £1,000 was raised to support the South Marston Bell Tower fund. This will help start vital restoration work to bring power and lighting to the tower and get the old and rusty bells ding-donging with pride. It may also stop the committed (but not always tuneful) trainee campanologists struggling with dusty hair resulting from the activities of hungry woodworms.

Thank you on behalf of South Marston Bell Ringers!

CARRIERS ARMS

What's On at The Carriers Arms

Making memories every Friday 12pm TV Weekend Football

6th Nov - GURT WINGS in the car park from 5–9pm

13th Nov - Wine & Cheese Night – Ticketed

14th Nov - Birthday Disco

20th Nov - Quiz Night

28th Nov - Fundraising Raffle
Cake & Craft (day)
Live Music GET CARTER
(eve) Indian Food Van

3rd Dec - Christmas Pensioner Hamper Collection 2–4pm

4th Dec - Ladies Night (Abba Tribute) – Ticketed, Prosecco and Nibbles

12th Dec - Mulled Wine & Mince Pies

20th Dec Christmas Party - Father Christmas, GURT WINGS - LIVE MUSIC

25th Dec - Open from 11.30am
Christmas Jumpers compulsory

31st Dec - Live Music £10 a Ticket. Nibbles & Free glass of prosecco at midnight

Traitors evening - date TBC

South Marston Friendly Club

The Committee would like to wish all our current members
a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Why not join us at our meetings on the afternoons of the second Tuesday every month in the Village Hall. We already have the year ahead booked full of interesting speakers including trips and events. If you are over 50 and would like to get involved, you will receive a warm welcome.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 10th of November at 2pm – The Jaybirds Choir

Tuesday 8th of December at 12 noon – Christmas Lunch at Wrag Barn Golf Club

Tuesday 12th of January at 2pm – A Social Afternoon with a Quiz and Bingo

Tuesday 9th of February at 2pm – The Life of a Kestrel by Philip Male

For those interested and need more information please email smfriendlyclub@gmail.com or telephone 828545.

No More Paddling!

by Jenny McEwen, SMRA Chair



For several years, the Thornhill Road gateway into the Rec has filled with water after heavy rain, making it virtually impassable at times. We had hoped for some free tarmac and a roller from the developers, but it turned out to be impossible to organise. The gateway has now been raised up and a new layer of porous tarmac laid. We hope that this will now be an end to the muddy puddle of ankle-deep water that always lingered after very wet weather.

The recent storms will provide a good test of how well we have planned and executed the job.

Filling cracks in the Rec has seemed like a never-ending task for the past several months, but the end is in sight. The combined efforts of our contractors, Allbuild, and our own Lionel and Justin have kept the paths, play area and school area as safe as reasonably possible throughout the summer. Recently, a further 2 jumbo bags of sharp sand and topsoil have been used to keep the big football pitch playable. It's a long and boring job, and with another hot summer forecast for 2027, we anticipate that we will have to pay contractors to use specialist machinery to do it.

At over £8,000, subsidised by the F&E Harris Trust and the Parish Council, the summer of 2026 has turned out to be very expensive.



There have been comments about cars parked outside the Village Hall in September. This is undesirable, but we only know of it happening if a party has been booked in the Hall and the village car park is full of footballers' cars.

Recently the Hall has become a popular venue for wedding receptions and baptism celebrations. Wherever possible, we try to avoid clashes of fixtures, but this is not helped by Wiltshire Football Association giving very little notice of rescheduled matches.

We just have to ask for everyone's understanding on this.

A Term Full of Exciting Opportunities

by Marie Hendry, School Headteacher

We are delighted to share some of the wonderful experiences, achievements and exciting opportunities from school this term. It has been a busy and rewarding few months, and we have been pleased to welcome many new families into our school community. We have also enjoyed hosting tours for prospective parents, which have been very positive occasions and a lovely opportunity to showcase our school, our children and the learning experiences we offer.

Reading has been a particular focus this term, with the launch of our new 'Reading Around the World' challenge. This exciting initiative encourages children to read at home, rewarding them with stickers, certificates and badges as they reach different milestones. We are looking forward to seeing our pupils continue their reading and discover books that take them around the world!

We also celebrated the European Day of Languages with a whole-school enrichment day. Staff organised a range of engaging activities, giving children the opportunity to explore different cultures through food tasting, flag making, dancing and much more. It was a wonderful day of learning, creativity and cultural discovery.

Another exciting development has been the launch of our new Cultural Capital Passport. This initiative celebrates the experiences, opportunities and events we aim to provide for our children throughout the academic year. We are keen to work in partnership with parents and families to share and celebrate these valuable experiences, helping to broaden children's horizons and create lasting memories.

Some of our Key Stage 2 pupils have also taken part in Bikeability lessons, developing their cycling skills and building confidence to help them stay safe on the roads.

Pupil leadership has been another highlight this term. Following a successful application process, children have started a range of important leadership roles, including Eco Council, School Council, Librarians and House Captains. We are incredibly proud of their enthusiasm and commitment as they take on these responsibilities and help make our school an even better place to learn.



Towards the end of the term, we came together to celebrate our Harvest Festival at the church. This special occasion provided an opportunity for our school community to reflect on the importance of gratitude, kindness and supporting others.

As we look ahead to next term, there is plenty more to look forward to! Preparations are underway for our PTA school disco and a host of Christmas festivities, including our much-loved Christmas performances. We are excited to bring our school community together once again to celebrate the season and create more special memories. We would like to thank our families and the wider community for their continued support. It is wonderful to see our children growing in confidence, embracing new opportunities and making the most of everything school life has to offer.

Open Spaces and Allotments Update

by Barry Thunder

This update focuses on one of the village's woodlands which, whilst not readily accessible from the centre of the village without a short walk, is valued by many for precisely that reason. Its more secluded location provides a peaceful setting for walking and enjoying nature. The Oxleaze woodland itself will remain where it is, and visitors will still need to walk to reach it. However, our plans will enhance the experience by introducing a circular walking route, expanding the options currently available. We also intend to upgrade the seating by replacing the existing wooden benches, which have sadly deteriorated over time, with robust benches similar to those installed in Orchard Meadow and the Recreation Ground.

Residents who have been following proposals for new housing in the village, whether supportive or opposed, may be aware of the development taking place to the south-east of Manor Park, Manor Meadows, Ash Gardens and Fuller Gardens. The new roads and footpaths associated with this development will create additional access routes, including one that passes close to Oxleaze Wood, particularly near its northern corner.

This area of the woodland is currently bordered by approximately six metres of dense natural vegetation, predominantly bramble, and a newly installed drainage ditch. Working in partnership with Bloor Homes, the Great Western Community Forest (the woodland owners alongside Swindon Borough Council) and South Marston Parish Council (the woodland managers), we will be creating a new entrance to the woodland.

As part of this work, Bloor Homes will install a bridge over the drainage ditch, together with new signage and an all-purpose access gate. The Great Western Community Forest is providing funding and technical advice for the woodland path improvements. South Marston Parish Council will oversee the design and delivery of the scheme, working with a local contractor to manage the site works.

The new path will connect to the existing circular route within the woodland and will provide improved access for wheelchair users and families with pushchairs. We will also improve accessibility at the Morses Lane entrance to make wheelchair access easier.

In addition, we are looking to establish a volunteer woodland group to undertake simple tree maintenance throughout the year, hopefully to include new tree planting and coppicing. Anyone interested in becoming involved please contact me at barry.thunder@southmarston.org.uk. We also hope to organise educational sessions for residents of all ages covering woodland habitats, pruning techniques, and tree and plant identification.

Elsewhere in the village, we continue to maintain St Julian's Woodland and the Village Garden and War Memorial site, where work will include improvements to fencing and the management of surrounding trees and shrubs.

Allotments in Brief

The exceptionally dry conditions this year have presented challenges for some allotment tenants, and a number are planning to relinquish their plots in the autumn. We make every effort to support tenants facing these difficulties; however, in some cases the demands of plot maintenance become too great.

We currently have a small waiting list of three prospective tenants and would be delighted to hear from other residents interested in taking on a plot. To find out more, please contact me at barry.thunder@southmarston.org.uk or the Parish Clerk at clerk@southmarston.org.uk.

Tots & Toddlers

We love welcoming new faces!

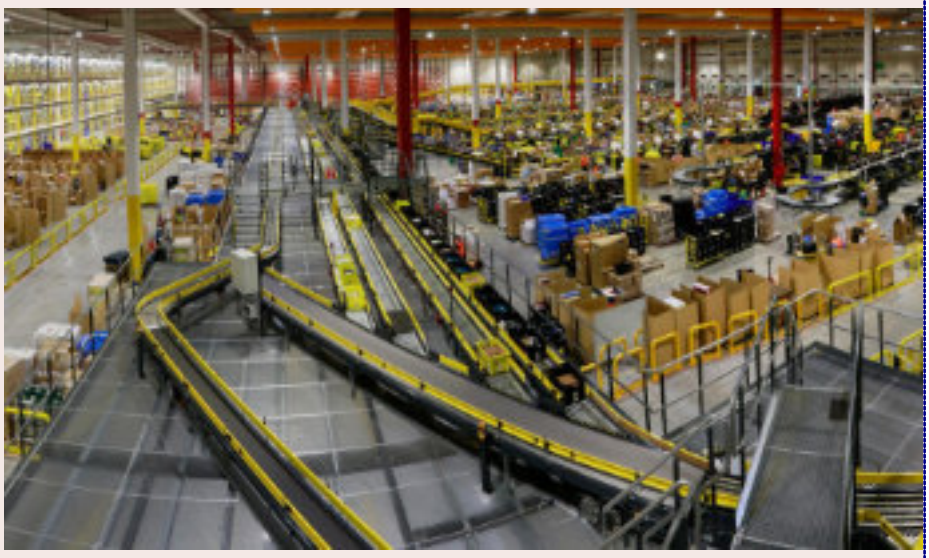
Tots and Toddlers meets on Wednesdays during term time from 9am to 11am at South Marston Village Hall.

There's a small charge of £2.50 for up to two children (just 50p for each additional child), and we provide drinks and snacks. We can't wait to see you!



Inside Amazon at Symmetry Park

by Vanna Leathart



I was recently invited to join a group visit to Amazon's fulfilment centre at Symmetry Park and came away genuinely impressed by the scale, technology and organisation involved in processing millions of customer orders.

After arriving, we were issued with visitor badges and headsets so that we could hear our guide clearly above the general noise of the warehouse. Following a brief safety induction, we were taken behind the scenes to see how an order moves through the facility.

One of the first surprises was the absence of traditional shelving. Instead, deliveries are unpacked, scanned, and checked by employees before being placed into containers known as totes. These totes are then transported along an extensive network of conveyor belts to the next stage of the process. Any damaged items are separated for further inspection before either being returned to stock or removed from the system.

The most fascinating part of the visit was seeing the thousands of robots in action. These low-profile machines move beneath tall storage towers and carry them around the warehouse as required. Guided by floor markers and sophisticated software, they continually calculate the most efficient routes while safely navigating around obstacles and employees.

When a customer places an order, a robot delivers the appropriate storage tower to a workstation, where an employee is guided by lights and screens to locate the correct item. Once picked, the item is sent to packing stations via more of the 13 miles of conveyor system. Here, staff scan each product and are instructed on the most suitable packaging. Customer names and addresses are not displayed to packing staff, helping to protect personal data.

The packed parcels then move to automated labelling stations before being sorted onto high-speed conveyors. These direct packages to distribution centres all over the country, where they begin the final stage of their journey to customers' homes.

The efficiency and precision of the operation were remarkable, combining advanced automation with skilled employees at every stage. It certainly gave me a new appreciation of what happens between a purchase and receiving a parcel on the doorstep. And, in some parts of the country, that final delivery may even be made by a drone!

The F and E Harris Memorial Trust

Christmas Hampers



The hampers will be distributed to eligible pensioners on Thursday 3rd of December 2026, between 2 and 4pm at The Carriers Arms, Highworth Road, South Marston, Wilts. SN3 4SE.

Any hamper not collected by Friday 26th of February 2027 will be returned to Trust Funds. If you are unable to collect your hamper, please notify Robbie via telephone 01793 823757, or email to robina.taylor@btinternet.com before 3rd of December to enable alternative arrangements.

Well Done Winners!

Congratulations to our AUGUST, SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER winners from South Marston Recreation Association.

AUGUST
£10 No. 84 Jodie Woolhouse
£10 No. 99 Sally Marsden
£10 No. 47 Nikki O'Doherty
£10 No. 4 Mary Williams

SEPTEMBER
£30 No. 64 Lyn Flitton
£10 No. 18 Kirsty Monday
£10 No. 52 Kate Jackson
£10 No. 100 Roz Haines
£10 No. 51 Brian Bell

OCTOBER
£10 No. 68 Nathan Molina
£10 No. 81 Paul Flitton
£10 No. 54 Pam Jackson
£10 No. 24 Ben Burrows

100 CLUB

The 100 Club is an annual subscription of £12 with the chance of winning £10, £30 or £100. All profits support the maintenance of the Recreation Ground and the Village Hall.

The SMRA would like to thank all the participants and Club collectors for their continued support.

If you are interested in obtaining a number for our prize draw, please contact Julie Hatherall on 07749211867.

A Pat on the Back

by Sylvia Brown

It was the autumn of 2024 when the idea of a major tree planting scheme for South Marston was first discussed, trying to lever in the Government's 'Trees for Climate Change' grants. After 4 months struggling with the budget, application paperwork and liaison with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust over choice of trees, our first 'volunteer' planting day was held. Over 50 villagers took part and were rewarded with a thankyou BBQ. It was so successful that we braved the application process again the following year and added fruit tree planting on the Rec, the allotments and the Orchard, and specimen trees on the Village Memorial Garden.



One of the unusual elements of these grants was that the money came with 15 years' support for maintenance costs – tree maintenance can be very expensive! The Parish Council holds the funds and organises any work that may need doing, including replacing any trees that have died, pruning and, most importantly, watering in the early years.

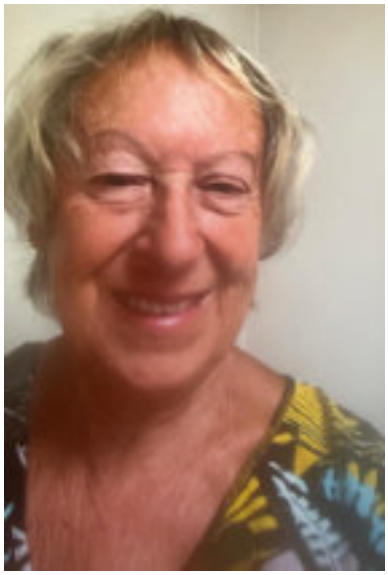
Two years of drought conditions have taken their toll – with no water supply in the vicinity of the planting, we have made ad hoc arrangements with some local residents, and various approaches on the Rec, finally settling on commissioning Allbuild to take on that task. Volunteers have managed pruning and mulching. All this effort has paid off – we have had a few losses, but these have or will be replaced.

Our efforts have now been recognised by our contact at the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who makes regular visits to look at progress. We received an email out of the blue which says '*I have to say a huge thank you to your maintenance regime and watering which has resulted in some really good growth and very few failures. THUMBS up to all involved*.' He did, however, suggest that the 'volcano' of bark mulching for the trees was high which can be detrimental. Within 24 hours, our ever-willing volunteer Lionel had gone out and removed the excess for use in later months.

Congratulations to all residents involved in this project. It won't be the last time we try and help restore tree cover to our village.

Volunteering for my Village

by Diane Whitford



Many people in South Marston know me as the Church Warden of St Mary Magdalene Church, a role I have held for nearly 6 years. Appointed annually by the Bishop, I am custodian of the church, churchyard and the Glebe. My task includes administration, maintenance, services, weddings, baptisms, funerals, burials and all sorts.

As part of a ministry team serving three churches due to clergy unavailability, I lead our monthly All Age Worship service, on the first Sunday in the month. We do have either our Rector or Curate giving a Holy Communion Service on the second Sunday each month, plus occasional special services such as Remembrance.

I have been a member of the Parochial Church Council since 2010 and served as PCC Secretary for six years. I attend training courses and hold certificates in Safeguarding Leadership, First Aid and DBS clearance.

I am fortunate to work alongside dedicated volunteers who help with cleaning, flower arranging, opening the church, fundraising, and community events. New volunteers are always welcome.

When I became Church Warden, I hoped to hear the church bells ringing again as they had been quiet for a few years, to install a toilet and replace our ageing sound system. Thanks to the support of Swindon bell ringers and volunteers, our bells are ringing again and progress is being made with our fundraising.

Being Church Warden has greatly increased my knowledge of the church and learning about its history. I moved to South Marston 19 years ago after living in America, South Korea, Hong Kong, Suffolk, and Shrivenham. Gardening is a great passion of mine, and finding a home with a large garden was one reason I chose to settle in South Marston.

Before retiring, I spent 28 years at Cranfield University as a Teaching Facilities Manager, coordinating timetables and ensuring lecturers, students and visitors were all in the right place at the right time, a challenge I really enjoyed.

The run-up to Christmas is one of our busiest times at Church, with special services to organise and preparations for welcoming South Marston School for nativity plays. My connection with the school goes back to 8 years as a Church School Governor, including 3 years as Chair.

Around 4 years ago, I joined the Communications Working Group as a volunteer member helping to produce Community News, a most interesting occupation, and I am delighted to be featured in this magazine.

South Marston Parish Council

Parish Council News

by Colin McEwen

Nightingale Lane

The Parish Council lodged a comprehensive objection to the proposed development to the north of Nightingale Lodge. In addition to the conflicts of use, we drew attention to the Neighbourhood Plan Policy, which you may recall voting for in 2017, that '*No new development shall be served from Nightingale Lane*'. There is a good chance that the application will be refused, but the applicant might then appeal to a Government appointed inspector.

New Village Hall and School Expansion

Both projects have recently had the green light to go forward for 2028 openings, although I'll be happier once contractors are appointed and there is a legally binding timeline! No significant changes are anticipated from the plans previously displayed at Have Your Say meetings.

Roads

Council Officers considered the width of the renewed stretch of Old Vicarage Lane, as seen right, to be adequate and it has been reopened. Work is now taking place on the Rowborough junction before moving on to the A420.



Speed monitor strips have been in place along Highworth Road. Whether this is in relation to the proposed 40mph limit towards Sevenhampton or traffic calming through the bends is not clear.

Borough Matters

The new Conservative administration is working on a new Council Plan that is looking for greater partnership working with Parishes, but not seeking to offload further services.

The new Local Plan that sets growth requirements up to 2043 is out for consultation. We have attended a presentation and will be making representations. Once published, we will consider bringing our Neighbourhood Plan up to date.

Morses Lane

The Developers have submitted the Open Spaces plan showing the landscape scheme for the brutalised area where Hammerman Way and the new Secondary Loop Road cross Morses Lane. We have immediately objected as it proposes a suburban mown grass appearance rather than the promised rural appearance and wildlife diversity approach.

The Carpenters Arms

We are told that '*Mr Arkell had a really exciting meeting with the architect and has great plans for the re-opening*.' We'll have to wait until 2028 for this, but it sounds promising!

Village Hall Parking

A request for double yellow lines to prevent parking outside the Village Hall was considered. This happens infrequently and it was felt that the precautions that SMRA already had in place were adequate and the problem should disappear once the new Hall is available.

Litter Pickers

Our ongoing thanks to the volunteer Litter Pickers, whose latest haul of black bags featured empty cans of artichoke hearts picked up at both ends of the Hammerman Way site. Our Parish Clerk, Kevin, has contacted the contractor concerned and been assured that bins are provided and that they will emphasise the need to use them!



Welcome Pack

by Barry Thunder

Have you have moved into South Marston village within the last 6 weeks and not received a Welcome Pack?

Please send a request with your residential address by email to barry.thunder@southmarston.org.uk and a copy will be delivered to your door.

The Welcome Pack provides a variety of information about what is available locally.

It also contains a local map showing places of interest and footpath routes, together with our history and our many woodlands and green spaces.

Update from your Local Borough Councillor: Matthew Vallender



Nightingale Lane Planning Application: I want to say a massive thank you to everyone who took the time to register their objections to the residential caravan application on Nightingale Lane. Behind the scenes during the consultation period, I also worked to secure objections from many statutory consultees too (like Highways, Drainage/Flooding, Conservation, etc). The consultation period closed on Tuesday 13th of October, and we should know whether the application is being refused by mid-December at the latest. I will keep residents updated via Facebook as soon as I know more.

20mph Zone: I am really pleased to see the 20mph zone has finally been installed in the village and is now in force. Throughout August, there were works to install the additional buildouts, paint the roundels and put up road signs. To help the zone 'bed in', I wrote to our local policing team to request speed checks in the village, which have recently been undertaken.

As promised during the elections, I will now begin working with SBC Highways on extending the zone through the Bends on Highworth Road and installing a chicane by Ashdene at the edge of The Bends, as was repeatedly requested by residents in that area through the election period and the most recent Have Your Say event in the village hall.

I have also had an update from Highways on the plans to reduce the speed limit out to Sevenhampton and Supermarine – we are looking at November for the works to put this zone into force, and I will share further updates as soon as I have them.

Summer of Events: I was really pleased to see The Carriers Arms officially reopen in South Marston over the August bank holiday weekend. Our local pubs are such an important part of village life, and I've always tried to do everything I can to support them. If you haven't been in yet, do pop along, have a drink and help support a great local business!

It was also great to pop by the South Marston Gardening Club's Annual Flower and Produce Show - congrats to everyone who won a prize this year. I also had a lovely evening at the South Marston Church Bells quiz fundraiser - thank you to everyone who volunteered to make it happen!

Finally, South Marston's Party in the Park – which is always one of my favourite afternoons and evenings of the year! A massive thank you to everyone who helped organise, donated funds, and volunteered on the day.

Government Funding Blow for NEV Schools: I was incredibly disappointed to see the Government cancel the Free Schools Programme. I've been campaigning for the last two years to keep this funding for the NEV schools, and to see the Government cancel this scheme without a replacement puts the Great Stall East secondary school in serious doubt. We're

considering next steps to ensure every child in Swindon can access a good local school place and exploring options to increase capacity and meet future demand.

Magdalene Close Road Adoption: I have been supporting residents on Magdalene Close with the ongoing issues with sewage smells and drainage issues under the road. Thames Water have confirmed the sewage smells do not relate to any of their assets, so I have now raised this formally with Bellway and am awaiting the results of their investigation. Bellway are working on resolving the remaining issues in order to progress the road adoption.

Autumn Litter Pick: It was great to join Pam, Richard, Norm, Martin & Hazel, Nigel & Mandie at the South Marston Autumn Litter Pick in October - we cleared over 7 bags on Highworth Road alone. Please take your rubbish home with you and help keep the village tidy!

Get in touch: As always, if there is ever anything I can help out with locally, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the details below. I also hold my ward surgery on the third Saturday of the month, 10am-12pm at the Community Coffee Morning in South Marston Village Hall. There are also bacon butties, cakes, tea and coffee available for purchase to help raise money for the church!

T: 01793 295171 | E: MVallender@swindon.gov.uk | FB: @cllrmatthewvallender



Hello from Your New Parish Councillor



by Major Andrew (Andy) Meenan

I am the the newest member to have been co-opted onto the South Marston Parish Council. Moving to South Marston with my family in spring 2026, I am originally from Birmingham, educated to GCSE level whilst playing rugby for Leicester Tigers Academy.

Having always had a burning passion for service life, I joined the Army and have been a serving soldier and now officer since 1999, after completing training in Winchester and Dorset before overseas service in Germany.

I joined the Queen's Royal Hussars as a tank driver and worked up through the ranks – receiving HM The Queen's Commission in April 2020 after 20 years of enlisted service. My service has taken me on deployments to Kosovo in support of NATO, Iraq on war fighting operations, along with deployments to Norway, Oman, Finland, Canada, USA, France, Italy, Austria and Romania. I am currently based in Shrivenham embarking on study towards an MSc in Strategic Studies.

I have 4 children – 22, 17,14 and 11. I have always had a keen interest in youth activity and have been an advocate of youth sports and social clubs. I see the importance of building life skills for young people – I hope I can impart this enthusiasm around the parish and ensure a bright future for South Marston. I currently coach Under-15s Rugby at the Supermarine RFC.

I am an ageing rugby player and whilst the mind is sharp the knees not quite as much! I have taken more space on the touchline than on the field for the last few years – building a coaching profile with both Army and civilian rugby teams.

I have volunteered with the Open Spaces group around the village for the last 5 years, always willing to turn a hand to heavy lifting and learning new skills. I hope to continue with this work in the coming years. I enjoy cycling and walking with my family and Hattie our dog!



South Marston Bells and Ringers

by Rusty, Tower Captain at St Mary Magdalene Church



Church bells are a bit like cars with several moving parts, requiring MOTs and servicing. The bells of South Marston stood still for several years, due to requiring servicing and some more advanced works. Bells do not like not being rung, like a car does not like not being left for extended periods. In the Summer of 2025, ringers from the wider Swindon area did sufficient work to get the bells sounding again, with a plan to carry out more extensive works when sufficient funds were in place. There was also the issue that there were no bell ringers at South Marston to ring the bells.

On finishing and coming out of the tower door after ringing the bells for the first time on a summer's evening, several locals who had heard the bells came to see what was going on and to listen and from there, Diane, our lovely Church Warden, started her quest for recruiting villagers to learn how to ring.

James and I teach bell ringing and were introduced to Rachel Case, who was automatically hooked and took on the mission to recruit more bell ringers and help fundraise for ongoing works to the bells. With James, myself, a returning lapsed ringer, Andy, and all our learners, there are now 17 South Marston bell ringers. An amazing achievement within less than a year of the bells sounding again. Regular practice night is Tuesday from 5.30–7.30pm. We recently raised £1,005 at a Quiz night in the Carriers Arms. Whilst we continue to raise funds, we are now able to start maintenance and works on the bells.

On the 8th of October we welcomed more than 30 ringers from the Swindon area who came to ring our marvellous tower bells and hand bells. We will be ringing on Remembrance Sunday, half muffled, the Tenor will be back in action for this. There will be a quarter peal lasting just under an hour on Wednesday 11th of November for Remembrance Day.

Our bells will be celebrating their 100th birthday this year. On Saturday 12th of December, ringers will be joining us from around Swindon, Worcester Cathedral and York Minister. The bells will be sounding out from 5.30-6.30pm. Ahead of our celebration service, which will include handbell performances, everyone is welcome to join us. Afterwards, we will be continuing our celebrations in the Carriers Arms with cake, refreshments and a raffle.

If you are interested in learning to ring or would like to know more, please get in touch with Diane, or you will always find a bell ringer frequenting the Carriers Arms. We are a diverse bunch, ranging from those in their teens to their 60s, and in the wider Swindon area we have active ringers in their 90s.

Dear Friends,



Young children seem to have endless curiosity, and love to ask 'why?'

When we hear the news, or are faced by a challenging situation in our lives, we too may ask 'why?', 'why them?', 'why me?'

At Remembrance, we remember those injured or killed in the World Wars, or in conflicts right up to those in Afghanistan and Iraq – including maybe some known to us. For those still living with injury or loss, it is painful to reflect on that question 'why?'

The problem of suffering – whether caused by humans fighting, humans exploiting nature, or natural disasters – is fundamental for us all. How can a God of love allow it? There is no easy answer.

If you've lost loved ones, or are facing issues like a difficult relationship or money worries, Christmas can be hard as memories of happier times and seeing the 'ideal Christmas' portrayed everywhere around only adds to the pressure to have a Happy Christmas.

As a Christian, I believe that God sent the world the ultimate gift - his own son, born as a baby, who grew up to take on himself all the pain and suffering – so that we might understand how much God loves us.

At Jesus' birth, huge numbers of angels praising God appeared to poor shepherds.

This year, angels decorated by South Marston schoolchildren will be hung in your church in the lead-up to Christmas – you'll see them if you drop in during the day or come to one of our Christmas services.

I don't have an answer to the 'why' about suffering – but what I do believe is that God longs to come alongside us in both the hard times in our lives, and in the joys too – because, whether or not we feel it, he loves us more than we can ever know.

Blessings,

Rev Charlotte

Curate, Stratton Team Ministry

Stratton Team Ministry

Seeking, Sharing and Serving God Together

Stratton Team Ministry will be conducting Sunday Morning services at St Mary Magdalene Church, South Marston (Unless otherwise stated)

8th November	**10am** Remembrance Service starts in Church **11am** continues at the War Memorial
15th November	**10am** Team Rosemary Service at *St Margaret's Church*
29th November	**11am** Team Advent Service at *St Leonard's Church*
6th December	**4pm** Christingle Service
12th December	**6.30pm** 100 year Celebration of our Bells with Carols
13th December	**9.30am** Holy Communion Service
18th December	**7pm** 9 Lessons and Carols by Candlelight
20th December	**10am** Team Carol Service at *Coleview Community Centre*
Christmas Eve **24th December**	**5pm** Crib Service **9pm** Christmas Holy Communion
Christmas Day **25th December**	**10am** Holy Communion at *St Margaret's Church*
3rd January 2027	**10am** All Age Worship

Getting in Touch

We are very happy to hear from you if you have any questions about the church, our timetable of services and events, or if you need support.

Church Office:
01793 826505
stmchurchoffice020@gmail.com
www.strattonteamministry.co.uk

South Marston Churchwarden:
Diane Whitford 01793 824339

St Mary Magdalene's Church is open daily and we welcome you to visit our pretty church.



Come and join us in the Village Hall for refreshments
(including bacon butties and delicious cakes)

10-12

Every third Saturday in the month

Next dates:

21st of November,
19th of December,
18th of January 2027.

Enquiries or for table reservations please call 01793 824339

South Marston in Lights (SMILE)

by Lionel Cave-Ayland



It's the time of year when residents are invited to show off their homes by decorating them with festive lights.

Judging will take place just before Xmas, so come on, put a SMILE on people's faces and earn the chance to win a prize, generously donated again by the F and E Harris Memorial Trust.



South Marston Gardening Club Christmas Social & Quiz

Monday 7th of December , 7.30pm to 9.30pm



Join us for our final meeting of the year for a festive evening of food, fun and friendly competition!

Everyone is welcome, including non-members, so come along for a chance to catch up with friends, meet fellow gardening enthusiasts and enjoy a relaxed evening together.

What's in store?

- Festive Quiz: Bring a team of six or come along on your own and join a team on the night. There's a prize for the winning team!
- Shared Supper: Bring a plate of sweet or savoury food to share and enjoy our communal buffet.
- Drinks: Your first drink is included, along with tea and coffee. You're also welcome to bring your own drinks (alcoholic or non-alcoholic).
- Optional raffle: Join in for a little extra festive fun!

Special Christmas offer – just £3 per person.

Whether you're a regular member or simply fancy trying something new, we'd love you to join us for a cheerful evening to round off the year.

Venue: South Marston Village Hall, Old Vicarage Lane, SN3 4SN

For more information on the above, please contact Angela on 07789 068340 or email angelanewton01@gmail.com.

Twelve days of Christmas Illuminated Walk

Saturday 12th December 2026
Event starts at 4.30 pm



Carol Singing with the Church Choir

Cotswold Voices Rock Choir

Bang To Rites Drummers

Children's Elf Hunt

Santas Grotto

Come and join us for a short festive walk, depicting the twelve days of Christmas!
Light refreshments on sale

PLEASE NOTE – The car park will be closed to vehicles during the event

Main car park at St Julian's Wood,
St Julian's Close, Off Thornhill Road, South Marston

Please bring a torch if you can!

Swindon Travel Choices

SOUTH MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Swindon Borough Council

Useful Contacts

South Marston Parish Council: clerk@southmarston.org.uk, 686150
Local Borough Councillor: Matthew Vallender MVallender@swindon.gov.uk, 295171, Facebook - @cllrmatthewvallender
Wiltshire Police Community Support: PCSO Victoria Townsend, 101, swindonnortheastruralnpt@wiltshire.police.uk
Neighbourhood Watch: martinhoffen@smsinternet.co.uk, 823513174
Stratton Team Ministry: 826505, Church Warden Diane Whitford 824339, **Parochial Church Council (PPC):** William Hiscocks, Michelle Giles
South Marston Church of England Primary School: 823379
SMRA: Julie Hatherall smrateam@gmail.com, Jenny McEwen 07770633362
Village Hall hire: Rachel Case on village.hall@smrateam.org.uk, 07545 923021
Tots and Toddlers: bethfairchildmartin@rocketmail.com
F&E Harris Memorial Trust: Robbie Taylor 823757
Gardening Club: Angela 07789068340, angelanewton01@gmail.com, Mike 827807
Friendly Club: smfriendlyclub@gmail.com, Sheila on 828545
Facebook page (South Marston): Sharon editor@southmarston.org.uk
Swindon Dial a Ride: 521123
Swindon Streetsmart: 445501 or streetsmart@swindon.gov.uk

Regular Village Events

- Community Coffee Morning - Every 3rd Saturday of the month at the Village Hall 10am-12pm
- Parish Council Meeting - Every 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Village Hall from 7.30pm
- The Gardening Club - From March to December every 1st Monday (2nd Monday if a Bank Holiday falls that month) in the Village Hall from 7.30-9.30pm
- The Friendly Club - 2nd Tuesday of every month in the Village Hall from 2pm
- Tots and Toddlers - on Wednesdays during term time, 9-11am in the Village Hall

About Community News

South Marston Parish Council

South Marston Community News is produced by the Communications Working Group of South Marston Parish Council. Although funded by the Parish Council, the Editorial Board of Community News operates independently and aims to produce an impartial, community focused magazine of interest to all residents.
Produced in partnership with our printers, Orchard Press www.Orchard-Press.co.uk.

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Acupuncture

Acupuncture treatment can help with many health conditions including back pain, fatigue, digestive disorders, poor sleep, arthritic pain and migraines to name just a few!

Hazel Andrews Lic.Ac AAC

7 Ash Gardens, South Marston.
SN3 4XX

For more information call me on
01793 827507

hazel@acuhome.co.uk

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