

Councillor Mervyn Hall's Blog 2017-2018

May 2017



My term of office begins on the day of Mayor Making, Monday 15th May. Marlborough has a way of conducting this event that invokes the past and has a sense of drama. There is a great sense of history being the 707th named Mayor, a very long tradition. You get more and more nervous through the day as the evening approaches. Once it begins you are just carried along by

it and it seems to go quite quickly. You follow the outgoing Mayor to the parlour, don the red robe and when you emerge back into the throng you realise that you are now the Mayor and actually have a meeting to run! Fortunately, the Town Clerk, Shelley Parker, is on hand to make sure you do not forget anything. The celebrations that follow, with family and friends are then most enjoyable.

The next job, a week later, is to chair the first Town Council on 22nd May, more familiar territory this and all goes well.

The first engagement of my new role follows the next day, on the 23rd May, when I attend the AGM of the local branch of [Mencap](#). An enjoyable evening and a relaxed introduction to the role. It is an honour and a privilege to be their President for the year. I'm told I will be judged on my disco dancing at a later event.



Wednesday 24th May is a busy day, first a drive to Devizes in the morning to meet up with members of one of my adopted charities, [Julia's House](#). I was given a one-

to-one tour of this new children's hospice before it becomes operational, in July 2017, and was amazed at the sophistication of the equipment and facilities. It will serve those in our community who are unfortunate in that they have a very sick child but we are truly lucky to have such a facility available and I hope it brings great comfort to those who use it. We will be organising a fund-raising event in Marlborough Town Hall later in the mayoral year.

Then, in the evening the Mayoress and I dress up to attend the Mayor making in Chippenham which has a 24-member Council. This was a good opportunity to meet some of the other new mayors from around Wiltshire for an informal chat and was an enjoyable evening.



This week has been somewhat overshadowed by the terrible events in Manchester on Monday 22nd. We joined in the minute's silence on Thursday 25th with the flag at half-mast and sent a [letter of condolence](#) to the Lord Mayor of Manchester.

June 2017



The start of June was a time very tinged with sadness in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London. Our flag was flown at half-mast twice, within a fortnight and I wrote letters of condolence, on behalf of the town of Marlborough, to the Mayors of Manchester and London. Then, the sombre mood continued with the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. There was only one civic engagement scheduled in the first half of the month, the presentation of the Mayor's Cup at the athletics event between Marlborough College and St John's on the 6th June, but this was postponed due to thundery weather. It was later presented by Deputy Mayor Lisa Farrell when rescheduled.

By contrast, the final part of June was very

busy with almost daily engagements. On the 23rd we saw the formal opening of the [Savernake View care home](#) by Angela Rippon, who has done a lot of work with the [Alzheimer's Society](#).

On the 24th June, we were guests at a concert by the [Marlborough Concert Orchestra](#) who gave a fine performance which included Dvorak's New World symphony. Then, on Sunday the 25th, there was a choral evensong at Malmesbury Abbey which was attended by several Wiltshire mayors. The Abbey is a fantastic setting for such an event and it was very enjoyable.

The following morning, the 26th, was an early start to attend Kiwi Barracks in Bulford with Deputy Mayor Lisa Farrell for a briefing on the activities of 4MI Battalion, our adopted army unit. It was very interesting to hear about the many complex activities that they are engaged in around the world and quite rare to get over 100 of them together in one place. The

morning ended with us judging their debating competition with the motion “Should serving generals sit in the House of Lords?”, (the motion was defeated!).

On Wednesday 28th June, it was a quiet day with Councillor training in the evening then on Thursday 29th the pace picked up again with the morning spent helping to clear out the old Youth Centre building to prepare for refurbishment as a Community and Youth Centre, a project that I hold dear. Then in the afternoon I chaired the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and in the evening attended the Scout Council AGM at the George Lane scout hut.

The month ended with a tour of the new [Marlborough St Mary's](#) school building on the afternoon of the 30th. A very impressive new building but it comes with no new equipment or furniture so fundraising is going on to try and raise the £75,000 needed to provide this. So far, they have raised over £37,000 but continue to work very hard to get ready in time for the new term in September.

July 2017

This month started with the [Mencap](#) disco at the town football club, on the 1st of the month, a very enjoyable evening was had by all and there were some pretty impressive dance moves on show!



On the 5th July Marlborough played host to the [Wiltshire and Swindon games](#) which occupied most of the sports facilities at Marlborough College and the town leisure centre, a large and very impressive event. This gave young people from all over Wiltshire and Swindon the chance to experience a multi sports games camp for the day. I presented one of the swimming medals and went on to watch a vast array of sports.



Not content with a whole day of sport I then proceeded to [Marlborough Cricket Club](#) in the evening for the Mayor's Cricket Match. I opted not to play, which I was glad about when I saw the speed of Marlborough's fast bowler, but was ably

represented by a scratch team which included four members of 4MI Battalion. We put up a pretty good show but, unfortunately, lost by 50 runs. Still, we managed to raise £335 towards sports equipment at the new [Marlborough St Mary's School](#).

On Friday 7th July, it was off to the High Sherrieff's summer reception at Odstock Manor where I had a very interesting chat with archaeologist Phil Harding who told me about

various holes that he had dug around Marlborough and what he had found there. He also informed me that, at one time, he had worked for Pelham puppets.



Then to cap off a fairly busy week we had the [Puppet Festival](#) over the weekend of 8th/9th July. I really enjoyed the puppet parade on the Saturday morning despite parading in full gown in the heat. I was in absolute stitches with some of the antics in the parade especially when two of my grandchildren decided to join in and dance

with the Punch and Judy puppets. This was also the weekend of the Marlborough Civic Service so we had a fairly unique event with puppetry in the service, I still can't quite believe that we had muppets singing hymns but we did. I was accompanied by eight other Mayors and various other dignitaries who thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The day also included the puppet exhibition where I got to meet the original Muffin the Mule puppet, this meant a lot to me, it was my earliest childhood memory of television. A local dance school finished off the day with a show portraying the [Bob Pelham](#) story.

August & September 2017

August is a quiet month in the Council calendar, with few meetings or activities, a time to have a break and take some holiday. The one Mayoral engagement of the month was to attend the [Marlborough Mencap](#) summer party on Sunday 20th at Kennet Valley Hall. A good time was had by all despite a few interruptions to the afternoon's entertainments from the showery weather.

September

In contrast to August, September was to prove to be a very busy month with numerous meetings and engagements.

On Sunday 3rd September, after delivering presents for our 7-year-old Granddaughter's birthday, it was off to Chippenham for their annual Civic Service which included awards for contributions to the community.

Monday 4th saw us get back to business, after the August break, with a full Town Council meeting.



Council to the Head, Mrs Schwodler, to help with the cost of new IT equipment.

On Tuesday the 5th we had an opportunity to view the new [St Mary's school](#) on the day prior to its first school day. The staff and governors had clearly worked very hard to get ready in time and the school looked terrific. The young children of Marlborough, including three of our grandchildren, are very lucky to have such a nice school. I presented a cheque on behalf of the Town

Wednesday 6th was a [Marlborough In Bloom](#) meeting where we reflected on the previous year and started to think about 2018. This project is very important as it brings together community groups to enhance the appearance of the town, we go to [Torquay](#) next month to hear the results of this year's judging, so fingers crossed.

A group of us attended the Market Towns Forum, in Ludgershall, on Thursday 7th with the Great West Way tourist initiative high on the agenda.



Also, that day, we held a meeting to discuss the progress on the [Community and Youth Centre](#) project in St Margaret's Mead. This is a project that is dear to my heart having helped with Cllr Farrell to get the Youth Club going, it should provide a much-needed facility for a variety of community activities.



Fresh air was in abundance on Friday 8th as we did a walking tour of some of the Town Council's open spaces in [Manton](#) and around the [cemetery](#), where we need to find some more space as it is nearly full.

On Saturday 9th I went along to the [ARK Big Picnic](#) in another of our open spaces, [Stonebridge Meadow](#), which has become a successful conservation project and a very nice amenity for Marlborough. It was certainly nice to buy honey from hives actually in the town!

Back to politics on Tuesday 12th as I attended the Cabinet meeting of Wiltshire Council to make a plea for us have a say in the future development and use of the old St Peter's school site, to try and ensure that it is used to meet the needs of the community. I did get a sympathetic ear from Baroness Scott, so let's hope for a good outcome.

A meeting of the toilets working party on the 13th where we started to look at phase two of the project that has seen the successful restoration of the public toilets in the George Lane car park.

Another Civic Service on Sunday 17th, this time in Royal Wootton Bassett. In fact there were three in Wiltshire that day but I could only attend one and have adopted a first come first served approach.

The following day, the 18th, I hosted a lunch for officers of 4MI Battalion, including their newly appointed commanding officer Lt Col Puxley. The army play an important role in our civic life and it is good to build a good working relationship. Later that day, some meetings to address concerns over social housing capacity in Marlborough with both Aster and Wiltshire Council, which confirmed our fears that the capacity is slowly reducing and needs to be replenished as demand is high.



Thursday 21st saw one of the more formal engagements of the year, a black-tie dinner with 4MI at the officer's mess in Bulford welcoming Lt Col Puxley to the Battalion, a very enjoyable evening.

An evening with the younger age groups in the town on Friday 22nd with the annual presentation evening of the [Penguins](#) Swimming Club, a celebration of real achievements and an impressive array of cups and medals.

I was recently invited to become an honorary member of the [Rotary Club](#), which I gladly accepted at a dinner meeting on the evening of the 25th. Rotary do a lot of good work raising money for worthy causes but also play an essential role in helping at local events like running the car parks at the Pewsey Carnival this month.



On Wednesday 27th I went to a Macmillan [coffee morning](#), held at Free and Sons in the Parade, then on to the [Jubilee Centre](#) to present a cheque, on behalf of the Town Council, to [Alzheimer's Support](#) which will help them to run their drop-in sessions in the town.



Friday 29th saw the start of Marlborough's very popular [Literature Festival](#) and a flash mob dance by local school children, then in the evening the opening ceremony and a thought provoking talk by author Will Self.

On top of all of the committees and meetings, that I also attend, a very busy month...phew!



Thursday the 13th July was the judging day for [Marlborough in Bloom](#), the culmination of a lot of hard work by various members of the community. I met the judges fully robed and even wore the hat for the first time, I hope it made a suitable impression. This was followed by entertaining the judges to lunch for which we thank [Rick Stein's](#) for donating that, I'm sure that made a good impression. They were then bid farewell in the afternoon, we await the results down in Torquay on the 5th October.

The final event of the month, as things started to quieten down for the Summer, was the Mayor's Bowls match on Saturday 22nd July. We actually played skittles this year, which was probably a good thing given the weather. A very enjoyable evening and more money was raised for the Mayor's charity fund.

October 2017



have no disabled access and a new site will be needed in future.

This month started with a visit to Preshute School, on the 2nd, where I had the honour of opening their new [library](#) area. The school operates in a very cramped space on a slope and it is amazing how the space is utilised, but, sadly, this means that they

On the 3rd I had the opportunity to view progress on the new Community and Youth Centre which has taken a lot of hard work getting it ready for community use again after many years of neglect and under use. In the evening, I attended the opening night of an excellent art exhibition, in the White Horse, by local artist Juliet Wood. I was accompanied by my granddaughter Genevieve (age 7), who I have now dubbed the “Mini Mayoress” as she seems to like public duties.



On the 4th, 5th and 6th it was down to Torquay for the [South West in Bloom](#) awards preceded by a Mayor’s reception, giving me a chance to chat to other mayors in the region. Marlborough did extremely well with a [gold award](#) for the town’s entry and a good number of awards for local “In Your Neighbourhood” projects, I was very proud to collect awards on behalf of the community.

I also got to meet Sir Julian Fellowes, the writer of Downton Abbey, whose wife, Lady Emma, is a great supporter of In Bloom.

The 7th saw the Opening of the [Mop Fair](#), always a joyful occasion where the Mayor gets to act as the pied piper and lead the children around giving them free rides, I even went on a few myself. This is a very long-standing tradition in the town and when you see the joy on the children’s faces, you realise that it is a very worthwhile one.



One of the more satisfying functions, as Mayor, is to hand out cheques to worthy causes and on the 8th I handed a cheque to [Macmillan](#) who were running one of their very successful coffee mornings in the Town Hall.

More sporting endeavour on the 10th, with the Mayor's Golf Match. I do not play golf but I saw them all off and tried my best to motivate and encourage the mayor's team to victory but, sadly, we lost 11/2 to 21/2. I later discovered, by looking at the cup, that the Mayor's team has only won twice in the last 30 years but a good day was had by all and many thanks to 4MI Battalion who contributed 4 golfers to my team.



On the 12th I went to the [Rotary Club](#) open evening where I learnt about all of the good works that they do, like the global elimination of polio and disaster relief as well as local projects.



The [Lions Club](#) were our hosts for a lunch on the 15th, another organisation that do a lot of good works both globally and locally. I will be riding around in their Christmas Sleigh at the [lights switch on](#) and they have donated [£1,000](#) to the [Community and Youth Centre project](#).

On the 16th I attended the AGM of one of my Mayor's charities, [Homestart Kennet](#), who provide valuable help and support to young families in the area, a very worthy cause.



Another charity, [Prospect Hospice](#), provided us with updates on their work on the 19th and are going from strength to strength. The two Prospect shops in Marlborough High Street are a major source of funds for this charity who support a lot of local families who have a member who is terminally ill.

Not a Mayor's official visit but one of my history interests saw a visit to Wolf Hall, with [Marlborough History Society](#) members, on the 22nd and a chance to climb down in to the tunnels underneath it, fascinating.

My final official duty of the month was attendance, with the Mayoress, at the civic service in Westbury on the 29th, another interesting Wiltshire town that I would not normally get a chance to visit.

With slightly less civic duties this month there has been quite a bit of work to do and I attended some 18 meetings covering various issues in the town like car parking and housing for young people, a good month's work.

November 2017

This month's activity started on a serious note with the annual [Brandt Group](#) lecture on the 2nd. It was given by Mark Goldring, Chief Executive of Oxfam and titled "Ending Global Poverty". This not only gave a lot to think about but also some cause for optimism, things are getting better.

On Tuesday the 7th we had the [Marlborough In Bloom](#) AGM in the Town Hall with an opportunity to thank local groups for their contributions and to hand out the awards that we had received back in October in Torquay.

On the 9th I attended the Wiltshire Assembly Conference at County Hall in Trowbridge. This brings together local groups and Councils from around the County. Wiltshire is one of the most complex counties in the country with some 252 town and parish councils. This year we discussed closer military civilian integration, a very fitting subject with some 4000 soldiers and their families, moving in to Wiltshire from Germany, a group larger than the population of Marlborough.



Saturday 11th November was [Armistice Day](#), the start of Remembrance Weekend. The ceremony on the Town Hall steps, started by an air raid siren and followed by the High Street falling silent, is very moving and atmospheric. This year we were joined by

Lady Marland, the High Sherriff, who complimented us on the way we do things in our town. We followed by laying wreaths at the 7th Wilts Memorial on London Road. These men did their training in Marlborough in 1915 and were then posted to Salonika to stop the Bulgarians from invading Greece.



On the next day, Sunday, we had our [Remembrance Day parade](#), with a very large number of people turning out in freezing cold weather. We were joined by soldiers from 4MI Battalion, Claire Perry MP and the town's many youth organisations. Following the ceremonies and Church Service a group of us went up to the town cemeteries, where there are eleven war graves, and laid poppies on the graves.

There are five graves in the Victorian Cemetery from the First World War and a further six from the Second World War in the current cemetery. There is an interesting background story behind each one, a subject for further research.

It was off to Trowbridge again on the 17th for a training day giving useful information about council issues such as strategic planning.

On the weekend of 18th November, we had the first of Fred Wilcox's West Country Fairs in the Town Hall. This is a craft fair and Fred puts a lot of effort in to putting together a collection of stalls offering mostly hand made items. He always does a collection for the Mayor's charities and this one raised over £350.



On the 29th I went up to the [Greatwood Charity](#) to present them with a cheque, from the Town Council, to buy safety equipment. When I posed for a picture they brought out the most enormous stallion I had ever seen, he was, however, very good natured. He was called Louis and only understood French, I thought, at one point, he was going to eat the cheque but, all was well!

Later that day I visited St John's school to meet with the College Captains, Head Boy and Head Girl. We discussed matters of interest to young people in the Town and had a very good discussion.

This looks like a quiet month but there were a lot of meetings, not listed here, particularly to organise the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the opening of the new Community and Youth centre, more about those next month.



December started with our big official event to start the Christmas period in Marlborough, the [Christmas lights switch on](#). This year's event had a market, fairground attractions from the [Showman's Guild](#), a Santa's grotto by the [Rotary Club](#) and an entertainment stage featuring local performers. Helping me with the switch on we had BBC Wiltshire presenter [Ben Prater](#) and his children. One of the most fun parts of the evening, for me, was riding around the High Street with Santa in his sleigh with the help of the [Lions Club](#). With my red robes I think that the young children thought that there were two Santas!

On the second the Mayoress and I attended the [Winter concert](#) by [Marlborough Concert Orchestra](#) in [St Mary's Church](#), a wonderful and entertaining evening.



The next day, the 3rd, we attended the lighting up ceremony and carol concert at [Prospect Hospice](#) in Wroughton, equally entertaining, but also quite cold as it was staged outside. Still, there was plenty of mulled wine to keep us warm.

On the 5th, I attended the first get together of the Marlborough tourist group, our first go at coordinating the town as a visitor attraction on the Great West Way tourist trail and later, a rehearsal for the College Carol Service, a quite daunting event when you are Mayor.

The 6th saw the County of Wiltshire Carol Service at the [Church of St Mary and St Nicholas](#) in Wilton, attended by Wiltshire and Swindon Mayors and Council Leaders. I had not realised that we had such a superb Italianate church in Wiltshire, quite wonderful.



Friday 8th was quite a busy day, starting with a [photo call for the press](#) at the new [Youth and Community Centre](#) where deliveries of furniture and equipment were arriving courtesy of [McCarthy and Stone](#) as part of their donation to the centre. Down to business in the afternoon with a meeting with Claire Perry, our MP, to discuss the issues arising from the [Neighbourhood Plan](#) work.

Then back to the ceremonial side for the [Marlborough College](#) carol concert starting with robing and a reception given by The Master, Johnathan Leigh, who is retiring at the end of this academic year. Then on to the carol service where I gave the first reading, this service is always one of the musical highlights of the year and this one did not disappoint.



On Saturday 9th I went to the Town Hall to greet Fred Wilcox, who once again brought his [West Country](#) fair to Marlborough with a range of local products. Fred always collects for the Mayor's charities at the entrance to the Fair, this year [Julia's House](#) and Kennet Valley [Home Start](#). Then, in the afternoon, it was off to the [Mencap](#) Christmas Party in Kennet Valley Hall, always enjoyed by all. In the evening the Mayoress and I then attended the Marlborough Choral Society [concert](#) where I had the pleasure of sitting in close proximity to no less than six fine [soprano voices](#).



The overnight weather was very poor with snow and low temperatures so my first engagement on the 10th, a visit to the new tennis courts at the golf club, was postponed due to the conditions. This also sadly affected Fred's West Country Fair who did little business on the Sunday but still made £175 for charity, having had a good day on Saturday.



On Monday 11th we had our last Full Town Council of 2017 after which I had the privilege of taking my fellow councillors out for drinks and cake, a thank you for their efforts.

On the 13th it was back to St Mary's Church for the Mencap nativity and carols, a very moving performance with everyone doing their best in front of quite a large audience. By now I had just about learnt the words of all of the popular carols!

On the 14th I had an [interview](#) to do for BBC Wiltshire, promoting the opening of the new [Marlborough Community and Youth Centre](#). These are usually done by telephone and you have to think very quickly as they only last a couple of minutes, but are live and you do not get a second go, I'm starting to get used to it.

Another full day on the 15th starting with the [Marlborough St Mary's](#) KS2 Carol Concert in St Mary's Church, in the morning, where I presented a gift voucher for the best Christmas card design, from that school, to Rachel Darby. There were two designs of Mayor's Christmas card this year, one designed at Marlborough St Mary's and the other at [Preshute School](#).



Then, in the evening, we had the [opening party](#) for the newly refurbished Marlborough Community and Youth Centre which was well attended by people from the community, donors and of course, local children who had a disco and party food. It is very satisfying to see this project come to fruition due to the hard work of many people and my fellow councillor, [Lisa Farrell](#), who's sheer determination has kept the Community Youth Project going. After

making a short speech and chatting to everyone it was then up to the [Savernake View](#) care home to switch on their Christmas tree lights. For this I was accompanied not just by the Mayoress but also the "Mini-Mayoress", my seven-year granddaughter, Genevieve, who did the lights turn on.

On Sunday 17th we had the St Mary's Church Carol Service at which I gave a reading, this was the last carol service of the month and again, a wonderful occasion.

On Monday 18th it was off to the Marlborough St Mary's KS1 nativity play, attending in my capacity as a grandparent and then in the evening the Rotary Club, of which I am an honorary member, Christmas party.

On the 19th I attended the morning assembly at Preshute school where I presented a gift token to Emily Nelson, for her winning Christmas card design.

Finally, on Christmas Day, after giving presents to very excited grandchildren, I attended the Christmas lunch for the elderly, in the Town Hall, where I chatted to the diners and thanked those organising and helping at the event.

After that.....relax!

January 2018

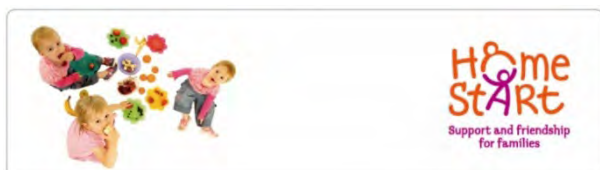
January was relatively quiet compared to December, although there were quite a few meetings as the Council got down to business after the holidays.

On Saturday 13th, I and other Councillors were shown the new [tennis courts](#), a very welcome addition to the town's sports facilities. I look forward to trying them out. We were also given a thorough briefing on the [Golf Club](#) and its activities.

One of my charities, [Home Start Kennet](#), was preparing for its birthday party this week, so on Tuesday 16th I visited their office in Pewsey and did a publicity shot for the local press to help publicise the forthcoming event.



On Wednesday 17th I attended the launch of a new charity, [Thriving Through Venture](#), which aims to help young people gain confidence and experience. This was hosted by Dr Nick Maurice and will involve some working in the Gambia, where the town already has established links with the town of [Gunjur](#).



Saturday 20th saw the [30th Birthday Party](#) of Home Start Kennet, held in the Town Hall. This is one of my two Mayor's charities and the Mayoress and I were very pleased to see such an enjoyable event involving Scottish dancing and then blues bands, a bit of something for everyone! This charity has

done very good work supporting young families, in this area, over the last 30 years and continues to be very active.

An important meeting on Wednesday 24th discussed the forthcoming major [roadworks](#), in April, with the resurfacing of George Lane and London Road. It was a good opportunity to impart some local knowledge to the contractors in order to minimise disruption. Let's hope that it all goes smoothly and we end up with smooth roads.



We both attended a reception in Swindon, on Friday 26th, given by the [Girl Guides](#). It is good to see that the organisation is thriving and interesting to see how it has changed over time. The Mayoress was once a member but, I won't say how many years ago.

The really big event this month was the official [opening](#) of our superb new primary school, [Marlborough St Mary's](#), on Tuesday 30th. This event involved a royal visit by the Duchess of Cornwall, who told me how much she liked Marlborough and managed to chat to many of the children who, I am sure, will always remember this special day.

February 2018



On Tuesday 6th, following a working party meeting to discuss work on the Town Hall basement, I went up to the function room, where Mencap were doing a fund raiser, for a bit of light relief. What I found was a room full of people thoroughly enjoying themselves at a [movie singalong](#). I had never seen one of these before, they were showing Mamma Mia with the words at the bottom of the screen, karaoke style and singing along to the songs. It was a great event and gave Mencap's funds a welcome boost.



On the 19th I helped to launch the [campaign](#) to persuade dog owners to pick up dog mess, which is a big problem in the town's open spaces, at times making them virtually unusable by small children. We did the launch up on the common and I had to borrow my Granddaughter's dog, Pepper, for the occasion, not being a dog owner myself. Talking to people about this problem it seems that there are a lot of "old school" dog owners who still think that it is OK not to clear up on grassed areas. This is simply not true as it makes it very

unpleasant for people who then use sports pitches or picnic areas which have been fouled and there is also a significant [health risk](#), particularly for small children.



Friday 24th February turned out to be a very busy day which started with the [Showman's Guild](#) luncheon in Swindon. We always maintain a good relationship with the Guild, who put on the Mop Fairs in Marlborough and also help us in many other ways as well.

Following the luncheon there was just time to get home, change and go out again for the [Civic Dinner](#) in honour of our adopted army unit, 4MI Battalion. This was a very enjoyable event and we were very well entertained by the Adjutant General's band and our own [Community Choir](#). There was one note of sadness in that Vanessa Lafaye, who conducted the choir at the dinner, passed away a few days later. She had been seriously ill for some time and it was immensely brave of her to come and conduct what was to be her last concert, we will always remember her.

Finally, on the 26th, I had the pleasure of dining with a group of travel agents from Germany and Austria, who were visiting potential tourist destinations along the Great West Way, otherwise known as the A4. It was a good opportunity to sell the town as a place to visit and hopefully, give a welcome boost to our businesses.



March started with bad weather disrupting activities as had happened in February, the Fairtrade event scheduled for the 2nd was cancelled. That weekend also saw the horrible news of the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, an event which caused ripples around the world.



The following weekend, on Sunday 11th March, the Mayoress and I travelled to Salisbury to attend the [Rule of Law Service](#) in Salisbury Cathedral, where we joined a procession of High Sheriffs, Mayors, Judges and other dignitaries. The service had a particular poignancy, this year, due to the events of the previous weekend.



On Monday the 12th it was [Commonwealth Day](#), which is remembered by the reading of a message from the Secretary General from the steps of the Town Hall and the raising of the Commonwealth flag.



Friday 16th saw a number of us go out [litter picking](#) around the Salisbury Road area, where we picked up several sacks full of litter which, with the reductions in service from Wiltshire Council, would probably never get cleared without the efforts of volunteers.



Later that day it was the [Mayor's Charity Lecture](#), something that I had been working on for some time. I had been thinking hard about what to do as a charity fundraiser this year when the opportunity arose to put on a lecture and Michael Hart very kindly agreed to give his lecture "The Awkward Place of WW1 in German History". The event, in the Town Hall, was very well attended and was a fascinating talk. We also

raised over £920 for the Mayor's Charity Fund, which will be divided between [Julia's House](#) and [Home Start Kennet](#) at the end of the Mayoral Year.



On Thursday 22nd I found myself wearing waders and standing in a very cold River Kennet as groups of children, from St Mary's School, joined me in the river to [release trout](#), which they had worked very hard rearing in tanks in their classrooms. Then it was quickly off with the waders and off to the Town Hall to chair a

meeting, the much-varied life of a Town Mayor!

We were very lucky to be asked to an excellent [choral concert](#) on Saturday 24th, which was a performance of J S Bach's St Matthew Passion in the chapel at Marlborough College. This magnificent work was performed by the combined choral societies of Swindon and Bracknell the Chamber Group Musica Poetica and professional soloists. The performers almost outnumbered the audience for this performance, which sounded incredible.

I finished off this month by becoming a tourist guide on Wednesday 28th when I showed a party of over 30 around the Town Hall as part of their tour around Marlborough. I think that tourism is a future source of expansion for Marlborough's economy, something that we need to adapt for.



I started April with a cheque presentation, on the 6th, to the [Poverty Action Group](#), gratefully received, on their behalf, by Janneke Blokland.

Then, later that day, I went to a viewing of works by local artists at St Peter's Church, we certainly have a thriving local art scene.



On the 8th I went around to the Community and Youth Centre to see the Boundary Walk, organised by the Lions, off on its way. It is good to see this tradition of "beating the bounds" revived in Marlborough.



On the 15th the Mayoress and I went to the Mayor's charity ball in Chippenham, hosted by Mayor Mary Norton, who has done a sterling job this last year.



On Wednesday 18th April, 4 MI Battalion came to Town for some [extreme circuit training](#). They had a stall on the market to sell mementoes and set up a circuit in the Court Room of the Town Hall, then proceeded to do eight full circuits each while collecting for charity. It looked exhausting stuff but they were well rewarded with donations totalling over a thousand pounds to share between the

Mayor's Charity Fund and the Army Benevolent Fund.



Later, that evening, we held the now traditional [Peppercorn Rent](#) ceremony where the Merchant's House Trust paid their annual rent to the Town Council in the form of a real bag of peppercorns. It was also an occasion to formally declare the new Town Museum open and to give everyone a preview. For this our Lord Lieutenant, Sarah Troughton, was in attendance.

Monday 23rd April saw our Annual Parish Meeting, an open Council meeting where we give an account of our activities over the last year and have some public discussion. This year's topic was the proposal to have [20mph speed limits](#) in the centre of town, which generated a healthy debate both for and against but generally in favour of the measure.

On the 24th it was off to Trowbridge with Cllr Loosmore to try and persuade Wiltshire Council's Cabinet to let us have some of its land for parking, partial progress was made but there is still some way to go.



On Saturday 28th April it was my pleasure to open the Rotary Club Spring Fayre, in the Town Hall, aimed at raising money for the Brighter Futures Charity, a very worthy local cause.

On the week beginning 30th April, the Deputy Mayor, Lisa Farrell and I gave a talk at St John's school assemblies each day, working through a different year group each day. This was a very rewarding experience and we managed to speak to around 1,200 pupils about a range of topics affecting young people in the town. Because of the forthcoming exams we were not able to speak to Year 7, but we will be returning on 25th May to do this.



On Tuesday 1st May, 4MI Battalion were back in town, this time to play a Charity football match against Marlborough Town FC. It was an exciting and close game which 4MI managed to win 3-2.



On Thursday 10th May we welcomed the BBC to the Town as they start researching for the programme Britain in Bloom in which Marlborough will feature next year. Filming will take place on a number of days over the course of the year.



Finally, on the 14th May we come to [Mayor Making](#), when I get to retire as Mayor. It has been a very interesting and rewarding year to serve as Town Mayor and the time has gone very quickly. A big thank you to the staff of Marlborough Town Council and my fellow Councillors for supporting me throughout. I now look forward to having a bit of a break but will still serve as Deputy Mayor for this coming year and I give new Mayor, Lisa Farrell, my best wishes in her new role.