



PRESS RELEASE

10 October 2020

Marlborough Mops 2020

Although Saturday, 10 October 2020 should have been the day when the Mayor of Marlborough, Councillor Mark Cooper, opened the first of the town's two Mop Fairs (the Big Mop and the Little Mop), the Coronavirus pandemic has meant that, sadly, we have no whirling waltzers, big wheel, ghost train, carousels or candyfloss to bring hours of fun to families across the town and further afield. The decision had to be taken to cancel the fairs, run by the Western Section of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain, in line with the view of Public Health Wiltshire that they could not take place due to the current health crisis. So, regrettably, the Town Council and the Guild have had to postpone the fairs to October 2021 – the first time this has happened since WW11.

However, at midday the Town Crier stood proudly next to the Mayor on the steps of the Town Hall and delivered the traditional proclamation, maintaining the statute and absolute right for there to be a fair in Marlborough High Street – a right governed by the Fairs and Markets Act of 1847. Alongside them and all socially distanced were Tommy Charles and Robert Kefford, Chairman and Vice-Chair of the Guild's Western Section, Charles Cole and Marlborough Mops Steward, Billy Whitelegg and his family. From here they watched over the one attraction brought along – a 'strike' machine – tested out by the Mayor himself!

Following this, all moved round to the Kingsbury Street entrance of the Town Hall where a plaque was unveiled in honour of Mr Whitelegg who has a 70 year association with the Marlborough Mops and has contributed so much to the town in that time. He and his wife, Louise, come from a long line of showmen spanning generations and both have a strong commitment to Marlborough and its annual Mops.

Our Town Mayor said: "It's so disappointing not to be enjoying all the fun of the fair in 2020. Growing up in the town, the Mops were the highlight of my year. Today though, we are taking the opportunity to honour the man who has brought a lifetime of joy to children, their parents and grandparents over many, many years. We are, of course, all looking forward to continuing our warm relationship with the Showmen's Guild and the 2021 Mops."

Whilst thousands will miss out on the thrill that these fairs bring to Marlborough, it also means that showmen's livelihoods suffer as fairs up and down the country are cancelled in the grip of this ferocious pandemic. Lockdown is having a tremendous impact of all of their futures.

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