

## Marlborough Town Council

### Grounds Managers Report September 2020

#### General

This summer has been another long hot summer  
Working in temperatures up to 36 degrees is something that we are most definitely not accustomed to.  
I have never known our open spaces being so well used

#### Workload

We have had a busy summer catching up with the work after returning from lock down although we had managed well to keep on top of the grass cutting but the weeds did get away from us for a little while but we are most definitely catching up with them now.

The grass had slowed down through the dry spell but since we have had some rain it is growing well and has greened back up nicely

#### Bedding displays

The bedding displays look good this year with numerous compliments from members of the public.  
I feel that they could and would have been better but due to the limited number of plants our supplier had in stock we have tried our best

The winter bedding order has been placed and should be delivered in the next couple of months

#### Play

The play areas continue to be well used around the town  
Since the 4<sup>th</sup> July, our play areas have been open to the public again  
We are sanitising them daily  
With daily visual inspections and a monthly recorded health and safety inspections

#### Football

We are coming to the start of the football season  
We have set out and marked 5 football pitches  
Two outside the cemetery  
One on Salisbury Road recreation ground  
One on the common  
One on Elcot lane  
These will require weekly mowing and over marking

#### Machinery:

We have had a good season with very little machinery issues  
The strimmer's have caused a few problems as they have done an awful lot of work over the last five or so years and have come to the end of their working lives, we have purchased two new machines  
We seem to be getting a few punctures recently and are looking at getting some replacement tyres especially for the Kawasaki Mule

## Site Specific

### Salisbury Road Recreation Ground.

Regular mowing and strimming throughout the summer

This area was well used throughout the summer

The play equipment is well used throughout the rec

The skate park is almost in constant use.

The bins are checked daily and emptied as required

The sunken roundabout safety surface is still fenced off awaiting repair

The surface under the spinning dish has now started to be pulled apart

### St Mary's Church

This area is well used by the public

Regular mowing and strimming weeding and edging

The trees are due to be re pollarded through the winter months

### The Green

Regular mowing and strimming

The trees are due to be re pollarded through the winter months

The new bins installed by Wiltshire Council are being well used

### Memorials

The roses on the Wiltshire Regiment Memorial have been replaced this year

The war memorial grass has dried out through the summer although the grass was left long to keep it green

### The Cemetery

Regular mowing and strimming throughout the summer

We have marked out another section in the cemetery for ashes internments this will be J section

We have not had as many burials over the last month but have 5 ashes internments to do over the next few weeks

### Old Cemetery

Regular grass cuts have helped to keep the cemetery tidy

Frequent visits from the Friends of the Victorian Cemetery who meet at least once a month have made vast improvements to the cemetery.

A joint effort between the Town Council grounds team and the friend's group is being planned for the next couple of weeks to give the cemetery a thorough cut.

Weed control on invasive weeds will be carried out on the re growth after everything has been cut and cleared away

## **The Priory**

Regular mowing and strimming edging weeding and dead heading of roses

The Priory was closed for a while during the lockdown period but has been re opened and has been well used through the summer months

Bins and litter in this area has been done daily.

## **Coopers Meadow**

This area again has been well used over the summer months.

There has been an increase in the amount of litter being dropped around the new picnic benches

We installed a new litter bin last year to help prevent this which does get filled almost every day

Regular grass cutting and strimming has been carried out throughout the summer

## **The Common**

Regular mowing and strimming

The common is being very well used with families picnicking kite flying and sporting activities

the ragwort was hand pulled to control this invasive weed

We have had an area of the common cut for hay by a local farmer

Some travellers gained access to the common close to the rugby club house but moved on quickly

## **Manton - Jubilee field**

The new play equipment has been installed in the Jubilee Field and has transformed the play area which seems to be highly popular with the local children

Grass cutting and strimming

A slight change to the entrance has been made to make it safer to cross the road by simply changing the angle of the gate back to allow better site lines both ways when wanting to cross the road

## **Wye House Gardens**

Regular maintenance visits have kept the standards up in the garden at Wye House the herbaceous borders have looked fantastic despite the long hot summer

Some maintenance work is planned for the bridge in the winter months

## **Elcot Rec**

This area is well used by dog walkers

The football pitch is marked out in preparation for the start of the new football season

Regular mowing and strimming throughout the summer

## **Stonebridge Meadow**

We have had an issue with gaining access to the meadow since the last traveller visit as the gates are locked by the football club we are looking at the possibility of getting a key from the football club to allow us access

The foot path along the side of the river has been cut with any encroaching brambles cut back

Bins and litter are checked regularly

The area close to Poulton Bridge is very popular with the young people of the town

## Stonebridge Meadow

**Summary** – This report asks Members to note the minutes of the Stonebridge Meadow Management Committee (SMC) on 17 June 2020 and consider de-silting works at the wetland, additional bins and a new gate and stile.

### 1. Background

The most recent meeting of the SMC took place on 17 June 2020. The outcome of this meeting was discussed at the A&OS meeting of 22 June and the minutes are now available and are at **Appendix 1**.

### 2. Works at Wetland

The wetland at Stonebridge requires some de-silting to make the central section deeper again. This is a task that is likely to need repeating every 5 years or so. The SMC agreed the action over a year ago and its Project Manager has since obtained quotes. The difficulty is that a larger than standard machine is needed to reach to the centre of the wetland and not many operators hire these machines out.



*Wetlands at Stonebridge Meadow - (when first installed)*

ARK budgeted to allow £1,000 for this, but the best value quote is £2,064, made up from:

Tracked dumper 1 day £440.00 +VAT

Digger 1 week £760.00 +VAT

Delivery/collection £520.00 +VAT

This is shared maintenance of Stonebridge Meadow and it is suggested that the cost is shared too.

#### Financial Implications

The Town Council budget for Stonebridge Meadow for 2020/21 is £1,000. Even with this being a shared cost it, there is insufficient budget to cover it. The overall joint maintenance budget will be overspent by a small amount. (Project quotes and ARK's budget figures are available to Councillors on request). The Town Council will take responsibility for hiring the machinery and insurance whilst it is on site.

Members are asked to share the budget overspend.

### 3. Additional Bins

Marlborough Town Football Club (MTFC) has asked that the Town Council provides new bins at:

- i) Entrance into Stonebridge Meadow close to where the new gate/stile/kissing gate will be and

- ii) The end of the Elcot Allotments before you cross through the fence into the Club's patio area (not strictly Stonebridge Meadow but close by)

MTFC have said that a lot of dog waste bags are being left on its patio or under the lid of its 1100 red bin. This happening in close proximity to those eating and drinking out on the Club's patio.

Financial Implications

No quotes have been obtained for bins and there is no budget specially set aside for it. It could be a charge to other budget lines (e.g. Equipment, A&OS Projects).

**4. New Gate and Stile/Kissing Gate**

It was agreed at the A&OS meeting on 22 June that quotes should be sought for a gate as well as a pedestrian access. Both ARK and the Town Council are currently seeking these.

Financial Implications

There is insufficient budget to cover this cost in Town Council's budget and it is not clear if it is to be a joint project. However, again it could be covered via other budget lines (e.g. A&OS Projects)

**5. Points to Note**

Members have already discussed contributing to a bridge linking the meadow to the other side of the river. ARK will be applying for external grant funding for this, but costings have not yet been finalised for the project and no budget has yet been set aside for it. As it is likely that the project will take place in 2021/2022, Members will need to ensure that it is included in the precept setting round later in the year.

**Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider

- i) Whether to share the overspend incurred on the works to the wetland
- ii) Whether to purchase 2 new bins as requested by MTFC
- iii) Whether to agree to the costs of the new gate/stile and delegate this to the Town Clerk and Grounds Manager to take forward.

**Town Clerk**

**26 August 2020**

## Marlborough Common

**Summary** – This report asks Members to consider requests from Marlborough Rugby Football Club (MRFC) for permission for a third pitch, concerns about the recycling area and locations for memorial benches.

### 1. Marlborough Rugby Club – Request for a Third Pitch

At the A&OS meeting of 22 June 2020, it was agreed that a meeting should be held with MRFC to discuss its request for a third pitch on the Common. This took place on 19 August and notes of the meeting are at **Appendix 1**. These set out the reasoning behind the request. MRFC's proposal is set out in the table below and gives 2 options (shown in yellow and blue) in the image below)

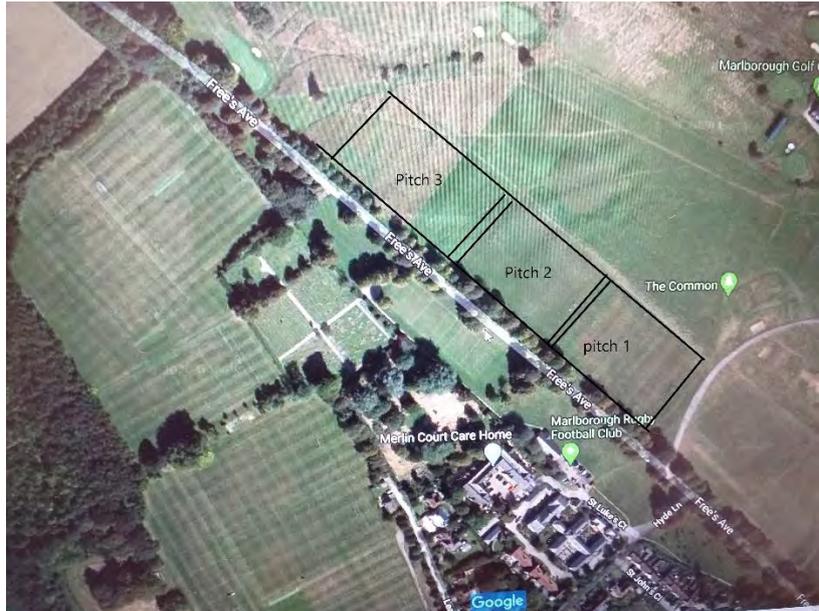
MRFC - ILLUSTRATION OF LOCATIONS OF POSSIBLE THIRD PLAYING AREA



**Summary** - MRFC currently has approx. 300 mini and junior players, 100 senior players and 50 social members and are looking to set up an SEN and a ladies team. It is struggling to accommodate numbers, especially on Sundays for the younger members as facilities at Marlborough College have not been available due to COVID restrictions. Current turnover for the Club is £160K with an annual surplus of circa £3K, all of which is ploughed straight back into the club for improvements and development. All involved in running MRFC are volunteers. The MRFC is a community sports club, not a business.

A third pitch would enable MRFC to use the pitches more effectively, enabling 8/9 age groups to train and play matches simultaneously. All three pitches would only be used at the same time on a Sunday for 60% of the rugby season. Some levelling work would be necessary.

Another option was put forward by the Town Council's Grounds Manager:



*Town Council's suggestion for a third pitch*

This highlighted the following concerns

- i. The pitch is undulating and would require considerable levelling
- ii. The pitch has existing walkways running through it and MRFC would not want to disturb/move/impact these
- iii. The pitch is located quite some distance along Frees Avenue and would make the task of getting equipment/topsoil there more of an issue
- iv. There is a water pipe which feeds the Golf Club running beneath this pitch and there are concerns that the pipe could get damaged.

Points to Note

- Marlborough Common is for recreational use and with agreement of the Town Council. a new pitch would not be in breach of The Commons Act of 1899, byelaws nor, as far as is known, the Commons Act of 2006
- No consultation has yet been held with other formal users – Marlborough Model Flying Club, Golf Club, Marlborough Youth Football Club, Parkrun, etc.
- No discussion has yet been had about what difference this may make to the existing rent of £500 pa (due for review in 2022)

Financial Implications

There are no costs chargeable for the Town Council for this.

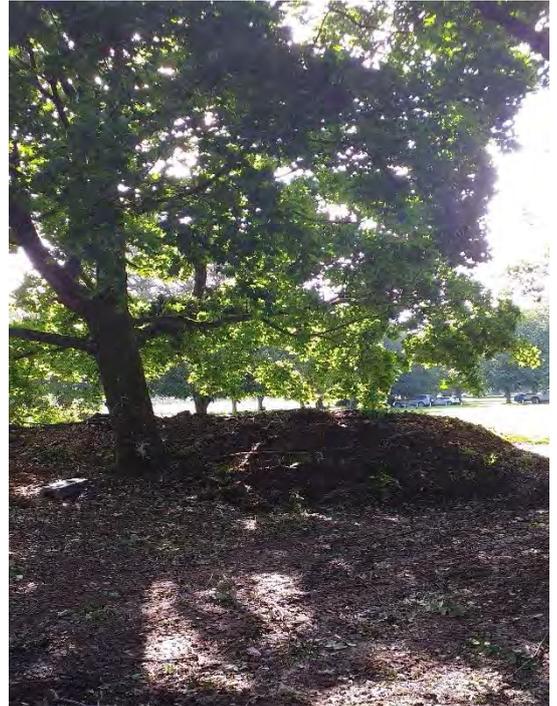
**2. Recycling Area**

The Town Council has been approached about the condition of an area adjacent to the cemetery used since at least 2008/9 as a compositing area. Spoil dug from graves and grass clippings are deposited here and the resulting compost used around the town for flower beds.

A meeting took place 21 August 2020 with a member of the public and a member of the Open Spaces Society (OSS). Concerns were raised about the condition of the site, H&S implications and whether it was in breach of the current regulations around management of the Common as set out in the Commons Act of 1899 [https://www.marlborough-tc.gov.uk/images/your-council/Commons\\_Act\\_1899.pdf](https://www.marlborough-tc.gov.uk/images/your-council/Commons_Act_1899.pdf) and the Commons Act of 2006 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/26/contents>

The new extension to the cemetery was cleared in 2008/9 to make room for H Section. Since that time spoil from the cemetery has been deposited in the area. It is not clear if permission was granted for this.

This sort of use at The Common may need permission from the Secretary of State.



*Composting area adjacent to the cemetery (skip to one side but not shown here). This picture was taken during the summer months. The area can be muddy and sometimes impassable in the winter.*

#### Possible Actions

- That the appropriate authority at the Planning Inspectorate is contacted about how permissions can be obtained to retain the area as an environmentally friendly composting space (one that has featured in Marlborough's entry into South West in Bloom)
- That it is levelled and made good (bearing in mind that an alternative site will be needed for spoil and composting)
- That it is retained and forms part of an area for a possible swap of land to accommodate the need for a cemetery extension but replaced with common land elsewhere in the town

#### Financial Implications

No costs have yet been investigated. Any levelling of the land and disposal of compost and spoil or additional skips will have an associated cost.

### **3. Memorial Benches**

Our Grounds Manager has been asked to identify 2 locations at The Common for:

- i) A member of the Free family who has recently died. The Free family sponsored the planting of the avenue of trees giving it the name Free's Avenue
- ii) A member of MRFC who worked closely with junior club members and lost his life in an accident a few months ago.

These locations are pictures below:



*A - Looking across training pitch from cemetery end (path)*



*B - Replacing an old, existing bench on Frees Avenue*



*C - Looking across pitch/main Common from where Frees Avenue meets the cemetery approach road*

### Financial Implications

The Frees memorial bench is to be funded from a family legacy to the Town Council and MRFC will be funding the memorial bench for a former Club member.

### **Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members:

- i) Consider the request from MRFC for an additional pitch
- ii) Consider how to take forward concerns about the recycling area on common land next to the cemetery
- iii) Delegate to the Town Clerk to work with the sponsors of the memorial benches to agree locations as suggested by the Grounds Manager.

**Town Clerk**

**26 August 2020**

**Cooper's Meadow**

**Summary:** This report asks Members to consider concerns raised by a member of the public about the decrease in the duck population at Coopers Meadow

**1. Background**

At a Full Town Council on 20 July a member of the public raised a question regarding the ducks or the lack of ducks in Coopers Meadow:

"Does this council have a policy of duck culling? Has this council or any other organisation set in motion a policy to rid the town completely of its duck population?"

I sincerely hope not. I have spoken to the British Waterfowl Association who have assured me that there have been no reports of any disease within England that could account for this sudden and complete lack of a duck population within a habitat other than a catastrophic spillage of pollutants in the river or human intervention. I cannot recall any reports of Coopers Meadow being affected by pollution.

I feel this Town Council should thoroughly investigate what has happened to the ducks and do something to restore this beautiful and much-loved waterfowl to its rightful place in Coopers Meadow.

The people of Marlborough particularly the very young love their ducks.

So, I ask again has this council or one of its partners a policy to rid Marlborough completely of its ducks".

*It has also been suggested that that a clause be put onto the Management Plans for all three meadows to state that: "The conservation of the wild fowl population was a priority of the Town Council and must be observed and encouraged in all three of its meadows by its members, staff and partners at all times.*

**2. General Feedback**

Firstly, the Town Council does not have a policy of duck culling. The number of ducks on the river and around Cooper's meadow does fluctuate throughout the year. However, the Grounds Manager has never known there to be so few ducks until now. Wild birds and their nests are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The ducks in and around Coopers Meadow have been there for many years. These ducks are wild fowl and do have natural predators such as foxes, rats, mink, squirrels, stoats, weasels and otters as well as domestic pets. Otters will take eggs and eat ducklings and adult ducks, but their primary diet is fish. They can range up to 12 miles on a river. However, if any of these predators, natural or domestic, were to blame there really should be some evidence of an attack - feathers and remains - which have not been seen. It is likely that they are wild fowl and may have just moved to a different location. It has been suggested that rats could be responsible, but again they would leave signs of an attack.

Loss of natural habitat could also be a reason for the decline in numbers

**3. Action for the River Kennet (ARK)**

ARK have offered the following comments:

There are a few issues which might impact the duck population. The first is that many of the ducks in Marlborough 10, 20 and 30 years ago were domesticated duck or

hybrids, usually Muscovy or Aylesbury, which escaped from gardens and farms then relied on people in the town feeding them. The ducks in town now seem to be almost exclusively wild Mallards, which probably prefer the quieter parts of the river with a good natural food supply. Coopers Meadow used to have areas of long grass, nettles and meadowsweet that provided sheltered nesting spots, but the last of those have been mown in response to concerns of untidiness, so it is likely that fewer ducklings are hatched close to the town centre because there are very few places to build a nest.

Overall ARK has not seen a decline in Mallards along the river and national statistics from DEFRA (2019) show that Mallard ducks are one of the very few species of birds in the UK which have increased in population in recent years.

Ducklings have many predators, rats and domestic cats are prime culprits, but fox, stoat, weasel, heron, owl and other birds of prey, grass snake, members of the crow family will all happily eat a duckling given the chance. It is fair to say that urban ducks are facing an ever-increasing impact from domestic pets. Since 1965 the dog population in the UK has nearly doubled, and off lead dogs often disturb nesting ducks, and when disturbed wildfowl will frequently abandon their nests.

If you take a walk beyond the town centre there are duck families to be seen. ARK doesn't believe that there is any evidence of a catastrophic decline, or a policy of duck eradication.

#### **4. Comments from the Grounds Manager**

- Though it is possible that rat poison could be responsible, it is unlikely as rats have not been seen in recent months in Coopers Meadow and rat poison has not been used for some time.
- There are ducks along the river through Stonebridge Meadow and on the opposite side of town around the college grounds. After doing some research, it appears that Marlborough is not the only town where the ducks have gone missing. For example, Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire is another town where the ducks seem to have vanished.

#### **Recommendation**

The Grounds Manager recommends that a close eye is kept on the duck population to try to prevent any further decline in numbers and Members are asked how to take the request for action forward.

Grounds Manager  
26 August 2020

## Cemetery Signage

**Summary** – This report asks Councillors to consider signage at the car park and entrance to Marlborough Cemetery and a possible small informal extension to that parking area

### 1. Background

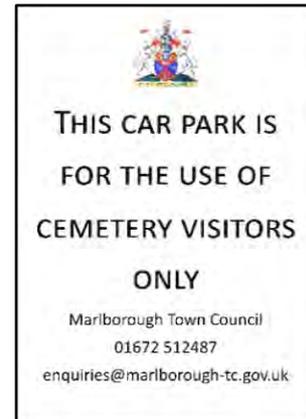
At the A&OS Committee meeting on 22 June, Members agreed that signage should be erected at the access road entrance to state the car park is for cemetery users only and that wording is agreed at the next meeting.

The Assistant Town Clerk has worked up a design and example quotes:

To supply 3 off aluminium signs to size and layout supplied including post fixings would be £145.00

To print 3 x A3 aluminium composite signs with solvent printed image to face with protective gloss, satin or matt laminate or your choice is £36 each.

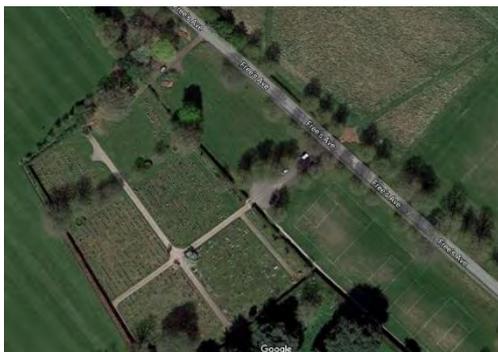
These can come fixed to wood or an aluminium pole



No planning permission will be required for these as they would be considered falling under deemed consent (Class 2c) for outdoor advertisements and signs.

### 2. Additional Parking Area

It has been suggested that more space is made available for parking at the approach to the cemetery.



There have been frequent complaints (most recently over the weekend of 22/23 August 2020) of the parking area being used by those not visiting the cemetery so leaving no spaces available for those who are.

**Points to Note**

- No formal car park (i.e. with excavation and tarmac) can be created on common land without permission being sought from the Secretary of State. However, informal car parking arrangements can be made (e.g. mesh under the grass as on the main part of the Common or a gravel surface)
- The area to the right of the cemetery approach road has been identified as a potential cemetery extension in the Neighbourhood Plan which could incorporate more parking space. This will require permission from the Secretary of State or a swapping of land (as has been done elsewhere on The Common)
- It is not clear if planning permission will be required for this and no advice has been sought from Highways

**3. Financial Implications**

Costs of the signage would be a charge to the cemetery maintenance budget line (202/4038). No costings have been sought for possible additional parking.

**Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that members consider any changes to the proposed signage and how to take forward a suggestion for additional parking at the cemetery.

**Town Clerk**

**27 August 2020**

## Planting at War Memorial and Elcot Triangle

**Summary** – This report asks Councillors to consider the planting of flowers at the War Memorial and at the Elcot Triangle

### 1. Background

About 5-6 years ago, poppies, cornflowers, etc were planted at the War Memorial at New Road. This proved popular and considerably enhanced that area.



It even warranted positive comments from the South West in Bloom judges in July 2014  
The area is currently grassed.

Members may also like to consider the same enhancement to the Elcot Triangle on the London Road.



### 2. Points to Note

The Grounds Manager will ensure that any necessary permissions are in place before going ahead with this work at the Elcot Triangle and check services (i.e. cabling or pipes).

### 3. Financial Implications

The cost of planting will be minimum and a charge to the open spaces plants budget line (210/4220)

### Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members agree the proposal to plant up both the War Memorial at New Road and the Elcot Triangle.

**Town Clerk**

**27 August 2020**

## Town Mill Machinery

**Summary** – This report asks Members to consider a request about the Town Mill machinery

### 1. Background

The Town Mill machinery wheel and associated machinery (formerly sited adjacent to Coopers Meadow (now the site of the Town Mill retirement housing) was stored for many years next to the workshop at the depot at the Salisbury Road Recreation Ground. The original ambition was to re-site it at Town Mill itself, but legal advice strongly indicated that installing it at this preferred site would be difficult to achieve. Other potential sites included Angel Yard and the Bridge House development neither of which went ahead. In 2015, a local resident came forward and offered to take it on and have it in his own property at the Ropeworks. Volunteers moved it and it has remained there ever since. The resident is currently developing the site and has asked that it is now moved on.

The Town Council has no available storage facilities for this equipment. The machinery is large and heavy - the small mill wheel weighs 930kg and the large one is 2980kg.



### 2. Options

In past discussions, it has been suggested that it could be offered up to an engineering museum or institution or sold on.

### 3. Financial Implications

As previously considered the costs of installing the equipment at a new site would be prohibitively high as would the costs of moving it and storing it. No quotes have yet been obtained. There is no budget to specifically cover any of these costs.

### Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members look at how to take forward this request to move the equipment on.

**Town Clerk**

**27 August 2020**