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**Much Marcle Parish Council Meeting**  
**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on**  
**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025**  
**7pm in Much Marcle Memorial Hall**

**Present:** Cllr M Barber-Starkey (in the Chair), A Hope; J Baldwin, E Thomas, F Powell, T Weston, S Cotton, E Jefferson

**Also Present:** 21 members of the public; Clerk Rachel Freestone; Ward Member Barry Durkin; PCSO Kirsten Kysow and Sergeant Alice Bennett.

**1. Chairman's Welcome:**

Cllr Barber-Starkey welcomed everyone to the meeting, those representatives who had come to report and those who had come to listen. Special thanks were given to PCSO Kirsten Kysow and Sergeant Alice Bennett for taking the time to attend. Ward Member Barry Durkin was thanked for his attendance at the meeting and his constant support for the Parish and Parish Council.

**2. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies had been received and accepted from Cllr David Griffiths and the Footpaths Officer David Beckett.

**3. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting:**

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024. **It was RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes as a true record. The Chair duly signed them.

**4. Much Marcle Parish Council, Chairman's Report:**

Cllr Barber-Starkey thanked all the parish councillors for their efforts over the last year, in particular those involved with the footpaths and speeding initiatives. The new footpath officer, David Beckett (unfortunately unable to attend the meeting) was thanked for all his efforts. He introduced the Clerk and thanked her. The new Jubilee Gates at Bartons are now in place with thanks to Cllr Cotton for organising. A Flood Working Group has been put in place recently, led by Cllr Cotton which also involves local residents and farmers. A new noticeboard has been fitted by David Beckett in the newly repaired and cleaned wooden structure at Bartons and it looks much improved. The recent 'Parish Clean Up' was very successful. The Speedwatch initiative has recently started with more to report on this later. Looking at installing SIDS with the help of PCSO Kirsten Kysow for location and funding. Cllr Powell has completed a survey of all the grit bins, where they are and their current state of repair now waiting for Balfour Beatty to complete their own review.

The emptying of the bin outside the Walwyn Arms now resolved with Balfour Beatty.

The Resident Wish List distributed at the last Annual Parish Meeting included 16 individual items, 8 of which are not within the parish council's direct remit for example school parking issues. However, the parish council have completed 6 from the list and are addressing the speeding and flooding issues.

**5. PCSO Kirsten Kysow, West Mercia Police Report:**

PCSO Kysow introduced Sergeant Alice Bennett to the meeting. She provided the crime figures for the last 12 months with comment on the theft of fuel from a farm, a trailer and a vehicle (that was recovered) and a drink driver. She informed the meeting that there is currently a national campaign against dangerous driving.

She thanked the whole parish for their support of the Community Speedwatch initiative. The Commissioners Community Fund should come in at the end of April to help with the purchase of SIDS (Speed Indicator Devices) and she will assist the parish council in applying for this. Sergeant Bennett added that with the new Police budget and grants coming back in, it is a good time to be looking for funding. The Chair asked if they could help with the locations for the SIDS? Yes they can. PCSO

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Kysow informed of the tool and property marking service on offer and she is more than happy to come out to residents homes to help.

**6. Community Speedwatch Initiative:**

The Chair informed the meeting that Cllr Powell is leading this team. Thanks were given to all 9 volunteers who have been very proactive since the scheme started on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. Training has been provided to all 9 volunteers. Three volunteers work in a group and are monitoring traffic, in daylight hours, at various times of the day and at three designated sites (the crossroads, by the school and at Glebe Orchard). The majority of issues are on the main road. *A volunteer added that some of the key problem areas are not safe to operate the checks as can only stand on public land.* Two other potential monitoring sites are awaiting approval. Twelve one hour sessions have been carried out to date with 78 caught speeding. The trigger points are 47 miles per hour on the main road and 36mph on the village roads. Warning letters are sent to those on first offence, final written letter on the second offence and a visit by the police on the third. More volunteers are needed, contact the Clerk if interested.

**7. Footpath Regeneration Project:**

In the Footpath Officers absence, Cllr Julian Baldwin presented a report provided by the Footpaths Officer. Please see Appendix 1.

Cllr Baldwin gave thanks to Hereford Council, all the landowners involved and the National Lottery. Thanks were also given to recently retired Footpaths Officer Jim Edwards, Dave Beckett and Richard Brooks who have worked hard to make the walks accessible.

*A member of the public commented on the condition of the gate near the model airway hut, rickety and tied with rope and could it be replaced?* Cllr Baldwin responded that the current set up is complicated but hoping to change them.

The Chair added that the Parish Council are working towards Interactive maps and are also investing in illustrative maps of the footpath routes in the area. Hope to present them next year.

The Chair thanked Jim Edwards on behalf of the parish councillors and the parishioners for all his help. He has developed good relationships with Hereford Council and the local farming community and opened up and maintained many of our footpaths. He was presented with a plaque to be placed on one of the new bridges in his name as a gesture of our thanks.

**8. Parochial Church Council of St Bartholomew's:**

In their absence the Clerk presented a report provided by Mr Richard Brooks. Please see Appendix 2.

**9. Much Marcle Memorial Hall:**

Mr Scott Flemming as Head of the Trustees reported. Please see Appendix 3.

**10. Much Marcle Community Shop:**

Mrs Elizabeth Lutzeier provided a report on behalf of the Community Shop. Please see Appendix 4.

**11. The Rushall Club:**

Mr Peter Montague-Fuller as treasurer of the Rushall Club reported. Please see Appendix 5.

**12. Much Marcle Gardening Club:**

There was none.

**13. The Guiding Groups:**

Mrs Nicola Johnson reported on behalf of the Guiding Groups. Please see Appendix 6.

**14. Hellens:**

Sash Giles informed the meeting that Hellens Manor is a charity administrated by the Pennington Mellor Munthe Charity Trust. Her role is to run the Manor on a day to day basis. Entrance to the grounds and parking continue to be free. They hold a variety of events including a music and garden festival and will

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host fundraising activities for the church, community shop and the Big Apple over the course of the year. Patrick Mellory, a trustee of the charity provided an update on the planning application. There was an extension put in place to the 2<sup>nd</sup> May and they hope that by then they will have a positive outcome. They then hope to start work on the new gallery which will house their vast collection of paintings. The plan is for the gallery to be open in 2027.

**15. Much Marcle C of E School:**

Cllr Hope presented a report provided by Headmistress Laura Davies. Please see Appendix 7.  
Cllr Hope added information regarding the Twinning Association Le Barroux Grant. The Parish Council have recently funded through this grant an interactive French learning system for the school.

**16. The Mercury:**

In her absence the Clerk presented a report provided by Charmian Mocatta. Please see Appendix 8.

**17. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Much Marcle Parish:**

The Chair informed all that the draft minutes will be on the website shortly.  
A member of the public enquired of the road between Hall Court and Kynaston which is prone to flooding. The Chair responded that this part of the road has been reported before. Cllr Jefferson added that the drains have not been unblocked and this needs to happen urgently. The pond above the road does also cause issues as that has not been dredged for some time. Ward Member Barry Durkin commented that drainage is being looked at county wide -where the water comes from, where goes etc. He is looking at the Highways with regards to flooding, Balfour Beatty will react to flooding queries and if no response from them then to contact him.

Cllr Hope closed the meeting, thanking everyone for attending, for Councillors input and attendance and to all that had spoken or provided a report. Much Marcle is a very active village which is great but a few volunteers are spread thinly. We are very lucky to have the support for all the different groups. Everyone had reported a need for more volunteers. She thanked Ward Member Barry Durkin, one of the most active Cllrs in Herefordshire, whom attends all our meetings and supports whenever he can. Thanks were given to the Chair, Cllr Mike Barber -Starkey for chairing this meeting and all his hard work over the last year.

Signed.....*M Barber-Starkey*.....Date.....*30.04.2026*.....  
Mike Barber-Starkey, Chair MMPC

The meeting closed at 20.12

## Appendix 1

Much Marcle Footpath Officer Report for Parish Council Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> April 25

Recap:

Much Marcle Parish had 2 footpaths closed by Hereford Council due to collapsed bridges at Kynaston MM23-PT13 & Rushall MM16-AL1. At the time we were in approximately position 44<sup>th</sup> for replacement. After a lot of searching, Jim Edwards found out about some National lottery funding and with Julian Baldwin's help MMPC were awarded funds to go towards the bridge replacements and to install a circular walk with self-closing gates by removing the old rickety stiles and restore some of our footpaths.

Since the previous Parish AGM 24 the following has been achieved:-

- Land owner consent was agreed for a circular walk and bridge installations.
- Designs were submitted to HC to allow MMPC to have the bridges manufactured and installed.
- At the time of the bridge submission and by coincidence HC had a grant scheme running to offer help to parishes to revitalise stiles etc if they applied.
- As a result, 8 self-closing gates were supplied, by HC free of charge to MMPC.
- With training supplied by HC, on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 24 a group of footpath volunteers removed the old stile & footbridge in Rye meadows to start our revitalising.
- With our new approved skills, the footpath group set out a programme to complete the remaining stile removals / self-closing gate installations for the circular walk.
- All 8 gates on the now named "Orchard Walk" were installed before the Big Apple for people to enjoy.
- Following recommendations by HC, the footpath officers attended a First Aid Course to add to our skills.
- During the year, a lot of work was completed clearing fallen trees and repairing existing stiles in certain areas.
- Following a great deal of time and correspondence with HC, our bridge designs were not approved based on a legal technicality.
- Discussions continued with a net result that HC agreed to supply and install 2 steel & wood construction bridges with self-closing gates at the agreed locations.
- MMPC agreed to cover the cost of the bridge abutments to the maximum value of £8,000.
- The Kynaston bridge was installed in February & the Rushall bridge in March.
- Both closure notices have now been lifted.
- Following subsequent discussions with HC, we have managed to achieve a further reduction of the abutment costs to £4,000.
- This will allow MMPC to purchase additional self-closing gates for the future projects subject to price rises.
- There are more "stile free" areas being developed in the Parish as different associations offer to improve access to our wonderful countryside, watch this space.

So, what is next? We have had approval from Hellen Thomas to make a start on a second "stile free" walk starting at the Sheep Wash including Shire Hill and then going over to little Puckmore, leading back down to the How Caple Rd, taking 9 self-closing gates to complete.

We are also installing a new self-closing gate in Rushall to open access to MM16 leading to the new bridge. Are there any areas that can be improved by a self-closing gate or turn into or be included into a circular walk near you, please let us know.

MMPC would like to thank HC for all their help and support in our footpath revitalisation programme.

## Appendix 2

St Bartholomew report

The last year has been relatively uneventful. I am glad to report that no major work on the building has been necessary. Annual gutter cleaning and servicing on the clock has taken place as usual. Those of you with a

keen ear will have noticed intermittent interruptions with the clock. This has been as a result of the battery, which powers the autowind, failing on a couple of occasions. The installation of a more powerful battery charger seems to have solved the issue.

There have been fewer weddings – only 12. There has been no progress on the new garden of remembrance although this is still proposed. Work on the churchyard railings is necessary. These are in a poor state as is the supporting wall. This work may have to take precedence.

We would still like to see larger congregations but those who do attend or are otherwise involved give much of their time and expertise. The stalls at the traction Engine Rally and Big Apple are well supported and both are good community events. The Autumn Supper at Hellens in November was oversubscribed. Christmas Services were particularly well supported and were most enjoyable events with good music and plenty of cider! The newly introduced Al Age Service is being well supported and it has been wonderful to again work closely with the school and have the considerable co-operation from Laura and her staff.

The maintenance of the churchyard remains an increasing expense but things such as the Easter Lily Appeal help towards that cost. The cost will again exceed £4500 this year

The church remains a focal point in the village and every effort is made to welcome visitors and make it a venue for events – Hellens Music is an example.

Thank you to all those who do give their support

### **Appendix 3**

Much Marcle Memorial Hall - April 2025 Situation report for the Parish Council Meeting

Overview : As Hall Trustees, our main responsibility is to provide a safe, warm and welcoming building which is the focal point for the community, used regularly for events which enhance the enjoyment of living where we do.

The Hall is a Community Asset and as Trustees we are responsible for looking after it. We have organised and managed community events, overcome obstacles and embraced the need for change. We have seen new events taking place here as well as our traditional ones.

We have continued to futureproof the fabric of the building, replacing the old windows with new double glazed, energy efficient ones. With the aid of a grant from the National Lottery we have also added and replaced the roof insulation to further enhance the energy efficiency of our building.

Traditional events included the Big Apple ( many thanks to the villagers who helped with the service we offered our visitors), Tree of Light and our Burns Supper in January.

New events : Our Fish and Chips Quiz evening was so popular , we ran a second one which was sold out !

Our Beaujolais Nouveau evening was very well attended and was greatly enjoyed.

Our financial position remains healthy although our income from hirings no longer covers our normal expenditure. Reluctantly we have had to increase our prices by approximately 5% from June. This is the first increase since pre Covid. We have a 5 year funded plan which is being followed.

What do we need ?

People! We are looking for volunteers to join the management team. People who are prepared to roll their sleeves up and help out with maintenance, compliance, attending and helping to run our events. We urgently require someone to take on the role of Safeguarding Officer as our current one is leaving the village having successfully guided us through all the legislation with which we have to comply.

As Trustees I am pleased to report that we have more than fulfilled our obligations during the past 12 months.

### **Appendix 4**

The Community Shop Steering Committee.

I'll begin with the Mission Statement we wrote when we started out as a Steering Group for the Community Shop.

We aim to serve our community by developing a sustainable shop, cafe and Post Office which creates a friendly social hub in Much Marcle.

The Parish Council had done a thorough investigation into the problem of losing the village shop and committed to supporting the community shop wherever possible. They then asked for volunteers for a Steering Group.

With our emphasis on serving the community and on creating a friendly social hub, what progress have we made since our last parish meeting?

For a start, a huge number of people, not just the Steering Group have served this community, helping to move us closer to our Community Shop. More than 70 people volunteered to help with the 2024 Much Marcle Open Gardens, raising over £6000. The Fundraising Group have organised friendly social events for a range of people in the village - from Archery to Bingo, Afternoon Tea to Wreath-making.

Members of the Steering Group have focused on three important areas:

1 - on Planning Permission,

We finally secured this on 30th September 2024.

2 - on raising awareness of our project and securing more shareholders and donations

We have done this through our regular presence at Hellens Produce Market, the Steam Rally, the Model Air Show and the Big Apple.

Articles have appeared on Facebook, in The Mercury and in the wider local press. We even had a mention in parliament when MP Ellie Chowns referred to our “fantastic project” and asked the government to reinstate the Community Ownership Fund.

We now have 266 shareholders - a record for projects like ours - and a total of more than £110,000 raised so far.

3 - our third main focus has been on securing grant funding. We’ve shared with the parish council our disappointment because two funds which would have fast-tracked us towards our shop - Herefordshire’s Community Hubs and the last governments Community Ownership Fund were both pulled when the parties in charge changed. The National Lottery’s Community Fund turned us down, saying that “Much Marcle doesn’t need a shop.” We’re now working on applications for smaller pots of money, with the help of Herefordshire Grants Liaison Officer. And we’ll keep on working until we get our shop.

We’d just like to say a huge Thank you to everyone who’s been serving the community by working with us to get this community shop built.

## Appendix 5

### TREASURERS REPORT

Overview: The Club was constituted following the gifting of the premises and warden’s house under the will of JJS Powell. It was given for the benefit of the ancient parish of Kynaston and the hamlet of Rushall until the Trustees are of the opinion that no further useful purpose would be served by continuing the Rushall Club.

It is run by Committee elected from its members:

Committee Members President – Rob Jolly

Chairman – Jeremy Hambling

Vice Chairman – John Walters

Secretary – was Doreen... TBC

Treasurer – Peter Montague-Fuller

Other Committee members – Francis Wynne-Jones, Stuart Evans, Dave Roberts, Julian Baldwin and Will Grant

The Trust is a key matter which now needs resolution following Doreen’s passing. There are no living Trustees since they did not hand their role onto other Trustees (or other beneficiaries were unwilling to act as Trustees). We are engaging with a known beneficiary, David Powell, as you trace the residuary beneficiaries under JJS Powell’s Will and beyond. With David Powell’s assistance and support we hope we can come to some clarity on how it can be taken forward. Either the Trust is wound up and the beneficiaries notified (and the property passes) or it is reconstituted with new Trustees from the known beneficiaries. People have volunteered their time to help with keeping the Trust straight (tax returns and bank accounts) without any instruction from Trustees, given that there are none. They have kept it going for the sake of Doreen who was living within the Trust property (and had done all her life). The matter will come to a head soon with bills and repairs needed Current year overview This year has been difficult with Doreen’s going into hospital, no dance nights and

fewer skittles matches. I am extremely grateful to Jeremy, Johnny and Stuart for keeping it going. Income has fallen from last year to £6,583 (£11,608 in 2023). This income has been due to the stalwart members but in large part due to the Skittles matches and as well as some important bookings like the Trumpet Ploughing Club, Birthday parties, Tractor Events and Big Apple meetings. 2024 membership was down mainly due to timing of receipts. It is on the up in 2025. It remains the case that the Club really needs income to be in excess of £10k to break even each year (particularly with the potential rising running costs: prices of both food/drink as well as utility costs). We were grateful to hear from Hazel and Tash in 2024 who had some excellent ideas for driving up local engagement and use of the Club, so thank you to Jeremy for introducing them. As ever the insurance costs (after wages and bar purchases) remains the most significant early outlay £2,230 as a fixed annual cost. There is continued pressure upwards on this cost which we rebuff with NFU Mutual. However we do note how good there were when dealing with the insurance claim on Clems Cottage. Closing stock is flat this year since Doreen did the stock take but didn't keep a record of it. So we have had to assume that it was the same as last year end. Margins remain healthy (44%). We have over £13k in the bank. A loss of £2,322 (2023: £2,082 loss) has been made. The loss will be carried forward for tax purposes to be used against any future profits. So I do not expect corporation tax to be paid in the near future.

Summary: With Doreen's passing we have reached a turning point for the Club after over 70 years of being in operation and largely run by Clarence and Doreen (and their predecessors). The Club can be viable with the help of volunteers but we urgently need a resolution on the Trust. It has some funds (£13k) but not enough to maintain the building (which is the responsibility of the Trust). We continue to have difficulty in attracting regular events at the Club but always grateful to the current members and use with skittles and need to find a regular event like the old Country & Western evenings to attract new members.

Revitalise – key points

- The Club is volunteer run now.
- It needs building work but will struggle to get grants given the issue on the Trust
- It is a great space for villagers to enjoy a pint in some unique surroundings
- It is a great venue for parties and licensed events with games facilities, such as a full sized snooker table.
- We need to do up the lounge bar to make it more cozy and warmer when there are only a few in the Club.
- We need to adopt technology like a card reader to accept payments in a form other than cash.
- We are always looking to new members, new ideas and keen to make it live for the community.

Peter Montague-Fuller, Treasurer of the Rushall Club 26 April 2025

## Appendix 6

Guiding Report to Much Marcle Parish Council AGM 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Brownies & Guides have continued to provide a range of activities and for girls between the ages of 7 and 14 on a weekly basis, here in the Hall.

There have been around 10 girls on the rolls of both Brownies and Guides packs through the year.

As a break from the format of previous reports, I thought that I would highlight some of the highs and lows of being a volunteer leader.

Last September, at short notice, the Guides needed interim leaders. At the end of the summer term, we had said goodbye to one leader who could no longer commit her time due to increased demands of her career and family.

By the start of the Autumn term, it became clear that the remaining Guide leader could also not juggle the demands of her young family, and work as well as Guides and so she reluctantly stepped down on a temporary basis. This meant that the Brownie leaders stepped in to support the continuation of meetings for Guides as a temporary measure and thankfully were subsequently replaced by 2 leaders from Ledbury who have

admirably picked up the baton and have grown the numbers in the pack. They both have their own packs in Ledbury and will have to make a decision as to whether they will continue here in Much Marcle by the end of the summer.

We increasingly provide a safe haven for girls who are struggling at school or at home. We have had a number of safeguarding challenges this year, keeping us on our toes. Thankfully we have job roles which keep us up to speed with such matters.

One of our successes over the past year or so has been a particularly shy girl who was struggling to interact in school. Initially, she found it hard to enter the room with us, but has steadily joined in with all of our various activities and grown in confidence and now absolutely loves coming to Brownies. The improvement in her social skills has been so rewarding to witness; proving the consistent, caring, safe yet fun environment has enabled her growth. Hers is not the only story like this, of course and rewards us for the hours of work that we put into planning activities.

Over the years we have noticed a change in the children's ability to concentrate, listen or even sit still for a few minutes! Currently the youngest girls in the pack will have been about 2 years old during the pandemic and the lack of social skills remains evident in their behaviour.

There is certainly never a dull moment being a Guiding leader! We are always keen to hear from anyone who would be happy to help us out, to share the load!

## **Appendix 7**

### **Much Marcle CE Primary School - Report for Annual Parish Council Meeting**

#### **Academy Update**

We are now excited to announce that we are formally part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust. We are excited to have the opportunity to work alongside a group of likeminded schools, who share the same vision, where sharing resources and ideas improves the education for all our children.

Andrew Teale, the Director of the DHMAT and Fiona Gibson, the Arch Deacon attended a special assembly on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March to formally welcome the children and staff into the academy.

#### **Pupils on Role**

We currently have 81 pupils on roll, including our nursery. Our Nursery numbers have increased significantly, and we hope to return the nursery children back into the log cabin as these numbers continue to increase.

#### **Future Projects**

We have no immediate building plans but as you can imagine with the age of the building it is constantly under review. Our Friends are actively fundraising to update our book collection in our library, and we are constantly looking for local grants that can supplement our ever-tightening budgets. We would welcome any suggestions for local business support or grants that we are unaware of.

#### **Thank you**

We would like to thank the community for their support in events such as our coffee mornings, and our regular community readers. If you feel you have time or any skills that would benefit the school, please do let us know.

## **Appendix 8**

### **Report for the MM Parish Council 16 April 2025 on the *Mercury***

*The monthly community newsletter for Much Marcle, Yatto, Rushall, & Kynaston*

*The editor sends apologies for her absence but is grateful to Rachel who will read this report.*

For the benefit of new attendees, I'd like to recall that at the meeting last year there were gasps from somewhere in the Hall to learn that the *Mercury* had been established BY 1897.

As a Parish newsletter it has continued to be produced ever since by volunteers; this year the circulation, although small, has increased slightly.

As mentioned last year, the *Mercury* team had decided a subscription increase was necessary. The £5 per annum for eleven copies had been unchanged for many years: not only had costs gone up generally but seldom could the *Mercury* be printed in colour; this had lead to a somewhat dull publication.

Although colour throughout would be splendid, it would increase printing costs considerably so we keep to one four-pages-section within the usual 16 pages. For special events like National and local celebrations we might stretch to more but the editor will always refer to the treasurer beforehand!

#### **Change of Treasurer**

Bernard Morris became treasurer four years ago had the task of sorting those who, after Covid, wanted to revert to printed copies and those who had decided to continue receiving an online version as a PDF. This became a minefield and took time and energy to sort out.

Our distributor, Marie, clarified the admin by producing a Master List which provides all names and postal & email addresses and is a most helpful reference.

Lin Sulley has volunteered to be our new treasurer. Readers might remember that he was editor during Covid when nothing happened so I have never known how he coped!

#### **Change of Bank**

This year Lin Sulley transferred the *Mercury* bank account to another bank which appeared to have a simpler system for 'small clubs'; this proved less simple than expected. Please make his task easier by renewing your subscription at the correct time. Reminders will appear in the two preceding issues. Again, it is necessary to emphasise that prompt renewal of your subscription, due in September, is essential. None of the *Mercury* team enjoys hounding people for money!

I must thank especially the regular contributors who send their material on time and often with several photographs which makes putting each issue together a pleasurable challenge:

Much Marcle Walkers, Gardeners' Club, Gardening Tips and, when appropriate, the Much Marcle Primary School and the 1st Much Marcle Brownies, Guides and Rangers.

Finally! The Editor is responsible for editing, designing and making sure the *Mercury* arrives on time but please remember that it is the content which keeps (we hope) the community newsletter interesting.

SO, unless libellous, contributions (including photographs) are always most welcome from everyone, please, whenever you feel like writing something!