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Much Marcle Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on

Thursday 30th April 2026

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: Clerk - Rachel Freestone
Ward Member - Barry Durkin
Footpaths Officer – David Beckett
PCSO - Kirsten Kysow

Public: 11

1. Chairman's Welcome:

Cllr Barber-Starkey welcomed everyone to the meeting,

2. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies had been received and accepted from Peter Montague Fuller, Charmian Marcotta and Laura Davis.

3. Minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 16th April 2025. **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. He commented on the following:

Much Marcle Twinning Society which linked with la Barroux in France had wound up and the parish council had agreed to look after the remaining funds. In 2025, funds were used to support a french scheme of work for Much Marcle primary school, it had been well received.

Picnic benches – recently installed the 5 new tables made from recycled plastic bottles on the Bartons Field, they look lovely and hope they will become a well-used asset.

Drainage – been trying to improve the drainage at the crossroads. The parish council received a small grant from Hereford Council and with a bit more added by the pc work was completed to clear the ditches around the crossroads. Next area to work on is the area near Amberley House, Hereford Council have agreed to support the work required but timings are unclear. There is additional Drainage funding for 2026, if any members of the public know of anywhere that needs attention, please let us know. Many thanks to Cllr Cotton for all his work with this.

19.04 mofp arrived

Footpaths - A lot of work still being done by our Footpaths Officer and the team. He will report but, thank you.

Hedges at the Bartons – they are in poor condition. We have received advice and the plan is to remove it all and replace, likely from September 2026.

Defibrillator – the parish council are considering an additional defib situated at the Walwyn Arms, this will depend on funding availability towards the end of the year.

SIDS – have now received agreement from Hereford Council re the position (took a long time) and are now looking at possible grant funding.

Rushall Club – we held one meeting last year at the Club and the July meeting will be held there again this year.

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5. PCSO Kirsten Kysow, West Mercia Police Report:

She explained that she is a member of the Ross on Wye Local Policing team. They cover 27 parishes as well as Ross town centre. Much Marcle has experienced one theft, 2 recorded road traffic collisions, 3 domestics, 1 criminal damage, 1 report of anti-social behaviour and 1 burglary in 2025/26. Between Nov 25 and Feb 26 there was a spate of burglaries in their area with a person now apprehended who they believe was also responsible for the MM burglary. She is able to help with security marking and general advice, contact her directly or through the Clerk.

There was a low level of road traffic accidents which can be attributed in part to the Community Speedwatch scheme. Speeding is the main issue in this village, thankfully not a lot of crime. SIDS are now in the pipeline, a delay at Hereford Council had held it up.

They hold monthly surgeries in the villages, these will be moved to the evening to give more opportunity to attend. The West Mercia police website has a lot of advice and can contact them.

A PCSO has 53 powers, they work closely with the community and respond to low level crime. They are also an extra resource to 999 calls and can work on priorities set by parish councils. She was thanked for all her support.

6. Community Speedwatch Initiative Representatives:

The Much Marcle scheme was set up in Feb 2025 with 9 initially trained. 1 more volunteer has joined and there are 2 more in the pipeline. They have to operate in 3's as operator, recorder and safety officer. They take time, make, model and reg. number and direction of travel, a lot to record in a short period of time. They have 3 authorised sites currently and are hoping to add more in the future. The details recorded are sent to the headquarters in Droitwich. First offence is a written letter, second get a further strong written warning, third is visit by the police. They operate one hour sessions at random times in the day.

They have completed 83 sessions since started. 5 sessions have recorded no offences so what doing is working. The max speed recorded was 64 in the 40mph zone. The team have received mixed feedback, with problems recorded with one person. They try to do a couple of sessions a week and hoping to be able to get a spot by the Royal Oak. Would like some more volunteers.

A MofP asked if they have any plans to record in the village. They have but as is a long stretch, cars slow down when see them.

A MofP asked if they are required to be so obvious? Yes, for safety.

7. Footpaths Officer Report:

David Beckett full report – Appendix 1

8. Much Marcle C of E Primary School:

In her absence, the Clerk read a report that she had provided – Appendix 2.

Action: Cllr Thomas to paint the goal posts.

9. Much Marcle Community Shop Steering Group:

Thank you for inviting them. The Steering Group were formed following a call for action by the parish council and they are supported by the parish council. The Parish Meeting highlights how many volunteers there are, so many wonderful actions in the village lead by all the volunteers.

Progress with the Community Shop, café and post office – a huge number of people have continued to serve and they move closer to having a shop. The Shindig and dog show raised almost £4k, a great event. The separate fundraising group meet regularly and have organised many events which have raised lots of money.

The Steering Group continue to raise awareness and manage shareholders and donations. They attend the Hellens monthly market and other events. There are 270 shareholders with £177,000 raised so far. They continue to work on securing grant funding following disappointment last year that two funding options had been stopped. National Lottery Community Fund turned them down as said MM didn't need a shop! They were advised to go for Charity Status but were turned down. Good news is that they would be in a position to build the shell of the shop now however, they want to have more funds to be able to be ready

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to function. Big thank you to everyone who has been involved, they are not going to give up.

10. Parochial Church Council of St Bartholomew's:

There are 14 on the PCC who met 6 times in the last year. Money remains a priority, the church operates at an annual loss of approx. £10.5k with the greatest outlay being £20k a year to the Diocese.

A quiet year on the fabric of the building. The auto-wind on the clock has failed, he has to climb up weekly to reset it. They need to address the church railings and want to get a working party together to do that.

They have to deal with Safeguarding, every member of the PCC has a DBS with Church Wardens needing an enhanced DBS and to complete training.

As with the school report, links between the school and church have improved since Laura Davis became the Headteacher. Children's services are held at least 4 times a year. The Open the Book team go into school every Friday to act out stories from the bible.

Christmas is the highlight with a well-attended Christingle service – 30 children and 40 adults. The carol service is joyous event. As always would appreciate more in the congregation. They have received many visitors with the book noting from Australia, Japan, Canada, France – they are a destination church. Support given to the church is very much appreciated.

11. Much Marcle Memorial Hall:

There are a number of regular activities held in the Hall including pilates Taekwondo, badminton, a nursery group, guides and brownies, film club, gardeners, dance and a monthly coffee morning. They rely on parties at the weekend. They made a small profit of £700 this year having spent £7k on maintenance funded by a grant or hall funds. They have future proofed the hall for the next 5 years.

Thanks given to the parish council for their contribution to a new defib. which will replace the current one. Thanks also to the Gardeners Club who maintain the beds and tubs. Thanks also to all the volunteers, two regular cleaners and Scott who manages the bookings for the hall and other events.

12. The Rushall Club:

In his absence, Cllr Baldwin read the report provided by the Treasurer – Appendix 3

13. Much Marcle Gardening Club:

The Gardening Club is thriving with 35 members. Their activities are set in stone. In the winter months they have meeting in the Hall and invite speakers. In the lighter months they visit local gardens with tours. This year, items have covered from ponds to preserving and pollinators. They will be running a plant stall at the Open Gardens event with any contributions to this gratefully received.

14. The Mercury:

In her absence the Clerk presented a report provided by Charmian Mocatta - Appendix 4.

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

A MofP commented on the pot-hole situation. Ward Member Durkin informed that the Highways website has the planned jobs.

Cllr Hope thanked everyone for attending, all the volunteers represented at the meeting and all those not able to attend tonight. She thanked Ward member Durkin, he attends all the pc meetings and is available to all if needed. Thanks given to the Chair and all the parish councillors. Keep up the good work.

Signed.....Date.....
Mike Barber-Starkey, Chair MMPC

The meeting closed at 19.51.

Appendix 1

Footpaths Officer Report

WE HAD A GOOD YEAR ON THE FOOTPATH TEAM BUT AS YOU KNOW TIME FLIES.

DID YOU KNOW IT WAS JUST A YEAR AGO WHEN THE REPLACEMENT BRIDGES WERE INSTALLED AT RUSHALL MM16 AL1 & KYNASTON MM23 PT13.

OVER THE LAST YEAR THE FOOTPATH TEAM HAVE WORK IN EXCESS OF 86 HRS INSTALLING SELF-CLOSING GATES AND OTHER RELATED DUTIES INCLUDING WEBINARS WHICH THE COUNCIL LIKE USING NOW.

WE ARE CURRENTLY MAKING GOOD PROGRESS ON THE “SHEEPWASH” WALK PHASE WHICH INCLUDES ANOTHER 9 SELF CLOSING GATES ADDING 1.5 MILES TO THE ROUTE.

ONCE FINISHED AND WITH THE ORCHARD WALK ROUTE, WE WILL HAVE A 5 MILE STILE FREE WALK FOR ALL TO ENJOY.

THERE ARE MORE PHASES PLANNED WITH LANDOWNER DISCUSSIONS DUE TO START SOON. WE WILL ALSO BE LOOKING TO GENERATE A MAP OF THE STILE FREE WALKS OF THE AREA, THIS WILL BE PLACED IN A NOTICE BOARD ONCE A LOCATION CAN BE AGREED.

IT IS ALSO HOPED THAT THE SAME MAP CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM THE PARISH WEBSITE BUT AS YOU KNOW THESE THINGS TAKE TIME.

IF YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED JUST ASK.

Appendix 2

Much Marcle Primary School Headteachers Report

School context

- 5 classes – Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 2, Year 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6
- Number on role – 87

Pupil Numbers

- Nursery is growing rapidly. We can take 16 children a day and we are now full on one a Wednesday with only a few spaces on others
- We had 12 Reception children this year but are full in September with 17
- We have had 7 in year transfers this year from other schools

Things to celebrate

- Joining the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust has provided support and opportunities for staff to access collaborative professional development, as well as pooling together to buy resources at a reduced cost
- Links with the Church – we have a fantastic Open the book team who visit school every Friday. We have children read at local services
- Community readers – a group of volunteers who come in and read with the children
- An excellent recent SIAMS inspection report that commented on our strong vision and values, community and children’s personal development, particularly with opportunities provided within our school parliament
- Growing pupil numbers

Challenges

- Budgets continue to tighten and resource prices increase
- Continuous wait for our Ofsted visit, with a new framework introduced in September 2025. It is unknown if joining the academy has re-set our Ofsted clock so we are still waiting!

Additional

- We would like to ask permission for a school fete on the Bartons to be held after our Sports Day
- Clarify works on the goal posts
- Always looking for support in the summer for outside projects if anyone would like to offer their time please do let the school know

Appendix 3

The Rushall Club

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.

Trust

The resolution of the Trust constitution and/or winding up remains the key matter. Since Doreen's passing, good progress had been made with one of the key beneficiaries under JJS's will, David Powell. David was keen supporter of the Club and wanted to fulfil the wishes of the JJS to keep the Club in the Community of Rushall and Kynaston. He had engaged his financial adviser, Nigel, to identify the existing beneficiaries and seek to "buy them out" and hand the Club to the community. It was unclear as to the expectations with regard to Doreen's old cottage. David and Nigel were making good progress but it was out of the Club's hands.

We now face a similar problem as before, with David's passing earlier this year. The resolution of the Trust will need to be wrapped up in his will and his nominated beneficiary. Despite all the good work to this point, the resolution of the Trust is now facing a very long delay.

The matter has come to a head with the latest council tax bill. Due to Clems Cottage being empty for over a year, the Trust has had to pay "double" council tax. We now have the bill for this full year for £5k and the Trust does not have sufficient funds. As a result the Trust is likely to be subject to a Court Summons since discussions with the Council Tax department does not provide any alleviation or support for this issue. [any assistance or ideas would be welcome]

Club - current year overview

This year has been difficult. We have continued to have the support from stalwart members and are extremely grateful to Jeremy, Johnny, Francis, Jean and Stuart.

We have cut our cloth to meet the straightened times, such as removing the TV and saving on PRS and BBC licence fees. There is still £13k in the bank but investment has been limited. We have not completed the financial audit and so cannot provide detailed figures for 2025. However the bank balance demonstrates the Club is effectively breaking even.

We have been grateful to Graham Baker for providing support to put WIFI into the Club and Francis Wynne-Jones for sorting out the cashless payment system, Sum-up.

Events have been limited to Skittles matches and a few one-off meetings (Trumpet, Tractor Runs, Botanical Society) and ad hoc openings for members. It has been important to manage stock levels to meet the decline in events and to buy long dated/non-perishable drinks.

As ever the insurance costs (after wages and bar purchases) remain the most significant early outlay £2.5k as a fixed annual cost (it includes insuring Clems Cottage). The Club will maintain an appropriate level of insurance to cover these properties (despite the Clems Cottage insurance being for the benefit of the Trust which does not have sufficient funds).

Summary

The Club is ticking along with the help of volunteers. But we still urgently need a resolution on the Trust and the challenges which come with that.

The Club 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 but always grateful to the current members and use with skittles. It could be a great feature of Rushall and Kynaston and provide both a meeting space, entertainment and more besides for the remote community. However it is very difficult to draw in new members, but we will continue to explore every opportunity.

Revitalise – key points from last year

It is a great space for villagers to enjoy a pint in some unique surroundings. It is a fabulous venue for parties and licensed events with games facilities, such as a full sized snooker table. The Club is volunteer run now.

- The Club needs building work (it has lost and asbestos tile and I can't find a builder to help cover the exposed roof woodwork) - to do major works will require resolution of the Trust
- The lounge bar needs redecorating – hope to get a working party together.
- Card reader to accept payments has been installed.
- We continue the search for new members and new ideas

Appendix 4

The Mercury

I apologise for my absence this evening.

It is probably known by now that my husband, David, passed away in early January in his 99th year.

His health had begun to decline in November and I began to worry that the December issue would be late – I also had to try to become familiar with a new laptop and the new accompanying software.

It soon became obvious to me that I was never going to have the time or energy to edit and design the December issue; subsequent events meant that neither would I be able to produce the January nor the February issues. I gave a brief explanation for this in the March issue.

The *Mercury* team were concerned about reimbursement of subscriptions for readers who had not received three out of the eleven annual issues: but this was dealt with swiftly and simply:

Subscribers were informed in the March Mercury that subscriptions for 2027 will not be due until December this year instead of September. There will be the usual reminders in advance.

The *Mercury* now does have four pages printed in colour which I believe makes it more attractive. It would be good to have further colour but this will increase production costs.

We occasionally have more if local events justify the extra pages. (Technical reasons dictate that pages are printed in fours so, out of the usual sixteen, there will be four or, occasionally, eight in colour.)

I must mention that David's lifelong interest in photography and his sophisticated photographic programme on his computer enabled us to lighten/darken/sharpen/straighten etc any photograph which needed a little TLC before I included it. I much regret that my laptop/software does not have this programme.

I cannot emphasise sufficiently that the editor's role is merely to **edit and design** any material which people send in.

It is the **contributions by readers**, or others, whether these are text or photographs - or both, which make the *Mercury* interesting.

I never know from one month to the next what I will have to work with!

As I have mentioned before, one remit of the *Mercury* is to donate to local groups; the June issue will announce that we're donating £100 each to the first three applicants who apply!

My grateful thanks must be to those who are our regular contributors - and so often never need to be reminded! But also to those who send in 'fillers' which are not necessarily to do with local events but which are interesting and often very amusing. Anyone is most welcome to contribute to the *Mercury* - although anything libelous will not be published.

FINALLY

The *Mercury* would not happen if it were not for two other people:

Lin Sulley our Treasurer, and Marie Bowyer, our distributor who for many years has organised her team of volunteers who deliver each printed copy to individual letterboxes.

Thank you.

