

Notes on a discussion following Marple Civic Society's AGM, 12th April 2025

It is well known that there are over 90 community organisations in Marple. Some are quite old, including the Civic Society itself for example and some relatively new, Marple Fest, for example. All of them in one way or another have the interests of Marple and Marple residents at the heart of their business. If anything is missing it is that they do not always speak to one another. To begin to rectify that we have brought together leaders from 3 groups to talk about what it is they do and how they contribute to Marple life.

They are Peter Forbes from Marple Christian Care, Helen Middleton from the Marple Youth Project and Susan Smith from the New Mills and Marple and District Rotary.

Peter Forbes introduced Marple Christian Care. It organises lifts for people with mobility problems, in the main providing for the elderly who have hospital appointments. The range is wide, from local GP to as far away as Rochdale. Volunteers making their cars available for the service can claim 45p per mile. All volunteers require a DBS check (to help ensure the protection of vulnerable people) and must have a clean license. In answer to questions he said that there is no lifting of wheelchairs required; that for short appointments drivers often wait or for longer appointments can leave and return when required - or wait with a long book; that the organisation was previously run out of the library and is looking forward to returning to the library in the new building.

Helen Middleton introduced Marple Youth project. Marple Youth Project has been supporting young people aged 11-16 since 2021, with a focus on children with SEND and additional needs. The aim is to create inclusive, enriching experiences that are fun, empowering and confidence building. Activities include short breaks, taking young people on exciting outings such as canal boat trips bowling, cinema visits and creative art workshops. During the school holidays, they run holiday clubs where they introduce them to new activities like climbing, archery and tennis, helping them discover new interests and skills helped by Brabyns LTC and Linnet Clough Scout facilities. Art is a big part of what the Project does, involving children from our youth club and local schools in creative community projects. The artwork in Marple Station and Brinnington Station are examples of what they can achieve. The aim is to build young peoples' real-world confidence. In answer to a question about where they are based, Helen said that they work out of Senior Citizens' Hall a lot.

Susan Smith, secretary of her branch of the international organisation of 'the Rotary' made an introduction. They meet in Marple Golf Club on Thursdays at noon. There is always an informative and entertaining talk given by a guest on a wide range of topics. The meetings are open to the public and all are welcome. Rotary is essentially about fellowship, and it does a lot of charity work with the sentiment 'service above self' - it does the Marple Father Christmas collection for example. It is completely international and if visiting anywhere it is not unusual for a Rotary member will look out for the local club whether it is in Hexham, India or South Africa (she has visited rotaries in all these places informally in this way). Tangentially, she reported that at present the club is trying to set up a project to deal with a piece of scruffy land on Arkright Road and has had no joy from dealing with the Council: can anyone help?

In the following discussion there was agreement with Helen Middleton's comment that 'people just don't know how to volunteer'. Perhaps, Michaela Meikle said, things will be better when there is the new hub to act as a focus for all this activity: all agreed. She later remarked that 'Marple is lucky to have so many people invested in the area'. Marple Vision, which could be a focus, is off the ground with 2 notice boards erected. Keeping the Marple website going, an ideal vehicle for making connections and swapping information, is essential. We should engage schools more - Marple Youth Project is great - we need more

of youth engagement. Can we get the scouts involved more? They are a deceptively large part of Marple youth culture.

There were two joyful shouts from the floor at the end. 'Bring back Marple Urban District Council!' and 'We belong to Marple!'. Both received approving noises.

The meeting finished at 11.55