

April 2025 Newsletter



The Mardler & The Aylsham Show

Thanks to Margaret's recollection of The Mardler's early involvement in the Aylsham Show, we have been offered a stall at this year's event.

And An Offer

Taking place at Blickling Country Estate on August Bank Holiday Monday (25th) the annual Aylsham Show has offered The Mardler a free charity pitch at the show this year.

This is an opportunity for us to raise our profile and raise much needed funds. But we will need helpers to set this up and to cover the stall.

Not wanting to just stand there in front of a few posters we have had a couple of ideas about our potential stall:

- We could setup a mini-studio and ask show goers to provide brief reports of their experiences for inclusion in a future edition
- We could construct some vision impairment goggles and ask visitors to complete simple tasks like taking a simple written test, tossing a ball into a bucket or reading a newspaper

There are lots of rules and regulations to follow and many resources to find. We will be granted two free entry tickets and further tickets are available at a discounted price.

Please consider helping with the organisation and/or manning of the stall.

If you can help then please email chairman@mardler.org.uk so we can get the ball rolling.

A Donation

On Monday the 13th of January Chris and Lorna Wilson attended a packed Aylsham Town Hall to accept a donation of £250 from the Aylsham Show committee. The Show distributes its profits to worthy local organisations and £22,000 from the 2024 show was donated to 56 beneficiaries.

An Interview

The very next day the show's event coordinator, David Hitcham BEM, visited The Mardler recording studio. He was greeted by Chris Wilson, Richard Preston, Margaret Phillips and Beverley Hopkins who explained how The Mardler works and did a little show-and-tell. David was very interested in what we do and extremely supportive of our cause.

With Richard operating the recording system, Beverley and David recorded a short interview. David explained how he had come from a banking background to be involved in the show. He highlighted some of the show's history and what goes into putting on the event. The interview went out to our listeners in the magazine supplement of edition 1952 on the 31st of January.

Events, Meetings and Meals

AGM 2025

At a recent meeting of the Mardler Trustees the date for our 2025 Annual General Meeting was set as Saturday the 28th of June. The venue will once again be the Methodist Hall. Tea, coffee and cake will be served from 10 AM with business starting at 10:30. Please do come along to meet other volunteers and hear reports from our office holders.

40th Anniversary -1985 to 2025

The Mardler 40th Anniversary meal has been much anticipated with around half our volunteers expressing an interest. The Trustees concluded that The Stamp would pose access problems for some so focus was shifted to The New Forge on the A140 Norwich Road into Aylsham. A number of the Trustees have had recent good experiences there and The New Forge has just been awarded the highest Food Hygiene Rating by Broadland District Council. We have made a lunch booking for Tuesday the 17th of June starting from 12 noon.

Selections from their extensive menu will need to be made three weeks in advance.

Watch your mailbox for a booking form. In the meantime you can check out [The New Forge](#) menu at their website



Aylsham Town Hall Events

We are planning to attend a couple of events over the next few months, which will give us an opportunity to showcase The Mardler. Raising awareness within the community will hopefully lead to new volunteers, sponsorship and listeners.

The Healthy Town Event

Aylsham residents are invited to come and meet people from the health service, care organisations, charities, fitness providers and local service providers to help them access the care and support they need.



This will be held in the Aylsham Town Hall on April the 3rd from 10 am until 1 pm and is being organised by the Market Surgery Patient Participation Group and the Town Council.

A table has been requested and David Mitchell, Mardler Sound Engineer, has already offered to help on the day. Could you spare a little time to help promote The Mardler?

The Aylsham Community Fayre

For the second year running this will be held in Aylsham Town Hall. Running from 10 am until 2 pm on Saturday June the 7th the hall will be filled with voluntary organisations from the area and will be celebrating National Volunteers Week.

The organisers have asked us to provide a 'volunteer story' to highlight one individual's experiences of helping out at The Mardler. They are looking for a short piece explaining how you came to volunteer, what role(s) you undertake and why you keep doing it. Could you help?

We will, of course, need helpers to man our stalls, to explain what we do and answer questions.

If you can help then please email chairman@mardler.org.uk

Focus On ... The Listener Database

I struggle to imagine how, in the early days of cassette tape publishing, The Mardler volunteers managed to keep tabs on over three hundred listeners using a paper based system.

Thankfully the system that greeted me when I joined in 2021 had already moved to a computerised database – something I have experience of from my working life. There's always a danger that when you say things like that you end up 'volunteering' to look after it. And, of course, that's how I came to be technical support to the Copy and Dispatch teams.

Our listener database sits on an ageing, but capable, laptop and is a Microsoft Access database. For those of a technical persuasion this is a relational database with seven linked tables, fifty-seven queries (pre-defined searches and updates), twenty-three reports and twenty-six data entry or display forms. If that's not complex enough there are hundreds of lines of programming written in Visual Basic for Applications.

Each of our weekly Copy and Dispatch teams has one person trained to use the database. In simple terms that means using a hand held scanner to capture the barcodes on returned wallets and then confirming that we are performing the dispatch.

Our system works much like a library – you can borrow a limited number of 'editions' before your account is put on hold. The database keeps a tally for each listener of those sent and those received.

Listeners can borrow up to four editions before alarm bells ring and the Listener Liaison team are called into action.

The automation built into the database records who has returned a wallet and works out who hasn't. If a listener hasn't returned one and has not reached their limit then our database operator must dig out a spare wallet and address label so that we can send them the week's Mardler. The database produces a list of those needing wallets and those who are 'on hold'.

After each dispatch the database is archived onto a secure memory stick to allow for recovery in the event of a disaster.

Of course there are many nuances to the process. We might need to add a new user, update their details or even remove them.

There are on-screen forms in the database to allow for all these operations.

We treat our listener details with great care. The laptop is locked up when not in use and you require a password to access it. We are careful to follow the laws around data protection by seeking permission to store details, keeping those details secure and deleting them when no longer required. Just imagine what damage a criminal could cause if they got hold of a list of names, addresses and contact details of over one hundred vulnerable people.

Chris Wilson



Comings and Goings

Our listener numbers are steadily creeping up with one hundred and sixteen at last count and we are seeing a slow increase in the number of online listeners too. Our volunteer numbers remain steady at around sixty-five.

Some of you may have seen a recent Mardler article which was published in many of the local magazines around north Norfolk. This was aimed at recruiting a couple of new editors and has resulted in a flurry of enquiries. So far most are interested in reading and unwilling to stretch to the extra responsibility of putting a weekly edition together. Hopefully by our next newsletter we can report that our editing team is back to full strength.

Over the last four months we have said goodbye to volunteers Hugh Davies (Trainee Editor), Sam Geard (Sound Engineer) and of course we mourn the recent loss of Jolyon Booth (Trustee). As we go to press we must also announce that our Chief Editor, Peter Adamson, has decided to step down after 35 years of service (see his story in this newsletter). We have welcomed on board Trudy Box (Trainee Editor).

We do now have a substantial reserve list of readers but would still like to recruit a helper for Copy and Dispatch as well as another Editor. If you know someone who might join us then put them in touch with chairman@mardler.org.uk

Comings and Goings Continued

On the listener front six have left us, for various reasons, and we have welcomed ten as follows – Pat (Holt), Jean (Norwich), Jeanette (North Walsham), Angela (Cromer), Maxine (Cromer), Thomas (Holt), Susan (Felixstowe), Mary (Sheringham), Michael (Cromer), and Peggy (Holt).

As always our thanks must go to Imogen Waterson and Beverley Hopkins who work so hard to visit and support our new listeners.



And Finally, A Farewell by Chief Editor Peter

Born and bred in the East Midlands I have memories at an early age of attending Sunday Mass with my father, who sang in the choir. I distinctly remember being impressed by the skills of the organist, who was blind ... and he also let me pump the organ. My career took my family to Yorkshire and finally Norfolk and we tended to favour charities for the visually impaired, particularly those supporting children. As a result, after moving to Aylsham I was easily persuaded by a friend, Ted Hicks, in 1990 to join The Mardler, at that time one of five hundred Talking Newspapers in the UK.

On Tuesday evenings the copying and dispatch team opened returned pouches, briefly listened to 333 cassette-tapes ensuring completion and bagged them for posting. Naturally, the work was taken seriously but it was also a social occasion and I recall exchanging banter in particular with one Ron Cook, without sight himself but he taught me the ropes. It must have been the time I met Margaret Phillips, she and husband Barry being founder members of The Mardler in 1985. Margaret still heads a weekly Copy and Dispatch team. Cassette tapes gave way to CDs and more recently memory sticks ... how times have changed.

Ted Hicks talked me into becoming a reader on his team and after a short time to share the editor/producer duties on an alternative month basis. Apart from an eighteen month break for personal reasons I returned as a monthly editor/producer, that being my main, absorbing responsibility to this day.

Joining the Committee as a Trustee I have attended many a lively meeting, eventually serving as Vice Chair to a very pleasant and capable Chair, Joyce

Pemberton, then as Chair myself. My recent role as Chief Editor is also rewarding, encouraging and embracing pertinent ideas of newer recruits. A number of memorable volunteers over the years come readily to mind, too many to list but I would like to think friendships formed will survive. (Perhaps I could just mention my team's fine Chief Engineers, Jolyon Booth and Julia Bloomfield).

I do recall that in 2010 we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the founding of The Mardler, when some sixty odd members and friends, including some listeners, attended the AGM and lunch, the guest speaker being Richard Batson, then Chief Reporter of the North Norfolk News. Now the 40th Anniversary is upon us and will surely be just as memorable.

Nowadays, the UK boasts 300 Talking Newspapers that face far more competition from a variety of different broadcasters. Nevertheless, we can still claim The Mardler, 'Goes right down our listeners' street' with the local news and our magazine articles and is a welcoming venture for any volunteers seeking a worthy local cause.

In closing I must pay tribute to Wendy, my wife, for her forbearance and contribution over the years to my involvement in this Charity. Similarly, our new Chair, Chris Wilson and his wife Lorna, of Copying & Dispatch renown, deserve a special mention for the vibrancy they have brought to this venture in recent years.

A fond farewell ...

Peter R. Adamson