



It's Christmas!



This year The Mardler was invited to decorate a Christmas tree as part of the Christmas Tree festival at St. Michael and All Angel's Church in Aylsham. Volunteers Beverley Hopkins, Anne Allen, Susan Grant and many more created a variety of Mardler themed decorations to hang on the tree. The event ran from November 22nd to December 2nd. Funds raised during the event are shared among all participants. For those of you who missed it here is a picture of our tree and one of our stall at the Saturday coffee morning.

Mardler Marketing & Fund Raising

Aylsham Healthy Town Event

Following on from the success of the Aylsham Healthy Town event at the start of April a group of Mardlers attended a repeat of the event on Saturday the 11th of October in the town hall. Volunteering organisations from around Aylsham packed the hall. Once again the event attracted plenty of visitors; we handed out a number of Mardler leaflets and established contact with potential new listeners and volunteers. Mardlers Beverley Hopkins, Marylyn Evans, Ruth Harrison, Richard Preston and Imogen Waterson (pictured) took turns explaining to visitors what we do. Many thanks to Beverley for organising the stall and making the splendid bunting.



North Norfolk Stroke Support Group.

The group meets once a month in Sheringham and offers those recovering from the effects of a stroke the chance to meet, chat, have a drink and a cake, have a go in the raffle and listen to a visiting speaker.

On Wednesday the 26th of November a double act from The Mardler, Chris and Lorna Wilson, provided a short talk and played a few entertaining sound clips from past editions of our magazine. Mardler flyers were taken by some prospective new listeners.

The group kindly donated £60 to The Mardler.



The Apollo Golf Tour – Sprowston Manor Golf Club

A chance discussion between Mardler volunteer Gavin Flynn and his brother Stephen has led to a donation of £500 from a warm-hearted, fundraising group based at the Sprowston Manor Golf Club. Called The Apollo Golf Tour the group raises funds for local charities through tournaments, raffles and auctions.



After Copy and Dispatch on the 17th October Lorna and Chris Wilson raced off to Sprowston to meet the group. Following a very warm welcome we were given the opportunity to explain what we do and, of course, offer our profuse thanks for their kindness.



Tesco Stronger Starts Scheme

We finally had our turn at the Tesco Stronger Starts blue-token fundraiser which ran from July to the end of September in the Aylsham store. With both volunteers and listeners asked to support the cause we watched nervously as the blue tokens piled up each month. Gone was the idea of a weekly shop. Now it was little and often!

Early in November we had the results and it was first place for The Mardler! Our request for funding had to be focussed on a specific project so we chose the support of a year's worth of new listeners. The cost of providing 24 players together with the memory sticks and postal paraphernalia comes to just under £1500 which is what Tesco will now fund.

"Every little helps"

The Mardler tokens mount up

The Aylsham Show

Although we were unable to take up the offer of a stall at the Aylsham Show this year we have, once again, requested a donation from the profits of the 2025 show. We should find out if we are successful around the time that this newsletter gets published. Fingers crossed.



Focus On ...

Sound Engineers

About one and a half hours is the length of a typical edition of The Mardler. To produce these 90 minutes of content, the editor, four readers and the sound engineer will be together in the recording studio for just over three hours. The Editor will already have spent a considerable amount of time the previous day planning the edition.

But let's focus on the three hours that the production team spend in the studio to create that 90 minutes of content. Why does it take so long? 'Listener satisfaction' is our goal and making a faultless 90-minute recording at the first attempt is a challenge. In any live recording there will always be glitches, stumbles, mispronunciations and off-microphone noises that need to be corrected. To do this the Sound Engineer must work their magic, and that accounts for most of the additional time.

Readers come in diverse sizes and gender, and the tone and volume of their voices may vary significantly. The first challenge for the Sound Engineer is to do a sound check, to ensure that each reader's microphone is correctly positioned and that controls on the mixing desk are set to the correct level to compensate for the different voices. Get this right and the listener won't have to keep fiddling with the volume knob on their player.

The mixing desk allows the Sound Engineer to switch from one reader's microphone to another during a recording and to fade music in and out. Headphones connected to the mixing desk let the Sound Engineer hear what's happening, but more importantly, the mixing desk is also connected to a computer which shows a visual trace of the sound being recorded. We use sound recording software called Audacity.

The studio protocol is that if a reader in mid-flow stumbles, they should pause a moment and then resume their reading from a point before the stumble. During this time the recording is still live and Audacity lets the Sound Engineer add a marker on the visual trace at the point where the error ... sorry stumble ... occurred. We stop the live recording after about 15 minutes to allow the sound engineer to review what's been done so far.

This pause allows the Sound Engineer to trawl back

through the visual trace to locate the various markers, use the Audacity software to delete the bits of the recording that went wrong, and then save a stumble-free piece of audio. In fairness to the readers not all errors are theirs. It has been known for a Sound Engineer to open the wrong reader's microphone, fade in the music earlier than it should have been or mutter something in the background that gets picked up by the reader's microphone. These Sound Engineer mishaps ... errors ... are, of course, rare!

So, the first bit of recording, in Sound Engineer parlance the 'first clip', is now perfect. It just remains to record the rest of the week's edition. Usually, this will comprise another six or seven clips. Almost inevitably each will need a bit of tidying up before the team can start recording the next one. This is how the three hours is taken up.



We are now at the stage where the readers have done their bit and it just remains for the sound engineer to transform the 90 or so minutes of, hopefully, faultless recording into something that can be sent out to the listeners. The first step is to export each of the clips from Audacity and save them on the computer as MP3 files. This is the file format that can be copied onto the USB sticks that the listeners

receive every week. To allow the despatch team to do their part the Sound Engineer produces two master USB sticks, each containing the seven or eight clips.

It now just remains for the sound engineer to cobble together a single MP3 file of the whole edition and upload it onto the internet so that it is immediately available for anyone to listen to by visiting The Mardler website (mardler.org.uk).

Try as hard as the Sound Engineer might the occasional glitch gets onto the finished recording. For this we can only apologise and hope that our listeners find the occasional mistake amusing.

Richard Preston
Week 4 Sound Engineer

Comings and Goings

Our listener numbers are slowly creeping up. There are currently 105 postal listeners, with 12 listening online. The main clusters are in Sheringham (18), North Walsham (15), Cromer (12), Holt (9) and Aylsham (8).

Our volunteer numbers remain steady at just under seventy.

Over the last four months we have said goodbye to Week 3 Editor, Tracy Newsome, and will lose our Chief Engineer, Julia Bloomfield, at the end of this year. We have welcomed on board four new readers: Christine Baraclough; Beverley Hopkins; Alison Hoveson; and Robert Wotton. We also have new Editor, Rick Waghorn, and new Sound Engineers, Gavin Flynn and Peter Simons currently finishing their training.

On the listener front five have left us, for various reasons, and we have welcomed seven as follows – Janet, Jane, Patricia, Barry, Robert, Winifred (all from North Walsham), and Janet from Overstrand.

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

41st Anniversary Meal?

Following on from the success of our Ruby Anniversary meal at The New Forge it has been suggested by the Trustees that we might celebrate every year. This time the plan is to arrange something earlier in the year, perhaps February or March. Watch out for more details in your mailbox.



Birds of a Feather



It takes a special kind of person to volunteer – and you are all very special! But did you know that a number of our volunteers also volunteer for the Living History Team at Blickling Hall? We can't be sure how many as, once they are in costume, it's hard to recognise them.

If you have time for some extra volunteering with a friendly group performing light-hearted productions based on Blickling's past then you'll be glad to know that they are recruiting.

Contact John Hoyle via johnhoyle@btinternet.com for more information.

And the best bit is that they don't perform on Fridays so you can keep helping out at The Mardler.

Listener Feedback

We occasionally get notes from listeners returned with the memory sticks. Often in spidery, uneven script written by those who can barely see. Here is a selection of those received this past year.

Penny from Westwick wrote:

A big 'thank you' to your brilliant team. Thoroughly enjoyed listening. Looking forward to next week's

Graham from Roughton wrote:

Hello Mardler - Many thanks for the newspaper I enjoy the weekly selections of news, good choices. Very good of all of you for putting it all together. Keep up the good work.

Cheers,

Janet from North Walsham wrote:

Thank you to everyone involved with the talking newspaper. I do enjoy listening to the paper and so look forward to Saturday mornings. It's so good to know what's going on in our little bit of Norfolk.