

## Newsletter 25 – Autumn/Winter 2023

*We've been working for four years raising awareness, encouraging discussion, and stimulating practical action. We want to move forward as a thriving, sustainable community that responds positively to the big environmental and social challenges.*

### Wild Flower surveys of Blue Heart Verges

During the year we have been assessing how successful the Blue Heart verge initiative has been. In May and July we surveyed three of the verges. May is when many wild flowers are at their best, burgeoning in the lengthening, early summer days, a good time to get a sense of what is around. Although we have too little data to draw any meaningful conclusions, we found the verges appear healthy and contain a variety of species. We counted 34 in the Sheepfair Lane verge, 14 at Little End and a whopping count of 42 different species in the Community Centre verge!

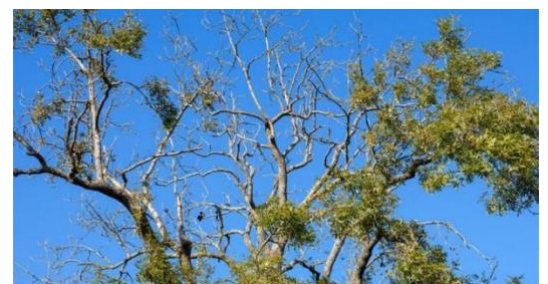
Our second survey was in July. An original survey of the verges had taken place in July 2020 and we wanted to survey at the same time of year to see which wild flowers survived since the first seeding and how the verges had fared in the meantime. We found 20 species at Sheepfair Lane, 26 at Little End and 24 at the Community Centre. Compared to the 2020 survey the number of species has gone up at Little End and the Community Centre but was slightly down at Sheepfair with 20 this year compared to 24 in 2020. In each verge there has been a shift in the wildflower community with some species gone, new ones arriving and some of the originals still present. For example, 'Fox and Cubs' *Pilosella aurantiaca* is one of 14 species that has disappeared from the Sheepfair Lane verge although there were 10 new species too. Maybe the verges are settling down and finding their natural rhythm, time will tell.

Our plant lists have gone to the Parish Council to begin to establish a record. We aim to see what does well here, what we may lose and what new species may find their way to our verges. We have plenty of wildflower expertise in the village and also the support of a locally respected botanist. She felt the Community Centre verge seemed settled and healthy. As well as a good variety of species none of these were rampant and though not included in the count she noticed a number of different grasses as well, another clear indicator of the verge's overall health.

Wild Flower Group

### Ash Dieback

Ash Dieback is now rife in the local hedgerows and verges. Most trees in the roads around Marshfield are now affected in one way or another and are a couple of years away from dying. Just across the border in Wiltshire the extensive tree cover either side of the A420 has been cut down and shipped for burning to generate electricity. Thankfully an extensive replanting



programme has gone some way to minimise environmental impact.

Sadly, a similar plan of clearance on the Tolldown Road, on Marshfield's northern boundary, did not see similar replanting done, due to different policies for replacing felled trees, not necessarily in the same places.

Replanting young trees in the roadside margins to speed regeneration is frowned upon.

Last year SM sought out a few farmers to identify suitable corners of farmland to plant new trees and mitigate the impact of our forthcoming loss of these important features in our landscape. A small number were planted on Garston Farm and

Bond's lorry pound off Tormarton Road. We're looking to repeat the process this year - **If you have a farm or small holding that has an unfilled corner that could host a tree, please let us know.**

## **Community Harvest Bring & Share Supper with Apple Pressing**

This was a day of true community cohesion and activity at the Community Centre. Throughout the afternoon we had a steady stream of people with their apples for Louise Wirick's capable Apple Pressing expertise, helped by many others, which provided plenty of juice for the evening too. Before the meal there were competitions for both children and adults. We had artist, Natalia Bo, helping with painting combined with the 'strangest looking vegetable' competition.



People were welcomed by music from Kindred spirits and our vicar, Sally Wheeler, blessed the food at the start of the meal. People brought a wonderful array of dishes to share. The supper was interspersed with a quiz, set by Paul White, a raffle and a thought-provoking reflection from Aurea Hart that put this harvest celebration into the context of the threats to our Climate. The long tables were dressed with flowers kindly provided by the Flower Arranging Group and they, too, went as raffle prizes so much were they admired.

We hope to build on this idea of community meals in the future based on the 'Long Tables' that are springing up around the country. We hope it might become an annual event.

## **Cracker Workshop, Thursday 21 Dec, 23**

The village has been donated some cracker making equipment dating from the late 80's. We're holding a workshop on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December at the Community Centre from 2.00-4.00pm. Please come and join us to make some 'vintage' crackers. See the poster for more details.



## **Community Car and E-Bike Questionnaire Feedback Gathering**

There has been a lot of work undertaken looking at different transport options for Marshfield. Some options are proving to be unviable for the size of our community, others show more promise. A pilot scheme to offer lifts is being trialled amongst a small number of residents. **On Thursday 18 January 2024** in the Community Centre small hall we will be feeding back the results of our Community Car and E-Bike Questionnaire post cards (which were distributed in August) as well as news about other work done by Sustainable Marshfield.

We wish you all a sustainable Christmas and 2024 filled with more positive ideas to help the planet.

**STOP PRESS** We're looking for people to join our committee and we'd really like someone with children at a local school to join our little band of sustainers. Please contact us if interested.

### ***Growing Sustainable Marshfield membership with your help***

We want to grow our free membership, connecting up households in and around Marshfield who are interested in taking local action for sustainability. Please encourage friends and neighbours to join. Email: [membership@sustainablemarshfield.org](mailto:membership@sustainablemarshfield.org) Correspondence to [news@sustainablemarshfield.org](mailto:news@sustainablemarshfield.org) Join the **Sustainable Marshfield Group** on Facebook/email, like 500 others, who get regular updates.