

Chair's Report

AGM held on 14 April 2025

At Marple Methodist Church

Another good year and the Society now have a membership of 154 with average attendance at each of the 8 talks given of 87 people including visitors. Visitor number during the whole year totalled 53. The information we got back from survey completed by 66 members in December 2024 leads us to think that the majority of members are happy with what we do and members are thanked for the suggestions made in that survey.

As well as talks and visits, 3 summer strolls took place. One of these was an evening sail on New Horizons canal boat which was a sell out on both trips that were offered.

Only one small exhibition was prepared this year and it was on display at the Compstall Cricket Club during a summer street party and it featured photographs from Compstall village, the cricket club and Marple Bridge in times gone by. Many copies of the photos were given to the cricket club afterwards.

But there is a lot more to the Society than walks and talks and there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes.

The website and newsletter continue to attract lot of interest and attention and thanks go to whole team who are responsible for this important part of the Society's profile. Since last September the main website has attracted an average of 965 views per week and the online archives have had an average of 910 views per week.

Often these viewings generate a lot of questions about a variety of matters and thanks go to the archive group for dealing with these enquiries.

Since September 2024 there have been 38 enquiries received and these enquiries have ranged from a student looking for work experience, a BBC employee looking for information about Fred Perry, the War Graves Commission, part of Historic England wanting information about the Compstall War memorial and questions from local U3A groups among others.

Additionally information has been given to The Wharf project and to Lisa Smart in her bid to gain World Heritage status for the canal network. In replying to these enquiries donations of money, documents, photos and items are frequently given in return which all adds to the richness of the material in the archives.

Also this year the committee have done a lot of work looking to future proof the Society. As well as the members survey which was carried out at the December meeting there was also an 'away day' to focus on future needs as well as there being constant debate at committee meetings. All this information has been used to develop a business plan which will be actioned during the coming year.

Although we are possibly the largest community group in Marple we still have relatively small numbers compared to commercial organisations but members of the committee still have to be constantly aware of the changing external factors that have to be complied with. Things like Health & Safety legislation and the requirements of our insurers, Data Protection Regulations which require us to have a Privacy Policy on our website. Since lockdown the Guidelines for members going on visits or walks has been introduced after consulting with organisations like Age Concern, the Ramblers Association and Probus. The most recent policy to be introduced is the Social Media policy which can be found on the website as we now have a presence on Facebook. It may seem extreme for a small society such as ours to go to these lengths but it is done to protect the Society, its members and its reputation. Keeping up with all these factors as well as the usual committee business can take a lot of time.

Thanks go to all my colleagues who give so much of themselves to keep the membership and interest in local history alive.