

Here's a selection of images from our task days and projects interspersed with comments from the people we connect with in the local community received within 24 hours of requesting them for this application:



"I realise that the Council has to save £30million pounds in the current financial year and consequently has to make gardeners redundant, the sight of people like the Friends of Memorial Park clearing leaves in pouring rain brings home the realities of the credit squeeze. I think they do a fantastic job and without these volunteers our environment would be a lot less pleasant. Mark Whittaker also runs the community web site, which we in the Rotary Club find essential for our communications."

Chris Farnsworth – New Mills Marple and District Rotary Club



“We are extremely fortunate in Marple to have dedicated individuals who give their time freely to maintain and enhance the appearance of this beautiful public space and their dedication continues with the provision of sports facilities for all ages. As we approach the centenary of the start of WW1, the War Memorial and surrounding gardens are a credit to everyone involved. The Society is proud to have been involved with the Jubilee Garden project and looks forward to future collaboration.”

Hilary Atkinson, Chairman Marple Local History Society



“I would like to congratulate the Friends of Marple Memorial Park for the excellent work you do, the beds have looked particularly attractive this year, it is always a pleasure to walk through the park. The planting work you have done around the War Memorial is also excellent. The children's playground area is a real asset to the town and is well used. Since the Park was given to 'the people of Marple' in 1922, it is commendable that it is partially maintained by people of Marple! ie the Friends.”

Alison Allcard, Chairman, Marple Locks Heritage Society



"I think the results you have achieved in the Memorial Park are amazing and to have done all this in face of cuts in spending by the local authority are even more impressive. As a former Chair of a Friends group, I know how hard it is to motivate people to turn out on wet and cold days and yet you seem to have done that. The park is a credit to the Marple area and brings a lot of pleasure to so many members of our community across all ages. Well done."

Jackie Collins, Former Chair, Friends of Brabyns Park



"With the cutback in Council funding for Parks, the work of Friends of Marple Memorial Park is a great contribution to the amenities of Marple. It is good to have an attractive, well-maintained park in the middle of the town."

John and Ann Hearle, Mellor Archaeological Trust.



"I am very grateful for all the help you gave me when I wanted to install a memorial bench in the Park, and also for the subsequent effort that you have given towards its maintenance. You and any of the other volunteers who I have spoken to have always been most friendly. You do an excellent job."

Pamela Bluhm (commemorative bench donor)



"I am delighted to write in support of the Friends of Marple Memorial Park. Looking at the work done in their Task Days and the environment the Friends create to coordinate other projects like the Skate Park Improvements and the future of other facilities/buildings like the Toilets & the Park Cottage, it is difficult to imagine what the Memorial Park would be like today and tomorrow, without the multiple efforts of the Friends. I write here both - as a private individual, who has a great interest in seeing all that is 'Marple' survive and thrive; and - as an active volunteer with two local organisations. It is almost impossible these days to overstate the importance to the Community of Volunteer Groups.

In both above respects I can do nothing other than express my gratitude for the amazing efforts put in, and the results achieved, by the Friends of Marple Memorial Park."

Chris Walters, Mellor Archaeological Trust and Friends of Mellor Parish Centre



"The park is the centrepiece of our town and is a real destination place where locals and visitors return time and time again. The park is maintained beautifully by Friends of Marple Memorial Park; their energy is astounding! Thank you friends, we take our hat off to you..."

Gillian Postill, Chairman, Marple Civic Society

Marple Memorial Park - The Carvers & Barlows



Thomas Carver and his twin John first came to Marple in 1859 when they purchased Hellins Mill from the family of Charles Waldmsley.

Thomas moved his family into Hellins House using the canal arm that ran into the mill yard to transport their possessions. The sunken bridge parapet to the right of this sign is one of the last traces of the arm, which was filled in during the late 1950s.

John built a new home for his family called Woodville Hall. This was later purchased by Frank Barlow, who married Thomas's eldest daughter Mary, and it became home to the Barlow family.

The Carvers were Congregationalists and raised money to build a new chapel on Hibbert Lane that was opened in 1955 (now the United Reformed Church). In 1969 they established the Albert School on Church Lane. Good attendance apparently ensured half-time employment at Hellins Mill!

During the cotton famine of the early 1860s Thomas's wife Hannah ran a soup kitchen for the people of Marple and became very involved in the lives of the mill workers and their families. This led to her setting up the Sick Nursing Society.

Thomas made an impact on Marple in many ways. He tried to improve the lot of his workers by organising lectures after work and providing a library. He formed the Hellins Mill Brass Band and often played drums with them.

In 1875 Thomas built the Union Rooms, now the cinema just a short distance from where you are standing. This included a coffee tavern, a library and reading rooms and a room for religious services. Free and easy evenings were a regular feature and the Carver family often provided musical entertainment.



John and Thomas Carver

In 1852 Thomas formed the Union Room Mission Army, which had its own band until 1899 when it apparently spotted its oystrook by visiting a local hostelry and some members had to be taken home in wheelbarrows!

Frank Barlow had business interests in tea plantations in Ceylon. He also became involved in the life of the village and was president of Marple Band when it was formed in 1902. Around the same time Thomas and his son Oswald purchased Springfield House on Church Lane and installed a gymnasium so that the young men in the area could exercise. It is better known today as the Carver Theatre.

Thomas and Hannah celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1904 and they are pictured here on the steps of Hellins House with their family. Soon after the couple moved to Southport. Hannah died in 1906 and Thomas passed away three years later.

The First World War took the lives of four of the Carver grandchildren. Two sons of Oswald and Kate and one son of Ethel, Frank and Mary Barlow also lost their only son. A dreadful toll for one family and perhaps just as well that Thomas and Hannah did not live long enough to grieve their loss.

After the war ended the Carver and Barlow families gifted the land for this park in memory of their four sons and the other 137 men of Marple who fell during the Great War 1914 - 1918. It was dedicated as a War Memorial Park on 22 July 1922 with a ceremonial pageant attended by more than 10,000 people.





Thomas & Hannah Carver's Golden Wedding in 1904 taken on the steps of Hellins House. P.L. & John & Oswald Carver, J. Barlow, M. Thomas, J. & Ethel, J. & Mary Barlow. Mrs. J. & John, J. & John, 10. November 1911. Mrs. J. & John, 10. November 1911.



Members of the 1922 Pageant

Dedicated to Peter Bardsley (1929 to 2010).

This display board was created by Friends of the Park in partnership with MMRP. It was funded by Marple Local History Society's PROUD 100. The scale of Marple 1850-1980 by Peter Barlow and John Barlow.

"The 'Friends of Marple Memorial Park' have done a remarkable job in ensuring the park always looks to the highest standard and is a pleasure to be in. Their regular task days help to maintain the park as well as introduce new ideas for the Marple public. As a very local School we enjoy using the park for a variety of activities and applaud and greatly appreciate all that the Friends group do. Thank you."

Lee Sanders, Headteacher, Brabyns Preparatory School



“Our park enhances our environment as a wonderful open space right in the middle of the town, giving a lovely open aspect with beautiful views to the hills beyond. It is heavily used by such a wide spectrum of people - those who want a quiet sit as they watch the world go by, young children who enjoy the swings and climbing equipment, or just want to run on the grass, boys working off energy on the skate board track, people playing bowls, and even the 'boules court'. We have the public library, the clinic, a facility for senior citizens, the Boy Scout headquarters and the local CAB office. There is room for local events like the stalls connected with the carnival, and for dignified civic ceremonies like Remembrance Day dedication around the town's war memorial.

The park was originally the grounds of the house of the man who built Hollins Mill, without which Marple as we know it would never have come into existence. After the First World War it was given by the mill owners to the people of Marple as a memorial to those who had fallen in the Great War. As we approach the centenary next year of the start of that war it is important to keep and enhance that memorial. The Friends of Marple Memorial Park, and SMBC Parks Department do an excellent job in keeping the park in good heart, but they need support to help them further their efforts, and this award would do just that.”

Judith Wilshaw, Citizen and native of Marple, Local Historian and member of Marple Local History Society and Member of Marple Civic Society



“Friends of Marple Memorial Park is a fantastic group which works extremely hard for the upkeep of flower beds, repair and maintenance of benches, design and installation of information signage, repair and maintenance of the War Memorial and its preparation for Remembrance Day, fund raising for improvement and expansion of skate park, etc, etc.

The Marple Vision Partnership aims to transform Marple into a vibrant visitor destination, capitalising on the wealth of heritage and unique environment to generate economic and cultural prosperity for the town and the community. FOMMP is a key player within the Partnership and with the position of Memorial Park at the centre of the town it is imperative that the group continues and flourishes.

In particular, FOMMP (and its many volunteers) is absolutely essential during this time of funding cut-backs by Stockport Council to the Parks Department and other services.”

Graham Clarke, Marple Civic Society Committee Member, Marple Vision Partnership Committee Member

“Born and raised in Marple I spent my youth playing in the park before I left to serve 22 years in the Army. I returned to the village, (and the Memorial Park), with my family some 30 years ago. Each year since then I have seen the park, its play area, bowling green, and the quality of the flower beds, etc, get better and better. Since the parks ground staff has gradually been reduced in numbers, this care of the park is purely down to The Friends of Marple Park. WELL DONE and THANK YOU.”

Jack Turnbull, Marple Bowling Club and Marple Band.



“I regularly use the Memorial Park in Marple, as a short cut when I walk to see a friend, or in a more leisurely visit when I walk my dog there. It is always a pleasure to walk through this park, and much of the credit for that must go to the people who look after it as ‘Friends’. There is always colour in the flowerbeds and the variety of plants creates a real community atmosphere, in a way that stiff rows of municipal planting cannot achieve. Some parks have clearly deteriorated since council cuts affected their maintenance, but the Memorial Park tells quite the opposite story. It is obviously cared for, especially poignant to note by the war memorial, and very well used, there’s usually a good cross section of age groups enjoying its different attractions whatever time of day. If it were the face of Marple, it would be smiling a welcome.”

A R Marsh, Marple Bridge resident, and my link is simply that I am a regular visitor to the Memorial Park



“Memorial Park is Marple’s best green space. An area that brings a lot of happiness to all the residents of Marple regardless of their age. Central to it all are the ‘Friends of Memorial Park’, a dedicated group of local people who have taken on a lot of the responsibilities to keep the park in fantastic condition along with being a voice for the local people. Mark regularly holds working party days where he asks for volunteers to clear flowerbeds, tidy trees and smarten the place up. A day many of the fire fighters here have volunteered for. We have worked with ‘Friends of Memorial Park ‘ for a number of years as we all live in the local area and this year we donated a sum of money from a charity event to their current cause, to improve the skate park for the local teenagers. This hopefully helps us by diverting any anti-social behaviour and ensures the future generations have plenty of things to help them develop. Overall a fantastic, prominent local group with dedicated volunteers who make a big difference to the community we all live in. thanks!”

Simon Dowling, Watch Manager, Marple Community Fire Station



“After making enquiries about sponsoring a bench local to where I live, and getting no satisfactory response, I approached FMMP via Stockport Council, as my father lived in Marple.

FMMP were very helpful throughout the process, provided advice about possible commemorative benches including possible locations, and carried out the necessary installation work following the purchase by me of a suitable bench. FMMP showed an appropriate level of commitment to the maintenance issues. It is abundantly clear that FMMP have a keen interest in keeping the park in a first-rate condition, and the commitment to see that interest fulfilled.”

David Kay (commemorative bench donor)

“The work effort and enthusiasm your group put into Marple Park are self evident to all who visit the Park. Your work on the Garden to commemorate the Centenary of the outbreak of World War I is inspirational. May I also on behalf of the ex-services community give our thanks and appreciation for your attention to the War memorial and its environs.”

Ron Townley, Marple Poppy Organiser, Royal British Legion



“Friends of Marple Park have been very supportive of our club over the years. Being in regular contact with SMBC they have been able to alert us to any contentious issues, in particular the campaign they organised to keep the park toilets open. The work they carry out in the park has been invaluable in keeping it as an attractive and useable space for the community during the ongoing austerity cuts that are being imposed.”

Ken Else, Secretary, Marple Park Veterans Bowling Club



“My wife and I are extremely appreciative of the work carried out by the Friends of Marple Memorial Park. Their efforts in maintaining the facilities of the park and introducing many new projects are an asset to the community. Our own personal experience of The Friends concerns a memorial seat placed near the bowling green in memory of my late brother. This seat has been maintained by the group and includes one complete refurbishment to a very high standard. The Friends of Marple Memorial Park deserve any assistance available, being it personal or financial.”

Alan McFall (donor of a bench that was refurbished by FoMMP)



“Marple is a special place and that’s due to the likes of the Friends of the Memorial Park who have worked so hard to create and maintain a beautiful park in the centre of our town. Despite Council cuts, the park has more facilities and features and is more beautiful than ever, thanks to the work of the FOMMP. All generations use it, from toddlers on the play park, to young men on their skateboards, to older chaps playing bowls and I regularly enjoy walking the dog there. The Friends of the Memorial Park are a marvellous group who deserve support for their sterling work.”

David Hoyle, Helen Winterson Ltd, Market Street, Marple



“Marple Memorial Park is the main site that hosts the attractions of Marple Carnival. And what a beautiful site it is. The hard work that goes into the care of the park throughout the year (come rain or shine) is plain to see. The support that we receive from the Friends of the park to ensure that it's a venue fitting for our Carnival royalty is much appreciated.”

Rachel Rowe, Secretary Marple Carnival Committee

