

The Parish Pump

The Journal of The Marden Society

January 2010

OLD ASHFORD

An illustrated talk by Richard Filmer, who began his talk by revealing Ashford's Roman history of a Roman crossing of the River Stour where Beaver Road now is, known as Trumpet Bridge. An old Roman settlement has been excavated recently and its results should be published soon. Richard described Ashford as originally an agricultural town with no great manors. Clay for the brick and tile industry, and chalk, was all quarried locally. Flooding still occurred in the town centre up to the 1960s but improvements in river and flood control has meant that there have been no further floods.

Corn trading took place in the town centre for many centuries, up to the 1850s. Sellers with their tables. Henry III granted 1243. The market also sheep being one of the successor now operates When Canterbury and Corn Exchanges, Ashford building 100 ft long, 30 ft 1,200 people. It was used and political meetings until demolished in 1964. Corn trading was still happening right up to the day of demolition. Great oak trees were felled for charcoal and timber framed buildings. If oaks were left until April before felling, when the sap is rising, the bark could be stripped and used by local tanners. Ashford had the second largest tanning factory in Britain, making strong industrial leather. However in the 1950s leather became unfashionable and the industry ceased



'samples' set out the Market Charter in sold wool; the Romney oldest surviving breeds. Its from a new industrial estate. Maidstone erected splendid followed suit in 1861 with a high, capable of holding for dances, roller-skating,

Spanish chestnut trees were introduced by the Romans, and were grown around Ashford, Suitable only for hop poles and stakes. Only about 56 acres of hop gardens remain now in England, compared with 72,000 acres in 1950; an almost unbelievable reduction in the industry. Ashford was also a brewing town, plus it has one of the widest high streets in Kent. The Fire Brigade was formed in 1862 with volunteers paid for by local businessmen. It also took part in parades, such as the 1911 Coronation Parade of King George V. The Great Fire, as it is referred to, of the Co-op in 1926 was a great event with £22,000 of damage. However

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with the aid of other local shops the Co-op did not miss one day's trading as space was found for various departments in other shops – until a new Co-op was built one year later.

Railways brought mass employment in 1842. Maidstone was the chosen original route for the line but the town opposed the proposition so the railway went through Ashford instead – thereby coming through Marden, too! The Railway Company provided decent housing, education for its workers, plus entertainment. Even the great Charles Dickens read extracts from Christmas Carol on one occasion. During World War 11 the works produced military equipment and worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, women now undertaking many of the heavy tasks. The giant Railway works closed in the 1970s.

A tank presented to the town after 1918 is still in place, now with a covering to help maintain it. It is still used as an electric sub-station which use helps keep it both as a memento and a functional building.

Richard's interesting talk revealed that Ashford has more to it than meets the eye.

MAUREEN CLAYTON

ROBERT WHITE OF MARDEN SCHOOLS

Although Robert and his staff had in 1895, been engaged to continue their teaching careers at the new Board School, it was to be another 2 years until the new school was built next door. The Logbook shows that many meetings were held with the architect.

The School log book shows that in May 1895 “*The average attendance (of the upper Standards chiefly), decreasing owing to hop-tying but not to the same extent as in former years*” – May 22 “*Punished John Shepherd and Henry Cogger for thieving gooseberries from the adjoining fruit plantation, and warned the whole School on this matter!*” I found this particularly interesting because I have often wondered how the Footpath adjacent to the Memorial Hall got its name, Plantation Lane.

On September 30 the Logbook entry reads, “*Teaching staff including R White (Head), one woman – three men*”. There is no indication as to what this entry relates to. Could it have been the number of staff employed at the School? It is followed by an undated entry that indicates “*an outbreak of measles around Christmas/New Year*”

1896 End of February – “*Several of the distant children unable to attend because of inclement weather*”.

I have assumed that the Logbook entries prior to 1897 were made after the School was renamed “Board Schools” in 1895.

I wonder if under the National School authority the records were as strictly kept as when it became the Board Schools. That might account for the large gaps between entries.

1897 – MARDEN (NEW) BOARD SCHOOLS – BOYS' DEPARTMENT ONLY.

July 12. THE ABOVE OPENED FOR TEACHING PURPOSES AT 9AM

At last, the great day had arrived but only for the boys! Their entrance door still shows the name, **BOYS**, carved into the lintel above. It was also that after this date in the logbook, the old National School was referred to as the Mixed School, as is shown in the first entry following the opening.

1898 – Feb 8 – Gertrude Judd late of Mixed School gained a scholarship in connection with Sir Charles Booth's Charity Scheme.

To be continued

EDITH DAVIS

Marden Walking Group Health Walks

Being physically active on a regular basis can significantly improve your health and fitness. Walking is ideal for building exercise into your everyday life. It is also a perfect way to see the natural environment around you. These Walks are supported by the Doctors of The Marden Medical Centre

We launched our Health Walks in September by naming the new footpath along to the cemetery The Dorothy Reed Walk. She tried so hard to get this established and many people enjoyed sitting on the circular seat round the tree in the centre. October's walk was a visit to the orchards to see the hop garden, apple and pear trees and the new Marden vineyard.

In November some people were visiting the Millennium Trees for the first time and extended the walk to see King Arthur, one of the largest oak trees in the area.

The flooded fields in December just drained away in time to enable us to splash our way through fields behind Bramley Court and look back on the village from a different angle.

Kevin and Anne Stone joined us on this walk. January's walk was photographs and anecdotes round the streets of Marden - the walkers telling us tales of the past - invaluable information for the History Group.

A good number turn up at the Car Park at 2.00pm on the first Saturday of the month suitably clothed and shod and we all enjoy ourselves. Do come and join us.

CATHERINE ALDERSON

Message from the Chairman

I hope as many of you as possible will come along on January 27th to the AGM, followed by a cheese and wine social evening. We urgently need a volunteer to take over the role of Secretary, as our long-standing Secretary Edith Davis is retiring. Edith who has been Secretary for 22 years has done a magnificent job and will be greatly missed.

Please do come along and support the Marden Society on this occasion. Numbers at meetings have been dropping off for various reasons, so I hope 2010 will see a few more Members able to attend our bi-monthly meetings.

January 1987 – Our first Winter in Marden

We had been to a meeting in London and my diary reminds me that the trains were affected by railway work between Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and we had to change to a bus each way. The weather was bitterly cold. As we came out of Marden station a few snowflakes fell.

We woke up in the morning to find that two feet of snow had fallen in the night and it was intensely cold with more snow during the day. On Monday all work had stopped; there was no post or milk and the village was cut off for several hours and Linton Hill was closed. Queues formed at Wilmhursts the bakers in Maidstone Road. The roads were in a very bad state and trains almost stopped. On Tuesday the milkman got through. By Wednesday the wind turned to almost gale force and on Thursday a helicopter from TVS dropped in to film us. Marden was shown on the evening news bulletin. The temperature was given as daytime – 5C wind chill making it – 19C. On Friday we had to buy milk as the milkman was unable to do his rounds. We also bought a shovel at Suttons to clear the snow as best we could. The weather continued at freezing or lower and I see for the next few days that my diary says that by Tuesday the 20th, that the temp. was slightly above freezing and that the huge icicles everywhere had started to drip! Monday 2 February the temperature was up to 43 F; the freeze was over and Marden's Dunkirk spirit had got us through!

EDITH

NEXT MEETING
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY 27 JANUARY AT 8PM
OLD SCHOOL ROOM
Followed by
CHEESE AND WINE SOCIAL

The Parish Pump is distributed
free to Members of The Marden
Society every two months



For details of Membership
please contact the Hon. Secretary
Edith Davis on 01622 831904