

The Parish Pump

The Journal of the Marden Society

March 2010

A Sunny first *VENDAGE* at The Marden Vineyard

A golden September sun warmed the backs of our ten fruit pickers who carefully worked their way through the Marden Vineyard to bring in the first harvest. They began early in the morning on Friday 25th September and completed the task by noon on Saturday. The Fruit was expertly picked and with such gentle handling arrived in superb condition at the winery. Sugar and acidity levels were perfectly set for the production of Traditional Method Sparkling Wine.

It is believed that this may be the earliest that the classic Champagne varieties – Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier – have ever been picked in England. Usually these varieties are harvested in mid to late October. Sometimes even into November. The long, warm summer of 2009 and the sunny, south-facing organic



vineyard site have combined to ripen our grapes perfectly.

Around three tonnes were picked and the first pressing of Chardonnay was completed that first Friday night. Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier were pressed on Saturday. Pressings were slow and gentle and yield was limited to 1350 litres of juice to maintain quality. This will translate into approximately 1,500 bottles of Sparkling Wine. Next year we would expect yield to increase five-fold. After pressing, the juice was chilled and

settled for 24 hours, when it was inoculated with Champagne yeast. 205 litres of the Chardonnay was barrel fermented while the remaining juice was fermented in stainless steel tanks.



Fermentation took around 10 days to complete. The Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier in stainless steel were racked off the lees and left to mature.

Meanwhile, the Chardonnay will remain in barrel and the lees will be stirred regularly. This process will help to develop roundness in the wine, which we hope will bring greater complexity and richness to the finished blend. We are using 205 litres Champagne barrels. It is believed that this is first time that genuine Champagne barrels have been used in an English winery. More often 225-litres *barriques* are used – made from American, Hungarian or French oak. We have chosen two-years old Champagne barrels to avoid the *oakiness* that can occur when using new ones.

In June, when the weather is warm again, the base wines that we have made will be blended, stabilized and filtered. The resulting blend will be bottled so that the extended secondary fermentation in bottle can begin. Then begins the long wait-possibly as long as eighteen months- until the wine is ready for degorging.

Thanks to everybody who made the first Herbert Hall *vendage* a memorable and successful occasion. **Nicholas Hall**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT To The AGM:

Maureen Clayton reported on the activities of the Committee over the past year. She thanked Committee Members for their support during her first year as Chairman. She spoke of the successful outcome of the production of the new issue of the Village Guide, which showed additional entries of Marden businesses. Maureen thanked the Marden Parish Council for its donation of £40 to cover the shortfall in costs. The Committee has also spent time on finding a way to improve the Membership numbers and of ways to encourage more Members to attend the General meetings. For which, she invited ideas from the Members. The new production of Marden Society Tea Towels is proving popular. Maureen lastly spoke of the retirement of Secretary, Edith Davis after 22 years. She expressed her good wishes and thanks to Edith and presented her with a Waterstone's Gift Token on behalf of The Marden Society. The Report was accepted.

Cobbett's Rural Ride through the Weald of Kent

Cobbett is describing his ride from Lamberhurst to Goudhurst, "I had three miles to come to Goudhurst, the tower of the church of which is pretty lofty of itself, and the church stands upon the very summit of one of the steepest and highest hills in this part of the country, The church-yard has a view of about twenty-five miles; and the whole is over very fine country.

Before I got to Goudhurst, I passed by the side of a village called *Horsenden* and saw some very large hop-grounds away to my right. I should suppose there were fifty acres; and they appeared to me to look pretty well. I found that they belonged to Mr Springate and people say, *that it will grow half as many hops as he grew last year.* I got to Goudhurst to *breakfast*, and, as I heard that the *Dean of Rochester* was to *preach* a sermon in behalf of the *National Schools*, I stopped to hear him. In waiting for his Reverence I went to the *Methodist Meeting-house*, where I found the Sunday School boys and girls assembled, to the almost filling of the place, which was about thirty feet long and eighteen wide. The '*Minister*' was not come and the School-master was reading to the children out of a *tract-book*, and shaking the brimstone bag at them most furiously."

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**ADVANCE NOTICE
THE MAY MEETING ON
CANTERBURY - THE HIDDEN CITY HAS BEEN POSTPONED
UNTIL THE MAY 2011 MEETING.
NEW SPEAKER FROM BROGDALE WILL GIVE AN ILLUSTRATED
TALK ON THE
BROGDALE FRUIT COLLECTIONS**

JOHN BANKS

Many of you will know that John Banks died in early February. He was just 70 years of age when he died and was a life member of the Marden Society. Life membership cannot be bought; it is something conferred upon a few for service to the village. But in John's case, that is just touching the surface and this short valedictory will only begin to give due thanks for what he did for Marden.

I first knew John when he and Pam moved here and took over Maynard's shop at Church Green. Most of us will remember John, though, from his years as a Borough Councillor, standing as an Independent for Marden ward and, along with Robin Judd, known as the 'Marden Men' casting party politics aside for the good of the community they represented. Whatever his views, and John was for sometime chair of the local Conservative association, he staunchly believed that politics had no place at local level, a sentiment I heartily endorse. In the course of these duties he was, for a year, Mayor of Maidstone and he took great delight in sharing this honour with as many of the village as he could, in the form of several local events and functions.

Many will also remember his involvement in organizing, along with Robin Judd and others, the village fete on Southon's field, a brilliant day of good old-fashioned country fun. It always ended with a barbeque in the evening and whilst, as far as I can remember, it never did rain on the third Saturday in July once or twice the BBQ was a trifle damp!

John was also chairman of the local Sir Charles Booth Charity and of the Maidstone branch of the Children's Society to name but two. He was chairman of the Marden Memorial Hall Management Committee for over 20 years and it was largely due to his tireless efforts (and acumen for knowing those in KCC who hold the purse strings!) that the stage extension and the kitchen improvements took place.

Both I and our former Secretary, Edith Davis had worked closely with John when producing the Community Plan and now, following its recommendations, we are nearing completion of yet further developments to the Hall, something that was very dear to John's heart and that I know he desperately wanted to see finished. That was not to be; completion will be early this summer. But hopefully, it will be a fitting tribute to John. As recognition of his involvement over the years, his dedication and hard work on behalf of the people of Marden, the new building will be called **The John Banks Hall**. The Memorial Hall Management Committee hopes you all approve.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS 2010

The subscriptions holiday for 2009 has ended and your collector will be calling to collect for the coming year, 2010. The price will be as it was in 2008; that is, £2.50 normal and £2 concessions.

Update from the Footpaths Group – Action required now!

A Little bit of History

Clapper Farm Lane is a minor public road located between Battle Lane and Marden Road, Staplehurst. It originally formed part of the main route between the villages until construction of the South Eastern Railway in 1842 when part of Howland Road was diverted. However, the old road was not stopped-up and a bridge was built over the railway at the eastern end (which is why it is also known as Overbridge Farm Lane).

What is the problem?

The ends are surfaced but the central section is a very rare example of a genuine 'green lane'. In recent years, the old road has been obstructed in a number of places and this has made Clapper Farm Lane virtually impassable to the public. The green lane has gradually become more overgrown because of lack of maintenance by Kent County Council (KCC), which has also failed to get the obstructions removed.

Why is the Lane so important?

Clapper Farm Lane forms an important link in the local walking network as part of the only direct route between Marden and Staplehurst avoiding busy roads with narrow or non-existent verges. As there are no bridleways in the area, it also offers the only chance for cyclists and equestrians to ride on the public highway away from fast traffic. It can also be used for round trips to the nearby Marden Meadow nature reserve.

What needs to be done?

KCC has a legal duty to maintain Clapper Farm Lane and has all the powers it needs to get the obstructions removed. Despite several promises of action, this has still not happened. Even worse, a set of gates has been erected at the western end of the Lane and KCC has still not acted despite knowing that these are often closed and sometimes padlocked.

What can I do about this?

Please get in touch with our County Councillor, Cllr Paulina Stockell and ask her to get KCC to clear the obstructions and overgrowth from Clapper Farm Lane without delay. She can be contacted as follows: Farthing Green Barn, New Barn Road, Hawkenbury, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0EE. Phone: (01622) 842508.

E-mail: Paulina.Stockell@kent.gov.uk.

If possible, please let the Parish Council have a copy of any letter or e-mail you write.

RICHARD ADAM

**Next meeting: Wednesday 24 March 2010
8 pm in The Old School Room, Memorial Hall
D J March
The Story of English Cheeses
with Cheese Tasting & Wine**

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



For details of Membership please
contact the Membership Secretary
Aileen Hill on 01622 831418