

DO IT YOURSELF JUSTICE!

A brief perusal of the Marden crime report in the free Downs Mail shows that nowadays there is not so much petty crime compared with about ten years ago. Members will be interested to learn that in 1843, farmers and shop keepers of Marden were pretty fed up with it. So much so that they did something about it.

A book that the late John Sutton discovered in a shed at the rear of his former shop is the record of "The Marden Prosecution Society" formed in 1843 to provide rewards for the apprehension of felons and miscreants. The Society, made up largely of farmers and shopkeepers, had a joining fee of 3/- (15p) and half-yearly payments of 1/6.- (7½p). Both sums were quite a lot of money then. There were never that many prosecutions though, and the Society seems to have fizzled out by 1847 (perhaps the subscriptions cost more than the goods lost!). However, among the actions brought were:

- Jan 10th 1844 Esther Pile prosecuted for stealing a silver spoon from her Master, Peter Austin.
- Jan 22nd 1844 William Mercer & James Ashdown prosecuted for robbing Mr W. Mercer's barn (?) of 1 bushel of beans and 6 bushels of peas.
- May 9th 1845 Two pounds reward offered for conviction of persons that damaged and threw down part of the wall of the Churchyard on 19th or 20th April.
- April 26th 1847 Person unknown be prosecuted for stealing a cap from a Boy of Geo. Marsh and the expenses, if any, paid by the Society.

How different from today, when items stolen are really valuable; such as chainsaws, motor mowers and even sometimes, motor cars.

MARDEN MEDICAL CENTRE—PATIENTS' SURVEY

The Survey will be taking place during January and survey forms will be handed to all Patients presenting at the Surgery during that period. Others will be circulated by other forms of delivery and by **e-mail** if the Centre has the addresses. Has the Centre got your e-mail address? The Doctors are hoping for a good response to this very important Survey. A similar Survey is being held by the Marden Pharmacy in the High Street. Forms are available for collection at the shop.

For detailed information about the Village, don't forget to visit the Society's very own website at www.mardensociety.org.uk

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

The Parish Pump

The Journal of The Marden Society

January 2012

HERALD OF FREE ENTERPRISE DISASTER-1987

Did you know that Kent Police were heavily involved in the worst sea disaster since the Titanic hit an iceberg? Colin Breed, our speaker, was a Special Branch detective inspector when the Townsend Thoreson's ferry, The Herald of Free Enterprise, sank in March 1987. The seven year old car ferry was not full to capacity but was carrying about 450 passengers, 87 cars, nearly 50 trucks and a couple of buses. It left Zeebrugge (N of Ostend) in the early evening for its five hour journey to Dover. Due to the position of the harbour and a high tide it had been necessary to take on water ballast so the bow of the ship tipped forward to get the vehicles easily on and off.



With a quick turnaround they reached the edge of the harbour sailing slowly, still with its nose down. Little did the passengers or even the captain realize that the bow doors had not been closed! In rushed the water, heaving the vehicles around their deck. The Herald rolled left, recovered, then rolled right and turned 180 degrees. Too late the captain tried to rectify this but in only 90 seconds the ferry had sunk 30 feet on to a sand bank in the dark. No phone lines were working and due to its position the passengers could only escape by attempting to smash windows, equally difficult was the task of the rescuers trying to gain access to them.



After many examples of bravery, time necessarily caused the start of the long haul of setting up procedures and identifying the dead. With four Belgian police forces and our police, yet with no one with overall control, also with 2 languages it was a management nightmare at the beginning. With no passenger list, many of them on a cheap ticket from The Sun newspaper, there was confusion over many of the survivors' names. One of our members had been sending his soldiers home from Germany, but fortunately for them they were delayed and therefore not on that crossing. Fifty bodies were sent to the Dover coroner but he insisted that they should be dealt with near to the scene of the incident as he didn't want to have to return bodies to Zeebrugge.



At the same time efforts were continuing to stabilize the hulk and make it watertight so that bodies could be retrieved for identification. Divers had already ensured that there were no survivors left on board. The Belgian Army were helpful in setting up a huge mortuary and the painful and painstaking task of searching the bodies and clothes began, also using dental records to help name the victims.

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This was the first time that Kent Police had used a computer programme called Crisis (now called Holmes) to help them with records. 193 people died that night. As an aside, five women responded to say that the body of a truck driver belonged to them. This took over four months of our speaker's life, alongside other Kent policemen, helping to organize all the formalities in the Belgian port.

Eventually a formal enquiry was held with the outcome being – “The ship was infested with the disease of sloppiness”. The master had not been able to see the bow doors easily, the Chief Officer had not checked them, and the assistant boatswain had not shut them and was found asleep. All these were accused of serious negligence. As the owners had repeatedly turned down requests for more safety measures they were judged partly responsible for the tragedy. The line was then rebranded as P & O.

Subsequently the inquest held at the Old Bailey in June 1990 was the biggest ever held there. The jury were instructed not to attribute blame but to look at it as unlawful killing, something not tried before. It turned out that the bow doors had been open when sailing on five other occasions and it seemed as if there was enough evidence to sue four of the directors of P & O. However the case was dismissed bit by bit with the final result of ‘not guilty’.

It took until 2008 before an Act for Unlawful Killing was enabled by Parliament.

EUNICE DOSWELL

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Our talk in November by Colin Breed on the Zeebrugge Disaster in 1987 was very interesting. Colin had been a policeman – part of the original investigating team – when the disaster occurred and gave some insights into police activity to find out just how such a terrible accident happened on a calm night so many years ago.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 January, at 8.00pm in the Old School Room of the Memorial Hall. After the AGM there will be cheese and wine and we hope many of you will come along. We urgently need 2 more committee members, so please do contact me if you would like to join the committee. We meet every 2 months for a short meeting so please do make yourself known either to a Committee Member or me.

Meanwhile a full programme has been finalized for this year, starting in February with a talk on Penenden Heath.

MAUREEN CLAYTON

ADVANCE NOTICE

**29 February 2012
8 pm
The Old School Room , Marden Memorial Hall**

**PENENDEN HEATH - Robin Ambrose
Maidstone's Dark Past**

THE NEW YEAR

At the beginning of a New Year numerous commentators speculate on the likely outcome of various aspects of life during and by the end of the year. Some we know for certain but many are dependent on factors we cannot foresee in advance. It is often epigrammatically noted that if you ask two eminent economists for a prediction you will get at least three dissimilar forecasts!

But let's first look back one hundred years to the year 1912. Significant events during that year included the heart-rending fact that on the 15th April 1912 on its maiden voyage the liner Titanic struck an iceberg and sank with the loss of over 1500 lives. It was also the year that the Republic of China was established yet only recently has it become a major player on the world scene. Also in this year the Olympic games opened in Stockholm.

Fifty years ago in 1962 we all held our breath and probably had a few sleepless nights when John F. Kennedy had to deal with the Cuban Missile Crisis - was there to be nuclear war? Other less traumatic events were the appearance of the film "To kill a Mockingbird", the top TV show was "Candid Camera" and sadly Marilyn Monroe died. In Marden we were all about to be converted - not religious wise - but from steam to electric on our railway line! And in the parish church the beautiful east window was installed. The large private estate behind the High Street was more than twelve away from construction and there was no central medical centre. And despite many fewer residents we had many more pubs and the beer was a lot cheaper!

In 2012 only a handful of Marden born-and-bred residents remain here after the recent deaths of John Sutton and Peter Tipples. However members of the History Group fastidiously unearth and record a detailed history of the village that is available to all in the library. What will 2012 bring forth? A new Vicar for one thing - named Alison Duguid - so if a name means anything.....! We send her our best wishes for a happy stay in Marden.

Presumably too we will hear the outcome of the Planning Application by the Cricket and Hockey Club regarding a new Sports complex.

The major national events, of course, will be the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the Olympic games. Regarding the former, Marden will have its own celebrations in which everyone is invited to participate. The very Best Wishes for 2012 to all Marden residents.

JOHN PERT