

**THANK YOU, PEGGY.**

It's hard to believe, but true, that the Marden Society has been in existence for over 35 years!

In 1976, there was a serious threat to build an airstrip in the fields at the rear of Plain Road, to be used primarily for crop-spraying aircraft for farms in Marden and the surrounding area. The first any local residents knew of the plan was the disappearance of a line of beautiful old oak trees, cut down (without planning permission) for "safety reasons". In spite of being up against top barristers, the campaign to prevent this desecration of our countryside was successful.

During my spell on the Committee, Peggy always brought both wit and wisdom to our proceedings and when, later on, I was lucky enough to work in her beautiful, tranquil, garden for a few years (until "anno dominie" caught up with me!), I always looked forward to my coffee break when she and I indulged in wide ranging discussions and conversation about anything and everything and her tales of cycling around the lanes of East Anglia when she was in the Land Army in World War II were enthralling. Conversation was even livelier when her great friends Phil and Harry turned up. Harry could hear the kettle going on the Aga all the way from Little Cheveney!

I hope she continues to enjoy life in her beautiful home and garden for many more years to come. In giving my thanks, please accept my personal apologies, Peggy, for not visiting as often as I should. Time just seems to pass me by.

*GRAHAM TIPPEN*

**For detailed information about the village don't forget to visit the Society's very own website at [www.mardensociety.org.uk](http://www.mardensociety.org.uk)**

**NEXT MEETING**

**Wednesday 28 March - Peter Ewart**

**"Smuggling in Kent"**

**ADVANCE NOTICE**

**Wednesday 25 April - John Buckingham - "Birds of South East England"**

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

March 2012

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—2012**

The Chairman, Maureen Clayton, reported on the activities of The Society over the past year. She thanked the Members for their continued support, Aileen as Membership Secretary and the Committee Members for their work also Edith for producing the Programmes and The Parish Pump. The Programme of talks was expanded to seven meetings in 2011, plus a very successful visit to Iden Croft Farm in Staplehurst to view their cheese making. The Society had donated the Hearing Loop in the Memorial Hall and given a donation of £100 for the Walker Church organ. The programme for 2012 has been completed, with another seven meetings planned, starting with a talk on Penenden Heath on February 29th. A visit has also been arranged to Horlands Farm in Summerhill Road, on 27 June.

The proposed increase was discussed at some length. Edith Davis pointed out that current fees (£2.50/£2 concessions) had not been increased since 2001, and proposed that subscriptions should be increased to a flat £5 per person (so £10 per couple). A Member asked if the Society really needed the extra money; it was pointed out that without it funds would gradually decrease due to the increase in Speakers' fees. Also the Committee is considering arranging talks by some higher profile "Celebrity Speakers" who would be more expensive. The £5 per person proposal was put to the meeting, proposed by Edith Davis and seconded by John Wright. This was voted on and carried by a majority of 17 (21 for, 4 against). Maureen reminded Members to renew their Membership with Aileen, and asked Members to provide e-mail addresses if possible.

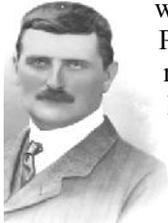
Both Peggy Skelton and Richard Adam had retired from the Committee and John Wright has agreed to join the Committee. All the other Committee Members were re-elected en bloc. Peggy has been asked if she would be the Honorary President of the Marden Society as she was a Founder Member. She is reluctant to do this, but it was agreed that Maureen and Steve should visit her with some flowers, and explain that this is a purely Honorary position and she is not expected to do anything. She would also be honoured with a Life Membership. The AGM was followed by a Cheese and Wine Social.

## KENT & EAST SUSSEX RAILWAY

Was it a strange phenomenon that occurred at the October Marden Society meeting with the guest speaker Doug Lindsay? The audience comprised of more males than females; with the explanation being the subject was the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

Until the 1830s most heavy goods were transported on the canal system. With the advent of the railways offering speeds of 30 – 40 miles per hour compared with 3 – 4 miles per hour there was no real competition, although passengers wondered if they would be able to breathe properly at this excessive speed.

Rail links came to Kent in 1842, but expansion to the southern part of the county had a rocky ride. The laws needed to give consent to various plans were expensive and this part of Kent was not highly populated. Particularly, plans for a railway between Paddock Wood and Rye never materialized. Riding to the rescue came a surveyor on horseback, Holman Stephens. He had a vision and the passing of a Light Railway Act of Parliament enabled his vision to be achieved more cheaply. Thus came into being the Rother Valley Railway with its line from Robertsbridge to Tenterden (actually this was really Rolvenden) opening in 1900. It extended to



Tenterden Town in 1903 and to Headcorn 2 years later. This later became the Kent & E. Sussex Railway.

After World War 1 better road surfaces challenged the railway transport, but this method had become indispensable to the farmers, with passengers almost being a side-line. In fact sidings took up a large area of the stations, each with their own individuality. Bodiam had a ticket office, a waiting-room, but no "Ladies". Wittersham Road dealt with a lot of milk. High Halden Road had a station agent not a station master, who was admonished for not selling enough postcards. They had a great number of sheep and cattle passing through when it was the Biddenden Fair. Frittenden Road was at least 1 ½ miles from the nearest dwelling. Altogether this standard gauge line covering 10 ½ miles had 12 stations, 17 level crossings with 2 halts. Robertsbridge - Junction Road – Bodiam - Northiam - Wittersham Road – Rolvenden - Tenterden Town - St Michael's - Hawkhurst Road - Biddenden - Frittenden Road - Headcorn.

Stephens, now a Colonel after WW1, was a wizard at managing everything on a shoestring, ably followed later by William Austen. The company started with 2 new engines then bought a second hand one which was 32 years old for £600. He experimented with other contraptions.

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One was a self-propelled steam car, 2 model T Ford engines back to back with one man; but this didn't have enough power.

They also tried with buses adapted for rail. Eventually 1948 saw the railways nationalized and 6 years later this railway closed.

A group of 3 schoolboys from Maidstone Grammar School decided to fight to save the railway and 160 people turned up to the first meeting. Crossing over the A21 and A292 was a bar to progress and caused 13 years of litigation. Eventually, the line re-emerged thanks to the tremendous work of numerous volunteers repairing tracks, stations, locomotives, carriages and whatever else was needed. Ever careful with money a redundant road bridge from Aylesford was brought in to cover a river. By 2000 the line reached as far as Bodiam.

They are rebuilding the engine shed and are the proud owners of 13 engines. Much of this latest achievement has been funded by the Millennium Lottery Fund. Today you can just enjoy a steam train ride or dine in their Pullman car. Children can experience Thomas the Tank Engine days or Santa Specials. Long may the line flourish.

*EUNICE DOSWELL*



## SAVE OUR VILLAGE HALL!

The development of the Memorial Hall is now complete and the village has a superb facility that will hopefully serve the community for years to come

But... look up and you will spot some cracked and missing tiles, broken guttering and down pipes.

We just couldn't afford to do this under "Phase 1" but we now need to replace the roof as a matter of urgency. If too many tiles were to slip off, there is a real danger that we may have to close the building for health and safety reasons. **A disaster for the village, socially, economically, structurally.**

The Hall Trustees are looking at various ways of obtaining the money needed - **likely to be a minimum of £125,000 based on estimates so far received** - either through grants, loans or fund-raising.

**'Sponsor a tile for a pound' might be an option, for example. We'll keep you informed.**

*GRAHAM TIPPEN*

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