

turning at Teston Lock for the return journey.
The cost is £21 per person, which includes either a fish and chip supper or a picnic basket.

At this stage, we just need an indication of how many people are likely to take part, so please let us know if you are interested. We are not restricting it to members of the Marden Society, so please invite all your family and friends!

FUTURE TALKS PROGRAMME

The meetings from March to May will be held in the Old School Room, Memorial Hall. Meetings from September to November will be in the Vestry Hall.

Wed 25 th March	Simon Ginnaw	Wildlife of Mote Park
Wed 22 nd April	Chris McCooley	Despatches from the Home Front WW2
Wed 27 th May	Tim Whittle	The PLUTO Pipeline
Thursday 25 th June	Outing	Three hour Medwaycruise
Wednesday 23 rd September	Victoria Golding	Kent's Coronation Meadow
Wednesday 28 th October	Brian Rance	Walking Through Kent and East Sussex
Wednesday 25 th November	Steve McArragher	The Life of Sir Marcus Samuel

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

March 2015

We welcome your views and contributions. Some of your memories of Marden, or impressions if you are new to the village.

Please contact Mo on 01622 831529 or tillergirl2913@aol.com

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The AGM in January had a good turnout, despite a cold night. Reports were presented by the Footpath Group (Richard Adam), the Walking Group (Catherine Alderson) and the History Group (Eunice Doswell). Steve gave a summary of the Neighbourhood Plan and the enormous development plans proposed for Marden.

A contentious issue was moving talks to the Vestry Hall in September. After a vote in favour of the move, with several abstentions, it was agreed to proceed with this.

The meeting was followed by a wine and cheese social, with food prepared by Aileen and wine donated by Pamela. Thanks to both of them.

HIGHWOOD GREEN

I went to the presentation of Highwood Green in January, which showed the eventual plan and layout. It all looks very impressive, little houses in immaculate gardens, with an open space with a pond towards the rear of the development.

Other developments

Five major developments have now been approved in Marden:

Name	Dwellings	Status
Highwood Green	110	Under construction
Parsonage	144	Outline permission
Stanley Farms	85	Outline permission
Howland Road	44	Outline permission
Cricket & Hockey field	124	Full permission

Thus Marden will grow by 507 dwellings over the next few years, though the exact timing is now up to the developers. A proposal for a further 50 homes next to the Parsonage development however has recently been refused. The Cricket and Hockey club development attracted the most opposition within the village, but to no avail thanks to Maidstone Borough Council. It remains to be seen how the increase in traffic will affect the narrow roads around Marden!

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (MNP)

The draft MNP has been passed to Maidstone Borough Council for

comment. This contains sections covering: Natural Environment, Surface Water, Sustainable Transport, Conversion of Domestic garages, Business and Employment, Conservation of the Historic Environment, Building Design and Sustainable Construction, New Agricultural Development, Open Space, Amenities, Education, and finally Housing and Development. However the Housing section has no recommendations for specific sites, as these have already been decided by MBC. It includes the statement "The intention was to use the results (of the Open Days consultation) to provide evidence to the Borough to be used in formulating planning policy, and ultimately, through adoption of the MNP to be used for specific site development control purposes. It is of deep regret to the village that this process has not been possible."

LOST EMPIRES

Well it was 'well come' to Wilf Lower and his tales of Lost Empires (not the colonial sort!) on February 25th.

He had worked for the BBC and the National Theatre, but the main fund of his stories came from the fact that his mother had run 'pro digs' for touring stage artists.

Theatres have provided entertainment for centuries from Roman amphitheatres through to Shakespeare's Globe until we arrived at our subject of Music Hall of the 19th and 20th centuries. Firstly was 'The Hall', just a room at the back of the pub. Audiences were so rowdy that acts needed to be visual. By the 1870s it was NOT for families. Thus Gardens became the venue for variety



shows until the 1895 Theatre Act said that no food or drink was to be consumed during a performance. Frank Matcham was the architect responsible for the Coliseum, The London Palladium and, nearer to home, The Chatham Empire. These palaces of entertainment were cloaked in marble and velvet and lit by great chandeliers.

So who might you have seen in the latter's heyday?

- Marie Lloyd – the pint-sized, earthy East ender – "My old man said..."
- Evidently she got booed in Sheffield but gave back as good as she got.
- Harry Lauder – very popular in the South East. He repeatedly sang his own song, "Keep right on to the end of the road," in remembrance of his son, killed in Flanders.
- Gracie Fields – she started as an 8 year old.
- Old Mother Riley and Kitty – in reality his wife. They argued more off stage than on. The stage hands

hated all the smashed crockery they had to clear.

- George Formby – was pushed to fame by his wife, Beryl. He was only given 6d for spending money on a Saturday night and although he wanted a Rolls Royce that was forbidden!
- Max Miller was the highest paid artist - £2,000 per week in the 1940s.
- Ken Dodd is a survivor from those days and still has a razor sharp brain.
- 'Specials' included jugglers, a strong woman, illusionists, ventriloquists, animals and dancers etc.
- Wilson, Keppel and Betty did their sand dance for 54 years – with 8 different Bettys.

As lighting was given by gas light and limelight the consequence was that theatres were always burning down and being rebuilt. Back to Mrs Lower's digs, Chatham could see about 75 artists per week looking for somewhere to stay. The routine would be: - Rise between 9 and 10 for tea and toast, 4.30 – a sandwich, 3 course meal at 11.15 after 1 or 2 shows and then chat until 2 or 3 a.m. Even stars such as Norman Wisdom and Arthur Askey preferred digs to a hotel as those were what they were used to. The harshest digs would charge 3d for the use of a cruet and another had a notice asking the guests not to put the chamber pot under the bed as steam rusted the springs!

By 1950s attendance was declining and the theatres tried to fight back with sex – as French Revues. Unfortunately the Chatham Empire eventually had to close. Wilf said that Variety committed suicide because it couldn't adapt to the times. We all felt well and truly entertained with Wilf reviving the memories of many of our members.



FUTURE TALKS

On 25th March Simon Ginnaw will be talking to us about the Wildlife of Mote Park. Simon is a Community and Education Officer for the Countryside Partnerships and has been a freelance wildlife tour guide for years. His passions are birds, bats, butterflies and trees and all things that grow, fly or crawl. He has noted 140 bird species, 23 types of butterflies and 8 species of bats. If you like wildlife, please do come along. Some of you may remember Chris McCooey, a larger than life character who has spoken to us before. He will visit us on 22nd April to talk about Despatches from the Home Front 1939-1945. This is the war diary of Joan Strange with comments about her allotment as well as speeches by Hitler and Churchill. She was heavily involved in helping Jewish refugees. A heart-warming and sometimes heart-breaking account of her experiences.

SUMMER OUTING

For our summer outing this year, we are proposing an evening cruise on Thursday 25th June along the Medway on the "Kentish Lady". The three hour cruise, from 6 to 9pm, travels upriver from the Archbishop's Palace, through Farleigh Lock and onwards under Farleigh, Barming and Teston bridges,