

# The Parish Pump

The Journal of the Marden Society

November 2015

streamlined West Country engine. I could sometimes catch a glimpse of passengers taking breakfast lit by a table lamp. What unimaginable luxury! Walking through the station occasionally there were bullocks in the cattle pens. The sidings would be occupied by various trucks filled mostly with coal, shoddy and fruit boxes. I walked past the static crane. To the right was Miskin's coal wharf which had its own siding. Next I would pass the station master's house and Mr Crowhurst the vet. George Ballard the butcher came next and then, the Chequers pub, Burr's bakery, Roy Maynard's

grocery and the shop where Mr Whittle made his own ice cream. Delicious! At the Westminster bank I crossed Pattenden Lane to Dr Newman's surgery. I then passed the chapel. Before I got to the West End pub there was often a crippled man sitting on a seat under a tree – he never spoke. A peep in Bert Johnson's forge was always interesting and I recall the smell as I had been there with my father and our horse. I then passed the Memorial hall and arrived at school – boys' department, of course!

*Robin Judd*

## FUTURE TALKS PROGRAMME

Please note !! : meetings in November and January will be in the Vestry Hall near the Church & Library, NOT the longstanding Memorial Hall location.

<i>The following talks will all be held in the Vestry Hall</i>		
<b>Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November</b>	<b>Steve McArragher</b>	<b>The Life of Sir Marcus Samuel</b>

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 27TH JANUARY 2016

Our AGM will be held in the **Vestry Hall** on **Wednesday 27th January 2016 at 8.00 pm**, when we will also have a cheese and wine social after the formal business. This is a good opportunity for a social get together and we hope many of you will come along.

The formal AGM is quite brief, but if you would like to come on the Committee, please contact me on 01622 831529 or e-mail tillergirl2913@aol.com. We only have five committee meetings a year.

*Mo*

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

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

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

## NOVEMBER TALK 2015

With the summer once again over all too quickly, we now welcome you to our meetings at the Vestry Hall, starting at 8.00pm, as set out at the back of this Pump. We do hope to see more of you at what we hope is a more convenient location.

Our last talk of the year is on Wednesday 25th November at 8.00pm in THE VESTRY HALL. Steve Mc Arragher will be talking on "Sea-shells in Bearsted" – The Life of Sir Marcus Samuel. Marcus was born Jewish,

and raised in the East End of London where his family business was importing sea-shells for Victorian ladies from the Far East. He was ambitious and when he took over the family business, they expanded into the Oil Business and founded the Shell Group of companies. He wanted to be an "English Country Gentleman", and so bought Mote House in Bearsted, living there for the rest of his life.

Tea and coffee will be served, of course, after the meeting plus our usual raffle

*Mo Clayton (Chairman)*

## BEFORE HIGHWOOD GREEN BECAME A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

WHEN a young Flag Lieutenant in the Royal Navy started work after the war, managing a brewery in Gloucester, he felt he was entitled to a rise in pay. His boss disagreed rather unpleasantly and so Gerald Tomkinson decided to move to Kent.

There he had some friends, made in Malta while on active service. He had also met

Robert Day's father and asked to borrow his lorry from time to time. Mr Day obliged, enabling Gerald to collect fruit and produce from this area and take it up to London to be sold (far more preferable to the bicycle he often had to use). He also ran his own fruiterers for a while in Marden, in a shop near The Unicorn.

Gerald had participated in the D Day landing – on one occasion the Germans who abandoned their blockhouse left in

**Talks from September 2015 onwards will be held in the Vestry Hall**

such a hurry that their cups and saucers were left behind. Some years later Pamela and Gerald visited this blockhouse, and found the cups and saucers were still standing where they had been left by the fleeing soldiers. Gerald served on the Russian convoys and remembered a large and robust Russian woman once demanding that the British Navy crews clean the dock area where they were moored – rather unsuccessfully - because the sailors did not oblige.

While in Malta he once had to help the Duke of Gloucester back to his quarters after rather too much celebrating, then having to escort the Duchess to the local nightclub. He also had to escort Lady Mountbatten there too.

As post war Britain's business environment improved Gerald bought up land, including the large area now known as Highwood Green (then owned by Edward Day). He played cricket at the Hockey and Cricket Club and noticed a young girl, Pamela, scoring the match. In time he and Pamela married, and it was Pamela who called this area Marden Apple Producers. While Pamela brought up their two sons, David and Mark, Gerald built up his expanding transport business.



At one point they bought a farm, but under government legislation the land could not be used for animals, profit or business, but just had to be kept in good order – even the grass collected by someone could not be paid for. British farmers

were being paid NOT to cultivate their land, perhaps to allow broken Europe to become competitive?

Gerald was one of the founder members of the Marden Society, and a keen cricketer. Pamela and he both played golf although Pamela was the better player. Gerald finally succumbed to cancer at age 80, leaving his son Mark to run GG Tomkinson Ltd.

Pamela still lives in the village, and remembers Gerald's understanding of her almost lifelong diabetes and the care he always gave her.

*Mo Clayton*

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#### HERITAGE CENTRE EXHIBITION

At last, I now know what a tar tank is and what it was for. Since moving to Marden 20 years I have often puzzled about the strange chimney in Plain Road and now, thanks to the Hopping exhibition in the library Heritage Centre, I realise it was a tar tank for preserving and coating the hop poles to protect them from rotting away.

This fascinating exhibition traces the course of the hopping year - from January, when the land was prepared (originally by horses), to the clearing away of previous growth, erecting preserved hop poles, stringing and putting overhead wires in place, to planting, protecting and finally picking the hops for beer making. Anyone who has ever fallen off a ladder must sympathise with these farm workers, shinning up ladders or balancing precariously on stilts, all the time on uneven often wet and unstable earth.

Our school year was designed to allow children to help with the harvest, permitting London children from overcrowded areas to visit the countryside and get some fresh air. Tar was even thought by many

doctors to be beneficial for children's chests.

Other health benefits from hops were thought to include the following –

- Stuffing a pillow with dried hops for a good night's sleep (George III approved of this)
- Assize judges sometimes carried a spray of hops in front of them to protect them from noxious air.
- A hop poultice could aid stiffness, swellings, bruises, and boils
- Hops could purify the blood, reduce nervousness and hysteria. Spent hops could be used as a plant food, and more remedies were thought to be efficient and successful.

People arrived in their droves from London and other areas, sometimes returning each year to the same farm and accommodation hut. The hoppers were blamed for many illnesses, but with no toilets or proper washing facilities, they themselves were pretty vulnerable. However for many, living conditions back home were no better, possibly even worse.

Outbreaks of cholera and scarlet fever were blamed on the incomers.



Shopkeepers would fit netting across their counters to avoid unnecessary physical contact and pubs would insist on them drinking outside rather than inside. Hoppers were blamed for pilfering and anti-social behaviour, but still many would look back on it as a golden time.

In 1924 Mr and Mrs Spender opened a Hoppers Hospital where the Medical Centre now stands, with room for only one isolated patient. In 1928 one estimate is that between 3,000 and 4,000 attended the hospital for some sort of treatment. By 1953 a few elderly locals were living in the hospital with some temporary accommodation for families and in 1983 the current Medical Centre was built. The exhibition is filled with photos, artefacts and a great deal of information. Do visit the Heritage Centre in the library and have a look round.

*AND PLEASE IF YOU CAN SPARE ANY TIME TO VOLUNTEER AND HELP RUN THE CENTRE, PLEASE DO HAVE A WORD WITH SOMEONE AT THE CENTRE*

*Mo Clayton*

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#### MY WALK TO SCHOOL AS A TEN YEAR OLD IN 1947.

LEAVING home at "Hartridge", I would first encounter either George Cox or Fred Pullen returning Charlie Chamber's house cow at Church farm across to the field opposite. At the railway arch I could just see over the wall to the left to the signal gantry. If the fish tail signal was up the "Night Ferry" was due. Opposite the farm house, (Southon House) from where my father had just returned from milking our own house cows I turned right into the black path. The Night ferry would then pass through, hauled by a wonderful