

There is still so much we don't understand about these intriguing little creatures, and I am looking forward to their reappearance in April.

*Carol Hogg*

### **GAVELKIND – A CUSTOM OF KENT: October talk by Imogen Wedd**

Gavelkind was a system of inheritance which was unique to Kent and part of Sussex. This allowed land and property to be divided between a man's sons after he died, as opposed to Primogeniture, where all went to the eldest son. However it was more than just inheritance law, and the practice reflected the independent streak of Kentish Men and Men of Kent. It symbolised Freedom and Equality under the Law, and an antipathy to distant authority.

The Swanscombe legend is that Kentish men extracted this right of inheritance from William the Conqueror in return their peaceful co-operation. This led to Kent adopting the *Invicta* (unconquered) motto and the White Horse symbol, which came from the Jutes. It was also perhaps because Kent was relatively easy to defend with a long coastline and protected by the Weald to the West. The legend claims that Kentish men would rather die than surrender their freedom. Kent was at the forefront of many of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century rebellions – the Peasant's Revolt, the Jack Cade Rebellion, and the Wyatt Rebellion. As written records began to be kept in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Custom of Kent was written down in Norman French, the language used by the Law Courts at that time.

The Custom favoured the yeoman class. Kentish people resented the payment of tithes, particularly after the dissolution of the Monasteries. This Custom gave them greater flexibility. For example Great Tithes were paid on fields, but Small Tithes on gardens. Thus Kentish hops were always grown in Hop Gardens! Gavelkind's principle that property was split between all male heirs rather than just the eldest meant that houses and fields were often divided between heirs, or another house built on a property, so smaller fields and houses were often created. This also led of course to many disputes between brothers, and some diatribes against Gavelkind!

One unpopular law that Gavelkind protected against was that land could be forfeit if a man committed a major crime such as murder, so sons could still inherit property of a convicted felon. For example Thomas Hayward was hanged but his five sons still inherited his property. It also gave protection to young heirs, whose future could be protected from abuse by the dictates of a lord – the nearest relative could ensure that the young heir was protected until he reached the age of majority. A widow also had protection – she was entitled to ½ of the Estate until she remarried, had a child out of wedlock, or of course died. However daughters had no inheritance rights if they had brothers.

Gavelkind remained in force in Kent until 1926, when it was abolished by the "Disgavelling Acts" as part of the reform of Land Law.

*Mo Clayton*

# The Parish Pump

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY - FEBRUARY 2017

Our first talk in 2017 will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb by Jackie Simmonds telling us about "My Life as a Tillergirl". This should be absolutely fascinating! Then on 22<sup>nd</sup> March Keith Beckford will be speaking on "The Wars of the Roses". Both of these meetings will be at 7.30 p.m. in the Village Club in Albion Road, due to problems with the Vestry Hall.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 24<sup>TH</sup> JAN 2017

This year's AGM was held in the John Banks Hall, due to the problems with the Vestry Hall floor, attended by only 16 members. Our Chairman Mo thanked the committee for their help over the year and commented on our successful meetings and the tour of Tom Hart-Dyke's World Garden. There is a full programme of talks for 2017 and the summer outing will be an afternoon tour of Little Mill Farm with Peter Hall followed by a Cream Tea.

Our financial position remains healthy with total funds of £2402. The Society lost several longstanding members last year and membership is down to 91. We are not getting any new members, so the committee decided to put a notice with our 2017 programme in the Spring Parish Newsletter, to try and attract new members. History Group and Walking Group reports were presented and the Committee re-elected en-bloc. The AGM was followed by an enjoyable wine and cheese social gathering.

*Steve McA*

### PETER COOK'S TALK ON 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER ON 'OUR COUNTY REGIMENTS'



Peter has seen 34 years' service in the Kent Regiments, before retiring in 2000 and has spent the last 15 years helping to raise money for the army charity. Kent

is a county of two halves, so had two regiments. The **Royal East Kent Regiment** were known as 'The Buffs', after the colour of their uniform facings, and were founded in 1572, when Queen Elizabeth chose 300 men from private militia who were equipped and sent to Flushing to help the Dutch fight Spain. Later when war broke out with the Dutch they returned and were known for a time as the "Holland Regiment of Foot" (3<sup>rd</sup> in Seniority). Then they went to Ireland in 1715 but moved back to England when trouble broke out.

During the 7 Years War in the 1750s the army was enlarged, and the **50<sup>th</sup> West Kent Regiment of Foot** was formed. During the Peninsular War against Napoleon, our old ally Portugal was used as a base for campaigns in Spain involving both regiments. The Queens own fought with distinction at the battle of Vimerio and gained the nickname the “Dirty Half Hundred” because of the way the dye in their uniforms ran. The Buffs had their worst day in the battle of Albuhera on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1811, when only 85 out of 728 men survived. In 1814 they were sent to Canada, meaning that they missed Waterloo! Both regiments served in the Crimean war including the major battles of Sevastopol and Inkerman. Two of the first Victoria Crosses were awarded to men from Kent regiments.

WW1 saw both regiments in action. In the summer of 1915 Kitcheners New Army was formed including 6, 7 and 8 Buffs and 6, 7 and 8 Queens Own battalions all despatched to France. 8<sup>th</sup> buffs had a grim introduction to war, marching for 5 days before being thrown straight into the attacks at Loos where they suffered 638 casualties. Both regiments also saw service in the Middle East fighting the Turks, including a strange event in 1917 when the keys to Jerusalem were surrendered to two Queens Own Privates! In total 5,688 Buffs and 6,866 Queens Own were killed during WW1.

Between the wars the regiments served in the Empire and Ireland. At the outbreak of WW2 several poorly equipped battalions were sent to France, and had to be evacuated from Dunkirk. The main regiments returned from their various duties overseas to join in fighting in the Middle East, Malta, Cassino, Greece (where heavy casualties were experienced) and Burma where the Buffs fought in the battle for Kohima, which was a turning point in the War in the East, and gained another VC.

After the war came Malaya, the Suez Crisis, Cyprus, the Mau Mau in Kenya, and the Rhine as part of the BAOR. In 1961 the regiments were amalgamated to form the **Queens Own Buffs, the Royal Kent Regiment**. However this was further amalgamated with other Home Counties regiments in 1966. Families have always been part of a regiment, and a soldier could only marry with this CO's permission (fortunately Peter got permission to marry Deirdre!). A few wives could travel with their husbands after drawing lots, receiving half rations (children had quarter rations). If a husband died a wife could be struck off after 3 months and thereafter received no money at all.



Kent's connection with Danish Royalty goes back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and their King or Queen has been the Colonel in Chief since 1906. In 2015 Queen Margaretha unveiled a statue of a WW1 Buffs soldier in the grounds of Canterbury Cathedral. *Mo and Steve*

## HAPPY HEDGEHOGS



Folklore has it that hedgehogs milk cows. That may or may not be true, but one thing is certain: they do have some very peculiar habits. I have been privileged to witness some of these as hedgehogs have come into my garden every night (when not hibernating) for the last three years. The first appearance each year is mid-April. After several months' hibernation, they are starving and will eat ravenously. Radio tracking has shown that

they can wander up to 2 miles a night searching for food. They need at least 100 grams a day. I feed them a mixture of special hedgehog food, cat food, cat biscuits and mealworms. This does mean however that they don't have much appetite left to eat slugs. I have watched in disbelief as slugs slithered on to the plate of food, with the hedgehogs apparently quite content to share their food with them.

Having replenished their fat reserves, they only have one thing on their mind and the courting rituals begin. Standing nose to nose, the female turns slowly on the spot and the male walks in circles round her, occasionally changing direction or breaking off for a drink or a bite to eat. I have read that this can go on for hours, but I have never managed to watch for more than about 40 minutes, and so I have never witnessed the conclusion! Circles seem to have some sort of significance in a hedgehog's life. Often they will stop eating, walk round the plate a couple of times, back to where they started, and resume eating. They can repeat this several times. Sometimes they will stand in the middle of the lawn and, for no apparent reason, run round in circles for several minutes.

The youngster born in about June last year comes alone to the plate of food and promptly sits on top of it, waiting for mum or dad to appear (never both at the same time except in the mating season). I will it to eat, because it needs to weigh at least 500 grams to survive winter. Three out of four hoglets don't survive to see their first birthday, but if they survive that first year, they will probably live another four or five years and have been known to live to the ripe old age of ten. Hibernation usually starts sometime in October, but a plentiful supply of food and mild weather can delay this by several weeks. In 2014, one came to my garden every night until 30 December. They can also reappear for a day or two during a mild spell in winter, using the opportunity to top up their dwindling reserves of body fat.

It is well known that hedgehogs are good climbers and easily scale walls and fences. The strangest tale I have heard about hedgehogs (and witnessed) comes from a friend who lives in a rambling old house in Hollingbourne. Every night, a large hedgehog came through the cat-flap and climbed **two** twisting flights of stairs to sit outside the door into the attic. And there he stayed until she carried him down the next morning. This continued every night until she blocked up the cat-flap. Whatever could drive a hedgehog to do such a thing?