



10 shoots must be trained to grow up 4 strings, (2x2 and 2x3). Hop vines always wind in a clockwise direction, as opposed to runner beans and bindweed which go anticlockwise (listen to the Flanders and Swan song titled "Misalliance"). The other shoots were burnt out with tar oil, now banned, which was also used later to burn off all leaves up to 3ft 6in high.

Hops are susceptible to many pests and diseases, including mildew, red spider mite and wilt, which is perhaps the worst, as chemical treatments are ineffective and infected hops must be grubbed out. Other pests, especially damson hop aphid, were treated with nicotine till this was banned; copper was used against downy mildew, now also banned. Organic hops require special treatments, savona soap is OK as is sulphur. Red Spider mite can be treated by introducing another predator spider, which eats the Red Spiders then dies off. Other natural predators include ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies and anthocorrids. Varieties include Fuggles, Challenger, Bullion, Target, Bramley Cross, Whitbreads NGS and Saxon. Hops have separate male and female plants but only the females produce the hop flowers. To make Bitter, one male is planted to every 99 females, to allow pollination, but Lagers need seedless hops, so every male plant within a 2 mile radius must be grubbed out!

The annual September influx of hop pickers from London and other industrial areas, or locals earning money at peak times, was a feature of this industry. One hopping family so loved this area that they had their ashes scattered on the farm, which is now an organic hop garden. There was an annual football match, Marden against the hoppers, a good natured 'needle' match. However the introduction of hop-picking machines in the 1950s (the Halls machine was built in Plain Road in 1957) meant that fewer pickers were needed. Now the Hall's hops are picked on one day in September, then dried in the Oast. This was long, hot, tedious work, as they must be watched all the time - helped along by a nearby barrel of beer. Now this is a continuous mechanised process. Dried hops are graded, into Choice, Grade 1, Grade 2, differentiated by colour how they were dried and other factors.

By the 1980s the industry had begun its slow decline. The increase in lighter "lager" beers meant fewer hops were needed and different (often foreign) varieties. Hop production techniques and use of pelleted hops were more efficient, so again less hops were needed. However there is now resurgence due to increased demand for "craft beers", produced by micro-breweries in US and UK. CAMRA report there are now 1540 breweries in UK. Jack entered several hop drying competitions at the Weald of Kent Ploughing Match and further afield, and won "Highly Commended" in one London competition. If you would like to learn more about "Hopping in Marden", a DVD "The Last Hop Garden in Marden" is available from the History Group.

*Mo, Steve and an "Old Mardonian"*

**MARDEN IN BLOOM:** The Marden Society joined in the Marden in Bloom competition and took over the small area in front of the Library. This was very weedy but was cleared and planted up by Mo and Diane Fisher and looked very colourful during the summer. Mo is now in the process of planting for spring with bulbs, grasses and primroses. The "Hoedown" on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct was a great success, and Ann Boswell thanked all participants and helpers, especially Roger Butler from Golden Hill nurseries who provided many of the plants.

# The Parish Pump

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY - NOVEMBER 2016

With regret we announce the death of three more members, **Sir Nicholas Fenn** on 17<sup>th</sup> September, **Trevor Simmons** on 2nd October and **Pamela Tomkinson** on 14th October. Sir Nick was a diplomat who was our ambassador in Myanmar and Ireland, then High Commissioner in India. He was a great friend to the village, involved in so many activities including FOMH, Theatre and History Groups. Trevor was an "old Mardonian" who had worked on the land all his life, with a strong interest in archaeology. He had an enormous knowledge of Marden farming and people, and was always happy to share his knowledge. Pamela was a Marden Society committee member for many years and always ran the raffle, always ensuring nobody got away without buying tickets! All will be greatly missed.

**Our last talk of the year is on 23<sup>rd</sup> November: "Our County Regiment"**. By Col. Peter Cook, another Marden resident. Peter was commissioned in the Queen's own buffs in 1966 and has served in many countries around the world. He retired as a Colonel in 2000 and is now Chairman of ABF, the Soldiers charity in Kent and Vice President of The Queen's Own Buffs, the Royal Kent Regiment Association.

All meetings start at 7.30 pm in the Vestry Hall, with Tea and Coffee and a raffle.

### SEPTEMBER TALK – MEDWAY TALES FROM THE DIVIDING RIVER by Wilf Lower

Wilf talked about some of the boats and characters on the River Medway, which has played such a large part in Kent's history. The Medway divides Kent into Men of Kent (East) and Kentish Men (West). Women are now called Kentish Fair Maids or Fair Maids of Kent after a Japanese wrote that the ladies were "Maid in Kent"! The division is thought to have arisen 1500 years ago when the Jutes invaded Thanet. Saxon mercenaries were hired to defend against them, who then took over the mainland. Thus Men of Kent are descended from Angles, but Kentish Men from Saxons.



In more recent times, **Richard Grimble** a violin maker from Upchurch, restored a derelict 72 ft Victorian gentleman's yacht, the Sorceress. Built in 1878 at Southampton, Sorceress was raced at Cowes, often with the Prince of Wales (future Edward VII) at the helm, and was also loaned to allow him to entertain Lilly Langtry – his current mistress. In 1937 she was retired and left in the Essex creek to rot. She was deck deep in Essex mud when Richard found her, and it took him a year to dig out and refloat her in 1975. He brought her round to the Medway where he was offered a berth in Chatham Maritime to restore her. The hull was found to be sound but the interior needed a complete refit. Richard used his woodworking skills to recreate an elegant Victorian boat,

with a magnificent interior complete with a hip bath. A buyer offered him £1.5 million, which he declined, but was finally forced to sell as he was unable to find a regular crew.

**Geoff Grandsden** had a close encounter with a sailing barge as a young lad, and vowed he would own one someday. His chance came in 1999 when he purchased the famous “Edith May” which was languishing at Upnor. He and his father had to install large barge blocks for her to rest on in Lower Halstow Creek, before starting work on her. It took him 10 years to restore, with the help of his family, and she is now the only barge you can take a trip on, sailing out of Chatham. It must have been a family obsession because **Geoff’s brother, Derek**- a steam enthusiast, restored a steam-engined Victualling Inshore Craft (VIC No. 96), This was based on a “Clyde Puffer” design, and originally built mainly by women during WW2, to resupply naval ships. She was in Cumbria as an exhibit for a new Museum, but this venture was unsuccessful and she was offered for sale for 50p as long as she was removed. Derek and his team (10 men and 2 women), bought her, then restored her and she was brought back down through the Caledonian Canal and along the east coast. She is now moored at Chatham Maritime.

**Owen Emerson** was a shipwright who always wanted a sailing barge. One day he saw an old lighter, the Alice, and decided to convert that into a “new” barge. It took 30,000 man hours to complete the job, working on a beach at Upnor. However attempts to offer charter trips on her from the Medway failed and she finally was sold and went to Portsmouth, an area with a much larger chartering business.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kentish resorts (including Gravesend and Gillingham) became tourist attractions with bandstands, a zoo at Gravesend, fairgrounds, theatres etc. As paddle steamers began to ply their trade from London down to Sheerness and Southend, families could escape London and enjoy a trip on the River and some sea air. One such was the **Medway Queen**, launched at Troon in Scotland in 1924 and purpose built for the River by the Medway steam Packet Company. Before the war she was used for pleasure trips around the Medway, Thames and Kent and Essex coasts. In 1939 the Admiralty commandeered her – wartime exploits included seven trips helping to rescue over 7,000 troops during the Dunkirk evacuation. After the war she was refitted in Southampton and returned to the Medway, but by the mid-1950s public tastes had changed and it was no longer a viable business. In 1963 she was sold to be used as a restaurant on the Isle of Wight, and then abandoned. In 1983 a local consortium brought her back to Chatham Historic Dockyard for restoration. However funds were short and soon she was again partially submerged and neglected. The Medway Queen Preservation Society led by **John Kempton** raised funds including a £1.8 million HLF grant, and she was taken to Bristol for repairs to the hull. She is now afloat, but ongoing restoration is costly, and new safety regulations make using her difficult. Her eventual future remains uncertain. Another paddler, the Kingswear Castle operated popular river trips downstream on the Medway for many years, but is now down in Devon on the River Dart.

Another of the Dunkirk “Little Ships” is the Sylvia, first owned by Mr Anstey, a garage owner in Maidstone. She was requisitioned by the Navy and made two trips to Dunkirk, returning badly damaged to Ramsgate. After the war she was rebuilt and renamed the “Wendy Ken” after the new owner’s two children. In 1978 **Ian and Doreen Pearson** returned to Britain

after many years in the Middle East, and were looking for a boat. They bought the Wendy Ken and now live aboard her. They sailed her to Dunkirk for the first time in 1985 for the 45<sup>th</sup> Little Ships anniversary and plan to continue with these trips for the foreseeable future.

The Medway also had a thriving fishing industry. **Shane Hales** is a young fisherman who is Chamberlain of the “Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery”, founded in 1189. Their Charter laid down the jurisdiction of the fishing and oyster rights, which extend to Hawkwood Stone, and upriver towards Allington, at which point the Mayor of Maidstone has jurisdiction. Shane left school and went into banking, but soon realised he would rather spend his time on the river, and opened a successful fish shop in Rainham.. One regulation states that any sturgeon caught must be presented to the monarch. There were 3 reported catches in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only one of which was sent to the Queen, but nothing since then. Sadly only 4 fishing boats are left now, down from 200 at the height of the industry.



**Jim Hutchison** is a founder member of the Historical Diving Society, which preserves the tradition of diving in rubber suits with copper helmets and lead boots. He learnt to dive in the Navy, serving on HMS Belfast, then left to become a freelance diver and set up the Medway Diving Company. Jim retired in the early 90s, but continued historic diving until he finally gave up at the age of 85! He sadly died in 2013 at the age of 91. *Mo and Steve*

**FOOTPATH AND PLANNING NEWS:** Work on the **Stanley’s Field development**, will start on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. so footpaths KM 281 and part of KM283 are closed from 17<sup>th</sup> October for 6 months while new roads are constructed. Better news is that the Order for new route for KM275 from Copper Lane to Park Road has been made, though we cannot use it until KCC have installed stiles and bridges etc., which we understand will be “soon”.

**The Highwood Green** site is almost finished as foundations have been laid for the last new house and only a very few are left for sale. Work continues on the **Parsonage site** though there are rumours of an archaeological find there.

There is uncertainty over the future of the **Cricket Field development**, due to the death of Roger Day who owned the land. However work continues on the new cricket field. A new Company, Jones Homes Southern Ltd, has taken over the **Howland Road** development and have applied in August for full permission to build 44 new homes.

**HOPPING DOWN IN MARDEN – PART 2:** of the reminiscences of an “Old Mardonian” It was a very labour intensive industry, with jobs to do for most of the year. Work started at the end of February with dressing the hops, which need a lot of nitrogen, as well as phosphorus and potassium. In the early days this was provided by wool shoddy, brought by train to Marden station, and spread early to encourage growth. Now pelleted chicken manure is used or even mustard grown as a green manure. Stringing was done by the traditional man on stilts, but now with a long bamboo pole. Generally there was 2 metres between the rows of hops for “Butcher pattern” or alternatively “Worcester Work” had 8ft between rows but only 1 m between plants.