

The Parish Pump

THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY - APRIL 2017

Margaret fled to Scotland, raised a Lancastrian army, and lured Richard into an ambush at the Battle of Wakefield where he was killed. Richard's heir Edward was only 18 but very charismatic, tall and blond with blue eyes. On the death of his father he took command of the Yorkist army and marched towards London. Hearing this Margaret withdrew her troops to York. Edward was proclaimed King by the Earl of Warwick, (the Kingmaker), then followed Margaret. He offered amnesty to any Lancastrians who wished to join him and gained many recruits from Middle England who sought revenge for the Lancastrians' earlier plunder. The Duke of Norfolk was also marching along the Great North Road to join him. After a skirmish at Ferrybridge where Lord Clifford and about 500 Lancastrians were killed, they retired to Tadcaster about 2 miles from Towton and the Yorkists took up their position at Sherburn-in-Elmet. The following day was the 29th March 1461, Palm Sunday. The weather was dreadful, with snowstorms and howling wind. The two armies comprised around 50,000, the largest number of armed men ever seen together on English soil.

The Yorkist archers were ordered forward and shot their arrows into the Lancastrian army. Helped by the strong wind the arrows all found their mark and cut down many of the Lancastrians, so the archers fell back. The Lancastrians tried to retaliate but their archers were firing against the wind and blinded by the snow so the arrows all fell short, causing little damage but using all their arrows. The Lancastrians tried to advance, but were hampered again by the York archers, who fired not only their own arrows, but also Lancastrian arrows which had missed. With their greater numbers the Lancastrians did succeed in pushing back the York army, but about mid-day the Duke of Norfolk arrived with his men to support York. The Lancastrian line was broken and with the death of Percy they turned and fled, hotly pursued by the men of York. Those trying to cross the river were hacked down or drowned, many tried to cross the bridge which gave way under their weight. The Yorkists showed no mercy and the river was said to stream with blood for many days. According to the chronicles of the time about 8,000 York men were killed and 20,000 Lancastrians, it is believed to be the bloodiest battle fought on English soil .

With the defeat Margaret fled with Henry to Scotland and then to France. Edward was proclaimed King and reigned more or less peacefully for nine years. The Wars of the Roses continued on and off for another 25years, culminating in the Battle of Bosworth and the establishment of the Tudor dynasty.

Keith also brought for display a collection of armour and weapons which would be used at that time: the longbow, (made to measure to the height of the owner plus a fist), with a selection of arrows with the different heads. Archers were obliged by law to practise for one hour every Sunday after church. The targets were called 'Butts' and this name came still be found in many places. His sword had a sharp pointed end, for thrusting and wounding rather than hacking from side to side, and the poleaxe had various vicious functions!

Barbara Dubois

With regret we announce the death of Edith Davis on 26th February. Edith was Secretary of the Marden Society for very many years and a committed socialist, well known for her forceful left-wing views.

Our next talk will be on **26th April, "A Walk in the Clouds"** by Kevin Reynolds telling of his mountaineering exploits in the Himalayas and other areas. This will again be at 7.30 in the Village Club. Then on **24th May Jeremy Wilkinson** will be speaking on **"The Wealden Iron Industry"** at 7.30, this time back in the Vestry Hall.

On **Wednesday 28th June** we will visit **Peter Hall's Mill and Little Mill Farms**, to see the work he and his team are doing to promote wild life, including birds such as buzzards, red kites, linnets and kingfishers, and flowers. His water catchment project is supported by the Environment Agency and RSPB, and will reduce the risk of flooding to Marden and the surrounding area. There are longer term plans to have a meeting room at Mill Farm for school groups and organisations. It is a large undertaking and Peter is a real enthusiast who will explain his projects to us. Meet at Mill Farm (behind the strawberry stall) at 2.30pm for a tour, on foot, which will last just over an hour (there is ample parking). Then back to Little Mill Farm Oast for strawberries and cream and tea, courtesy of the Marden Society.

JACKIE SIMMONDS LIFE AS A TILLERGIRL.

Jackie brought a touch of glamour to Marden in February when she visited the Village Club to talk on Her Life as a Tiller Girl. Jackie's parents planned a life for her as a teacher, despite her love of dancing. However she persuaded them to let her take a dancing job between school and college, but was talent spotted for the Tiller Girls while working at Catford Town Hall, and her parents had to bow to the inevitable.

The Tiller Girls were formed by some Manchester businessmen and their chairman, John Tiller in 1880. These gentlemen wanted a troupe of dancers who were respectable without the disreputable image most dancers presented. Betty Boothroyd, one time Speaker of the House of Commons, was a Tiller Girl in 1949. In the 1960s there were 16 Tiller Girls, and they worked with such great entertainers as Sinatra, Judy Garland and Bob Hope among others on "Sunday Night at the London Palladium" (she was between the two Ls in Palladium on the revolving stage). This was hosted



first by Tommy Trinder, then Bruce Forsyth and finally Jimmy Tarbuck. The girls also appeared on the Billy Cotton Band Show and on 21 series of the Black and White Minstrel Show, until it became politically incorrect. The Queen was apparently a fan of this and asked the BBC for some old recordings. They were very disciplined and sported fishnet tights and the memorable headdresses and sequins, which were changed for every Sunday night performance. Many of the costumes were made by outworkers in Kent, and sadly discarded once they had been used.

The group disbanded in the 1970s, as they were no longer wanted for new-style shows, so Jackie continued working in TV as an actress, and turned her hand to choreography. She appeared in General Hospital (with Lynda Bellingham), Secret Army – still occasionally shown on alternative channels for which she receives 4p Royalties by cheque! However she still found time to marry and bring up two children. In 1989 a benefit show was put on at the



Theatre Royal Drury Lane in aid of Terry Thomas, who was ill and penniless, and his wife. The girls were asked to be part of this, so all 16 got together, realised they could still do the high kicks, did a full routine for the show and got a standing ovation. Their efforts helped get the couple into an actors' retirement home. They carried on doing shows after that, including the Royal Variety Performance, and at least 250 charity shows, preferably under Royal Patronage. Prince Philip

is a keen fan of the Girls and they once gave him a birthday present of an expensive bottle of whisky, with a special TILLER GIRLS label.

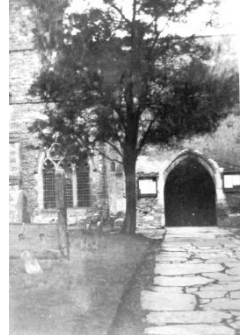
Two of the girls are now over 80, and not all can do the high kicks any more, but they will appear once more at the Palladium to celebrate Dame Vera Lynn's 100th birthday. All the original 16 will be present, and they will also perform specially for Dame Vera at her home as she is now in a wheelchair. At this point Jackie persuaded 7 members of the audience to join with her in a few dance moves – they all did very well and Geoff Burr looked very pretty in his sequined tiara. Once her halter strap broke during a performance but due to its construction remained in situ – until a high kick caught the strap and it started to slip! The girls took the only course open to them (to stop dancing was not an option) and closed ranks tightly around Jackie to hide her embarrassment from the audience. Jackie finished her talk by getting her 7 'volunteers' to do another routine. It was a very entertaining evening. *Mo and Steve*

WALKING THE SAXON SHORE WAY

A Long Distance sub-group of the Walking group have started their journey around Kent on the Saxon Shore way. They walk on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Tuesday of the month, walking two hours each side of a pub lunch. Please contact Ian Balmer 0752 28801306 if you are interested to join them. *Catherine Alderson*

MARDEN'S NEW STOCKS

Marden has had a set of stocks since the 1359 Statute of Labourers prescribed their use for miscreants and required that every town or village design, make and use them. Ours were designed to be portable and so probably had wheels. When this Law was repealed by the Statute Law Revision Act of 1863, the stocks were stored in what is now the Farm Shop but was previously known as the Manorial Court House and then the Cross House. There is an engraving, from a drawing dated 1882, in the Heritage Centre showing them stored inside the Old Market House. They were moved to the front of the churchyard, immediately behind the railings, in 1882.



Maybe because the stocks needed repair or because the railings were removed to aid the war effort, their next position was halfway between the front fencing and the church, on what is now the rose bed alongside the path, as clearly seen in Edith Walker's photograph. Their final place was in front of the church to the left of the porch. Last year, the existing stocks were considered unrepairable, so a new set was commissioned, which were built by Keith Doughty. He reproduced the original ones exactly including the upright whipping post. These were installed on the green alongside the Library and Heritage Centre and inaugurated on 10 December 2016. They were put to appropriate use with Keith Doughty and David McFarland being placed in them and pelted with wet sponges by villagers during Marden at Christmas Day. *Diane Fisher*

MARDEN SOCIETY GARDEN BORDER

The Society 'adopted' the ground in front of the library last year for "Marden in Bloom", with the help of the library. Our daffodils are looking lovely at the moment and we plan to plant out some bedding plants as soon as the frosts are truly over. I am also going to put in a couple of favourite perennials. If anyone has any plants they wish to donate, please contact one the committee. *Mo Clayton*

THE BATTLE OF TOWTON

Beating his drum and playing his whistle Keith Beckford, dressed as "Edward Shortsted" and showing allegiance to Sir John Brooke 7th Baron Cobham, gave a fascinating talk about the Battle of Towton during the War of the Roses. England was ruled by the weak King Henry VI who allowed his nobles to seize land, tax the poor, and cause general unrest. Meanwhile most of the lands won in France were lost, leaving only Calais. Henry's wife was Margaret of Anjou, niece to the King of France, who hated England, but loved power and gradually assumed control over the King. The situation deteriorated into civil war between King Henry (the Lancastrians), and the supporters of Richard, Duke of York. Richard had a good legal claim to the throne and tried to get his claim endorsed, but Margaret produced a son and heir so Richard took up arms, proclaimed himself King and captured Henry.