

The Romans were very proficient in the production of iron. Julius Caesar mentions the industry in his visit 55BC and in 43AD Strabo mentions it as a primary export, much going to Gaul. William the Conqueror mentions the industry in the Domesday Book and over the centuries the iron was used by the British fleet, especially for military purposes. After the Black Death in the 13th Century there was a shortage of manpower and water was being harnessed to provide the power for the furnaces. The ironworks began to be centred around the towns of Crawley, Horsham, and Cranbrook.

During the 15th century blast furnaces were introduced from Belgium and proved more efficient. Men were brought over from France and the furnace blowers were water powered. Many ponds were needed to provide water and the landscape shows that many of these still remain. Ore and fuel were fed in to the top of the furnaces with lime, which helps separate the iron which was still allowed to run into a sow, (hence pig iron). Soon other shapes could be made this way, from cannons and cylinders to more decorative products, from cast iron. The industry relied heavily on the manufacture of guns and in 1543 the first cast iron gun was produced during the reign of Henry VIII. The English cast iron was of high quality and the industry prospered until the 17th century when Swedish iron began to be imported and the Wealden foundries started to diminish. Slowly the foundries closed until in 1813 the last foundry shut down and the Wealden iron industry was finished.

Barbara Dubois

A VOLUNTEER ON THE KINGFISHER

About 35 years ago a man called John, with a son Jamie who had Down's Syndrome, bought a boat – which he called Dawn Treader – to help Jamie and other youngsters with similar conditions enjoy a day on the River Medway from Wateringbury. The owner of Medway Bridge Marina, Ivan Dozin, let the Dawn Treader have a rent free spot in the boatyard. When John died his project fell apart until a charitable group called the Kingfisher Project purchased a new boat to take elderly, disabled, or vulnerable groups on river trips. Having a long association with the Medway, I have just volunteered to help. I have had a training day and one day out with the visitors, and have 3 more trips planned. The Kingfisher operates 5 days a week, doing half day or full day trips throughout the summer.

There is now a new bright green and yellow boat, and demand is great. It is certainly hard work, getting the boat ready for the day, checking refreshment supplies, enough toilet rolls etc. There is always a crew of 3, one of whom is the skipper. Guests have to be helped on board using the lift which can take wheelchairs, and ensuring everybody is safely aboard. At the moment East Farleigh lock is closed for emergency repairs so trips to Maidstone are out of the question. Instead it is upriver towards Tonbridge, a delightful country cruise, but with more locks. Lock gates are heavy to open – the lock keys need considerable effort and then pushing the enormous gates open is heavy work. Once the Kingfisher is inside the lock itself, the gates are closed, paddles lowered, then the other lock gate can be tackled. Tea and coffee are supplied, but everyone mucks in; last time even the skipper, a retired naval Rear Admiral, dried up while I washed. I boasted to my ex-navy daughter and son-in-law about this, but I am not sure I impressed them. If there is another trip in the afternoon, we must quickly and safely get the visitors off, grab a sandwich and prepare for the next party. At the end of the day, wash up, empty the toilet, clean up generally, and gratefully go home. My family think it is bizarre that I have volunteered to help the elderly!

Mo Clayton

The Parish Pump

THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY - JUNE 2017

Our next talk will be on **27th September** when **Dawn Page** will speak about **“Teston and the anti-slavery Movement”**. In 1784 the vicar of St Peter and St Paul Church, the Rev James Ramsay, published a damning essay on the treatment of African slaves in the British sugar colonies after fleeing the Caribbean island of St Kitts, where he had criticised the treatment of slaves on the sugar plantations.

Then on **25th October** **Colin Brown** will be talking about, **“The Ordnance Survey Ancient and Modern”**. This is the story of how Ordnance Survey came into being and a little about the speaker's work with large scale OS mapping.

Both meetings will be back in the **Vestry Hall at 7.30**, with refreshments and raffle as usual.

EDITH DAVIS: SOME MEMORIES



Edith Davis, the Society's former Secretary and Editor of the Parish Pump, died on 26th February. Graham Tippen knew her well and was honoured to have been asked by Arthur to give this eulogy at her funeral.

You always knew where you stood with Edith. Whatever task, or project, or cause she was involved in, she was always deeply committed, loyal and tireless in achieving an objective. She had firmly-held convictions and beliefs and stuck to them. You were allowed to disagree with her, but only if you could back up your argument, with hard evidence. She was a fighter against inequality, injustice and duplicity, determined to right wrongs.

When Edith and Arthur moved to Marden in 1986 they were already keen walkers. So it was fortunate for all of us that the Marden Footpath Group had just been formed. Marden has 35 miles of public paths in the Parish. At the time many were overgrown, stiles broken, footbridges missing. As part of a nationwide initiative to encourage walking we set about restoring them. Not only did Edith and the rest of us walk all these paths, but over the next few years managed to fully open them up. One of Edith's most notable achievements was to use her persuasive skills to sell the footpath guides we had written and the coffee mugs and tea towels that we had produced to raise funds. Some previously sceptical landowners became some of our best customers. It was also during their walks that Edith came to know John Hall and his sons Peter and Nick and they became good friends.

Edith was keen to be involved in all aspects of village life, though, not just footpaths. It was why she became an active and stalwart member of the Marden Society and soon became the Society's Secretary, a post she held for 23 years. Often a thankless job, involving taking minutes, arranging speakers, and writing letters, Edith did it without complaint.

I was for some time during these years the Chairman of the Society and I relied on her heavily to prepare our meetings and keep me posted about developments. I worked in London at the time and was rarely home before 7.00 p.m. Edith had an uncanny knack of arriving on our doorstep just as we were about to start dinner. We lived at the time in the West End (the road, not the pub). The front door had two frosted glass panels and we could see them from the kitchen. The doorbell would ring. We could see the outline, if not the face, through the frosted glass. Red anorak, red bobble hat, Edith became known as "The Red Shadow". Edith enjoyed writing. Strongly worded letters of complaint, yes, but she also wrote for the pleasure of it, so she also became editor of the Parish Pump for many years. As well as editing others contributions, she also penned articles herself. About local history, ancient history observed on cruises: e.g. to the Greek Islands; about birds and the local countryside. She persuaded the Halls (in best Edith fashion) to write about the country from their aspect.

So there we have it. A short picture of a most remarkable woman, with a heart of gold, who made Marden her home for over 30 years. Who loved the village just as much as anyone and who, once she decided you were a friend, was a friend for life.

Graham Tippen

SHIPWRECKS

The April meeting was the last in the Village Club for now and we would like to thank them for their help this year. Sadly our speaker, Kevin Reynolds, advised us the night before the meeting that he was unwell and it was too late to find another speaker, so Mo Clayton filled the gap with a talk on Shipwrecks. The 1120 loss of The White Ship off Barfleur, carrying the heir to the throne and his entourage of young English noblemen changed the course of our history. As the drunken captain and crew, plus the passengers, went to a watery grave, the stability of the succession went with it. Decades of bitter fighting between Matilda, the rightful heir, and King Stephen, resulted in Matilda's son, Henry, succeeding Stephen, then Richard the Lionheart, and King John of Magna Carta fame.

The loss of the British naval fleet in 1707, off the Scilly Isles, showed how imperative it was to find a reliable means of determining longitude. Returning from France with the British fleet, Admiral Cloudsley Shovell and his officers believed they were off Ushant, but were off the Scillies and struck rocks. Four ships were wrecked and 2000 men lost, including Shovell. A sailor who warned they were off course was hanged. The search for longitude took many years as the accurate clock designed by clockmaker John Harrison was ridiculed. Finally it was accepted, but many ships didn't use it as it was expensive, so shipwrecks continued.

The loss of La Meduse, a French ship, off the Senegal coast in 1816 became infamous when it was revealed that the men cast adrift in a raft resorted to cannibalism. The British were horrified – no British man would eat his shipmates! However a few years later some British sailors admitted eating their comrades. They were surprised to be hanged for their crime! When HMS Birkenhead was shipwrecked off the South African coast in 1852, it was crowded with soldiers and their families going to South Africa. The captain insisted the women and children got into the lifeboats first, and this became known as the Birkenhead Drill.

The infamous Goodwin Sands, just off the Kentish coast, are thought to have swallowed up 2000 ships at least over the years when the sands shift and can soon break the back of any ship stuck on them. Then they disappear, usually for good though the spooky hulls of some

can occasionally be seen. Even today the sea is a dangerous mistress. The Herald of Free Enterprise capsized within minutes when the bow doors were left open as the ship sailed, resulting in many deaths.

Mo Clayton

MARTINS – HOUSE OF SAND?

Walking to collect our paper the other morning, I saw a dead chick on the pavement, a House Martin that had fallen out of the nest above. Sad but it's good to see that the nests outside the old Post Office are still used, with chicks peering out, and parents rushing in to feed them. There are a number of other nests around the village, though house sparrows have been driving them out of these nests. As with so many bird species these days, numbers are in decline, by almost 20% in the last 10 years according to the BTO. The use of plastic for house cladding and eaves does not help as the mud used for nest construction will not stick. However artificial nests are available. The only trouble is the mess they leave below the nests, but this is nature.... One of remaining mysteries of birding is "where do the House Martins go in winter?" We know they head south to Africa, but where? Over a thousand House Martins are ringed in Britain each year, but their wintering grounds remain a complete mystery. Few have been observed in Africa which has led to speculation that they might spend long periods of time feeding at high altitude, perhaps above the rainforest, where they can go unnoticed. Miniature tracker tags are available, but do not have the battery life to cover the full migration, so BTO are waiting for the technology to improve.

One piece of good news is that the Sand Martins are back in North Kent, however they have



moved along from the cliffs at Reculver back to their original colony at Bishopstone. One birder has counted 112 nest holes! Sand Martins are believed to winter in the Sahel, just south of the Sahara and, though basically stable, their population has crashed twice over the last 50 years due to droughts in this area. So how do you tell if your martin is sand or house? Both have similar shape and short tail (unlike swallows), though sand martins are slightly

smaller. The key difference is that Sand Martins are brown above with a brown breast-band while House Martins are blue-black above but all white underneath.

Steve McArragher

THE WEALDEN IRON INDUSTRY

In May Jeremy Hodgkinson gave an account of the once prolific Wealden Iron Industry, which dates back to pre-Roman times, but is now defunct with little evidence of it left. The Wealden landscape of valleys, hills, water and trees provided exactly what was needed to produce iron. This was ore (siderite) from the High and Low Weald clay, and wood to make charcoal for smelting the ore. In 1554 250,000 acres of coppice woodland were for the iron industry.

Early iron production was by a bloomery. This was a type of furnace with heat resistant walls of earth, clay or stone. Iron ore was dug out of the clay from mine pits; when the pits were empty they were filled with waste from the next pit. It was pre-heated to the correct temperature by burning charcoal, (indicated by the blue colour of the flame).. Then ore and more charcoal to reduce the ore were fed in and the molten iron drawn off, leaving the other impurities as slag. The iron was fed into a 'sow' and the resulting bar would weigh about half a ton.