



# Despatches

Issue 6

October 2012

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## Archive content:

- Catalogue : 4703
- Baptisms : 16062, until 1934
- Marriages : 3814, until 1950
- Burials : 10398, until 1905
- Trade Directories : 2423 (complete, we think)
- Electoral Registers : 4459, latest 1974
- Cemetery : 1592
- Tithe : 2358
- Poor Law records : 1264 (complete)
- Newspapers : 1079

## NEW

- More Tithe data
- More Baptisms
- More Burials
- Maidstone Journal extracts – 376 records

## COMING

- 1911 census update: Half printed, then need entering into a database.

## Heritage Centre News

And it is some news! June was the month in 2012 for all of us to remember and celebrate. The lead up had started several years ago when I was invited by the staff at the Centre for Kentish Studies to join them at the annual conference of the Community Archives and Heritage Group held in University College London. How inspiring was Anthony Wedgwood Benn speaking on the need to preserve our own history for archives? Last year I received a newsletter mentioning this group's first award for Community Archives with six categories and an overall winner. Could we cope with all the applications needed? Well, we decided to go for it and several members spent many hours extolling our achievements in each award category except "New Archive". In went our words and pictures and we sat back to wait. One morning a phone call came where I thought someone was selling something; No! It was to say we had won the category wherein we had hopefully solved the Victorian mystery of where the bronze age hoard was really found. This had been inspired by John Smythe, a researcher from London, and dogged investigation by our own Trevor Simmons. BUT there was more to come: out of 61 entries we were the overall winner. So on 27th June a group of us caught the train to London where David gave a great

presentation backed up by Ian Newton's graphics. Nick Barratt, a serious researcher who has found fame on TV, especially on *Who Do You Think You Are*, gave a fascinating lecture. So back to Marden we came clutching our glass trophy and framed certificate.

That was still not the end – the next evening the organisers and Nick Barratt came to us to repeat the presentation. We entertained them royally with our best sandwiches and homemade cakes in true rural hospitality style and a wonderful atmosphere. The weather held good and the gazebo outside helped to make space for all the people who were there. It was so pleasing to be told that our applications stood out and were 'a really good read', thereby exemplifying what community archives are all about.

*Eunice Doswell*



*Dorothy Reed (Chairman Marden Parish Council) and Trevor Simmons*



*Nick Barratt, David McFarland, Eunice Doswell*

## The Railway and Marden

On 13th June 1842, Queen Victoria made her first ever journey by train from Slough (then the nearest station to Windsor Castle) to Bishop's Bridge in West London: the first terminus of the Great Western Railway before Paddington Station was built.

Just a few weeks later, on 31st August 1842, Marden was placed firmly on the railway map when the first train steamed in, shortly after 11.00 a.m, as the South Eastern Railway (SER) opened another section of its line from London to Dover. Queen Victoria was not present, but doubtless many local dignitaries, including Lord Cornwallis from just up the hill in Linton and 'squire' of the area, would have been present, with the local band, to welcome the train to the strains of 'See the Conquering Hero comes'. Marden's involvement and reliance on the railway for reaching the outside world has continued ever since. Although, historically, the horse-drawn route between London and the English Channel, Dover especially, had been via North Kent and Watling Street, the North Downs and the River Medway presented significant problems when building a railway. So a route through the low Weald was the obvious choice. On the opening day, the SER was opened as far as Headcorn, not reaching Ashford until December that year and Dover in February 1844. Originally trains from London ran via Croydon and Redhill, until 1868 when the line via Sevenoaks was opened.

There is a lot of Marden history that is inextricably linked to railway history, its influence on: the population; trade; industry and agriculture. International events – war, especially, - had its affect as did the several attempts to build



Looking down line. There was an ungated level crossing between the platforms.

a channel tunnel; the earliest in the 1880s. It affected culture and religion; most of Marden's chapels were founded as a result of the presence of 'the navigators', many of whom were non-conformist, Welsh in particular.

Much of this influence is still with us today. Marden, since the 1970s, has become a popular commuting village, though thankfully not on the scale of neighbouring Staplehurst.

### OWNING AND RUNNING THE RAILWAY

The South Eastern Railway was in a pretty parlous state by the 1890s, both financially and in terms of its service and reliability. Part of this state of affairs was due to rivalry with its neighbour to the north, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway that was, if anything, even more unreliable and poverty-stricken. The solution was to amalgamate, forming the South Eastern and Chatham Railway (SECR) in 1899. This, at least stopped the building of duplicating lines and stations, but it took a few years for the timetables to be sorted out in all areas. Trains from the rival companies used to arrive within 2 or 3 minutes of each other then nothing more for several hours until the process was repeated. The SECR, however, also managed to design some of the most elegant locomotives of the late Victorian and Edwardian era, arguably painted in the loveliest of liveries.

The SECR lasted until 1923 when it became part of the Southern Railway (SR), one of the 'Big 4' as they were known, at 'The Grouping'. Ravaged by the effects of the First World War, deprived of investment, maintenance or development and with severe loss of



Looking up the line toward London, with freight sidings to the left (now the commuter car park)

## The Railway and Marden (continued)



Early station staff — late 19th century?

manpower, the nation's railways in 1919 were run down. The Government of the day decided that the only way to get things moving again, literally, was by amalgamating the dozens of small companies across the country into four much larger ones. Thus, the Great Western, London, Midland & Scottish, London North Eastern, and Southern Railways were born. The Southern was made up, as above, by the SECR, together with the London and South Western (LSWR) and the London Brighton and South Coast (LBSCR) and some small independent lines in the West Country and the Isle of Wight. War again took its toll during 1939-1945 with the Southern bearing the brunt of attacks from enemy aircraft and from the demands of the forces in shifting men and materials to and from the Channel ports. The part the railway played in the Dunkirk evacuation and D-Day landings are well documented. This, run-down, in part led to the Nationalisation plan of the new Labour government in its landslide victory in 1945, and on 1st January 1948 the Big 4 ceased to exist. British Railways was born.

None of this had affected Marden very much. The station and its building were still painted a dark green and brownish-yellow colour as they had been for decades. It wasn't until the late 1980s that a change came. The colour scheme at the time becoming post-box red and a light grey. It was "all change" again after 1995 and the privatisation of the railways under the John Major government. The honourable gentleman had seemingly never travelled by train. Under the initial scheme, everything was not just privatised but fragmented into dozens and dozens of different companies who, so it seemed to us commuters at the time, were run by those who knew the cost of everything but the value of nothing. It took a number of serious flaws in the system including, sadly, some serious fatal accidents, for the railway infrastructure side of things to be semi-renationalised into Network Rail.

The companies actually operating the train services, or TOCs as they are colloquially known, have to re-bid for their operating franchise every few years. Currently we are served by South East Trains (SET), trains having previously been operated by a French water company (Connex) and another part-private and part nationalised outfit (Network SE).

### PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICES.

At the time of opening in 1842, Marden received 6 trains a day in each direction, the fastest taking almost exactly 2 hours for the 51 miles to London Bridge. For Mardonians of the early Victoria era, it must have seemed like a supersonic flight on Concorde would today (if that superb airplane were still flying). You could walk to Maidstone market in about 3 hours; go to Stilebridge and catch the mail coach that would have taken a day to get to the capital; but two hours! Railway travel was born, even if the trains had no heating, and in third class were only open trucks with benches.

Bradshaw's guide for 1922, the last year of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway, shows that Marden received 8 trains a day in the 'Up' (toward London) direction; 10 on the 'Down' (toward the coast). Sundays saw 2 trains on the up line, 3 down. There would have been some commuting even 90 years ago, mainly into the City of London proper, by stockbrokers and the like who had chosen to buy a country house and travel 'up to town'. To cater for this, the first three trains from Marden each day were all direct services to Cannon Street, the fastest, the 08.18 from Marden taking 1hr 20 mins. After a few hours in the office, lunch at one's club, a quick nip



A London bound train pulls in to Marden.

## The Railway and Marden (continued)

back to work and sign any letters and you could be on the 5.12 p.m, arriving at Marden at 6.23 just in time for warmed slippers and a livener before cook announced dinner.

By 1949 there were eleven trains each way stopping at Marden; 2 each way on Sundays.

This arrangement remained virtually unaltered right the way through until electrification in 1961 (see below) when a timetable of regular frequency services was introduced, enhanced at 'rush hour'. Now there is a half-hourly service on both the up and down line between Marden, London and the coast. Progress indeed!

Apart from these services directly serving Marden there were, of course, express trains and specials. Many Mardonians will have been on a Sunday School outing to Margate, Ramsgate or Folkestone when a special train was chartered exclusively for Marden folk for their day by the sea, a day when virtually the entire village had a day's holiday. Sometimes, for a smaller party, a special carriage would be added to a normal train. Didn't we feel grand climbing into the compartment with 'Reserved for Marden School' boldly stuck on a label on the window!

Even grander, occasionally an express train was stopped at Marden to enable a special group to board. I remember this happening on several occasions in the late 1950s for our Primary School annual outing: once to the Tower of London; once to London Zoo; and once, to my utmost delight, to Ashford Railway works. But it wasn't just groups that could arrange the special treatment. A newspaper cutting from June 1923 records that after the wedding of Miss M Oyler and Mr F Highwood "by courtesy of the Southern Railway Company, the Dover Express stopped at Marden station and the happy pair left en route for London and Ilfracombe".



A big Church day out from Marden to Margate for the behatted villagers. (1920s)

Then, of course, there was the 'Golden Arrow'; one of the most luxurious and famous trains ever. The train, with its gleaming green, highly polished locomotive and its Pullman carriages ran from London to Dover where passengers transferred to a first-class ferry cabin. Awaiting them in on the other side of the Channel was the French equivalent, the 'Fleche D'Or' to whisk them off to Paris Nord, and then, should they wish, to Venice, Istanbul, or the French Riviera. It was always on time and you could set your watch by it. The huge golden arrow on the side of the locomotive, the 'Golden Arrow' headboard, and the names of the Pullman coaches: Perseus, Pegasus, Iona, are as clear a memory to me now as they were over 50 years ago. Something of a re-creation of this train has occurred in recent years with a number of private steam heritage companies running Pullman car specials on the main line, including through Marden.

But that's not to say that the local trains weren't as interesting. Even the little tank engine with its two ancient carriages that used to chuff down from Paddock Wood each morning before spending the day on the Hawkhurst branch. It did so to take Marden youngsters to the newly opened Mascalls School in Paddock Wood, where local secondary school kids went from the mid 1950s. A steam equivalent of the school bus!

### GOODS SERVICES

The coming of the Railway, as I mention in my opening paragraph, was one of the most significant events in the history of Marden and opened up the village and local farms and businesses to far greater opportunities for employment and trade than they had ever known before.

In terms of trade – the sending and receiving of goods and supplies – the South Eastern Railway and its successors



Station Approach, Marden.

The road into the station, somewhat quieter than 2012.

## The Railway and Marden (continued)

provided Marden station with a good range of sidings and facilities right through from the opening of the station in 1842 to their closure and removal over 120 years later in 1963. Even after then, express parcels and priority goods could be sent from the station itself until the early 1980s.

### LAYOUT AND FACILITIES

There were 4 sidings in what is now the upper car park, plus a siding to a goods shed and two 'refuge' sidings.

The 'long siding' ran adjacent to the churchyard with, just below where the black metal footbridge now stands, cattle-pens used for loading and unloading livestock. You can still see the entrance to these pens across the Station Approach from the Station Master's House (now Old Station House) with the notice 'Penalty for not shutting gate - £5' on the anodised metal gate. In earlier days, through to the last World War, cattle would also have been driven down to the pens along the path that runs between Shepherd's House and the Wesleyan Chapel (Vestry Hall). Earlier still, before Linton View was built in the early years of the 20th Century, a third route to the pens existed directly from Marden market (subsequently Tippen's and, later Tomkinson's yard between the Unicorn and White Lyon House). For those readers living in Marden you can see this clearly in the painting of Marden railway station yard that hangs in the Heritage Centre at the village library.

The other two longer sidings here ran parallel and were just slightly shorter. These were mainly used for coal and bulkier traffic, where horse and carts and, in later years, lorries could draw alongside for loading and unloading. Botten and Luck, R Miskin and Sons, & Finch and Preston were 3 coal merchants all based in Marden who received coal this way and even in the early 1960s most days would find local men like Ken Hollamby, Howard Luck and his Dad, Charlie, or George Boorman shovelling, weighing and bagging up loose coal from



The Golden Arrow, the Eurostar service of its day, heads for the channel port.

12 ton coal wagons into one hundredweight sacks and stacking the sacks into neat piles in the station yard. Rarely was anything stolen and each firm knew whose pile was whose. What is now the lower car park was Miskin's main coal yard, with large amounts of loose coal and coke stored here. This would have been shovelled, loose, into carts and carried down to the lower yard until needed. Other materials such as logs were also stored here. There was also a short siding ending in a loading ramp for the off-loading (or more accurately end-loading) of anything on wheels or legs. The remnants of the ramp are still noticeable, if you peer over from the 'up' platform where the metal railings meet the high wooden palisade fence. Perishable goods, or those of greater value were provided for by a goods shed which was equipped by a small hand-operated crane. This was to the left of the main station building and the siding that served it ran in behind the up platform. The banking behind the lower car park formed its foundation.

Lastly, there were 2 'refuge' sidings where slower trains could be shunted back to let an express pass. The one on the up line was also used for shunting the sidings and ran as far as Maidstone Road arch. The one off the down line ran back to Pattenden Lane arch.

### THE PICK-UP GOODS TRAIN

The number of these trains varied over the years; mostly there were 2 a day; one in the early morning and the other early evening. Wagons for Marden will have been sorted at Ashford yards along with those for Pluckley, Headcorn and Staplehurst, having been brought to Ashford in larger trains.

The pick-up goods train was one of the most endearing features of the railways, and a particular feature of rural areas. Having assembled its train, the



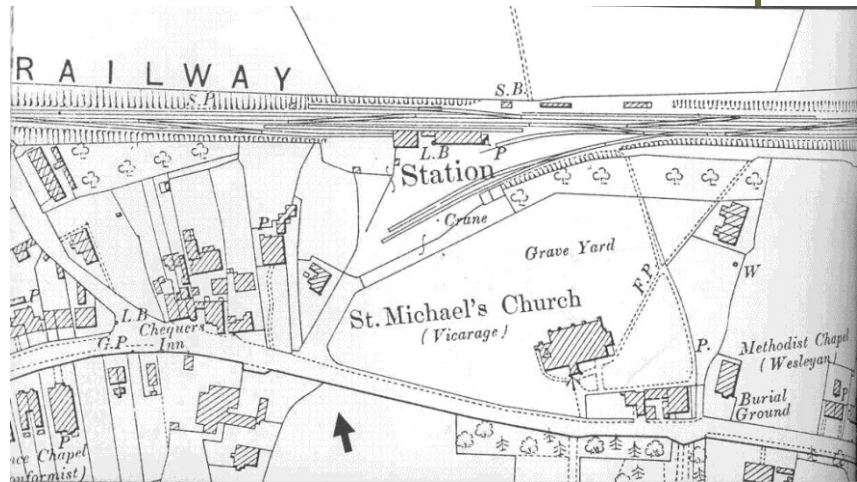
The Golden Arrow whistles through Marden toward Dover.

## The Railway and Marden (continued)

locomotive, usually elderly, would make slow but purposeful progress along the line, picking up and setting down trucks at each station along the route. There was a sort of timetable, but it depended very much on the number of wagons to be dropped off or collected and the number and frequency of other trains on the line. This was the case at Marden, as in order to assemble its train in the right order involved forays from the sidings on to the main line that could only be fitted in around passenger services including expresses and continental boat trains. It was particularly problematic when shunting involved crossing the up and down lines. Regulations regarding shunting movements were strict: there would have been hell to pay if the Golden Arrow had been delayed because there was a truck-load of coke sitting on the main line! These movements would all have been controlled by the signalman who had a good view of all the sidings from his box at the London end of the down platform. So sometimes the whole operation took 10-15 minutes; another time over an hour.

I often used to watch the evening goods as a lad, as it arrived at Marden about 6.45 p.m. – after tea, just before bedtime. The period I am relating is around 1957- 62, my years of relative innocence in the days when you could leave your doors undone, walk the streets safely and before I discovered women, beer and cars.

It went something like this. The bells would ring in the signal box asking the signalman to accept the train from Staplehurst 'box. He would 'pull-off' the up distant signal and the train



The freight sidings once occupied most of the area on the village side of the station . After 1960, only a twin track remained: one up line, one down line.

would appear from under Maidstone Road arch (for railway enthusiasts, usually, at this time, pulled by a Wainright 'C' or O1 class engine: you can see both types at the Bluebell Railway in Sussex. C class 592 and 'O1' no. 65 both did this duty) that would wheeze to a halt with much clanking and buffering up of trucks at the platform.

The whole train would then reverse into the 'up' refuge siding' before uncoupling the train where the trucks to be left at Marden were located. These would be brought back out on the main line and left between the crossover. The engine would then run forward on its own, clear of the crossover before reversing across to the down line but facing in the wrong direction. Next it would run forward 'wrong line' to the top of the crossing before reversing again back across to the up line, but now behind the Marden trucks rather than in front of them. Re-coupling, it would draw them back into the siding. Here, temporarily, the signalman left the shunting in control of the shunter that accompanied the train en route, as all the points in the yard were operated by hand levers. Slowly pushing the Marden trucks forward, the shunter selected the correct siding by operating the point lever and uncoupled the wagon for that siding using his shunter's pole; the engine gave a gentle shove, the truck trundled off and the shunter ran alongside it. Once clear of the points he grabbed the wagon brake lever and released it (i.e. to apply the brake), the wagon eventually rolling to a halt, or under the laws of physics, stopping when it hit the buffers at the end of the siding or of another wagon.

This went on with much chuffing backwards and forwards, whistling, arm-waving, tripping over coal scales, swearing, and missing the wagon brake handle until everything was in its place and there was a place for everything.

The whole process in the last 2 paragraphs was then reversed to remove the trucks that Marden had finished



The freight sidings have, since 1960, been replaced with a goods yard that was accessed by road, then later absorbed into the growing commuter car park.

## The Railway and Marden (continued)



Flat wagons, loaded with new tractors, wait for decanting in the old sidings

with and fit them back into the train ready for departure. The crew probably had a brew up at this point before they and their train ambled off towards Paddock Wood and I ambled off home. This was a scene repeated at countless locations across rural Britain for years, a vital part of trade and commerce and now gone forever.

### WHAT CAME AND WENT

Two items formed the majority of goods to and from Marden station: coal and agricultural products. Coal was, of course, solely inward but traffic relating to agriculture went both ways. As already mentioned, Marden had 3 coal merchants for many years. R Miskin and Sons' main coal and coke operation was situated within the station yard and they had their offices opposite the station (now the Dental surgery) as well as a large corn and animal feed warehouse (the black wooden sheds occupied by Hugo at Autobase). Botten and Luck's yard was in Pattenden Lane (now Luck's Way and Sovereign's Way) and Finch and Preston operated from a small yard in Howland Road also now houses.

Outgoing agricultural traffic was mainly top fruit en route to wholesale markets in London and further north. At one point, it was reckoned that Marden shipped more fruit traffic by rail than any other individual rural station in the country and this in competition from road haulage firms like my father's. A non-stop express goods, known as 'The Bullet' ran from Marden to London for several years. Hops, dried and in pockets, were also transported to hop factors in London prior to being sold to brewers in other parts of the country. Dozens of special passenger trains – hopper's specials – would also have run every hop picking season to bring the workers down from London and return them afterwards. That is a story in itself.

Hops were a valuable crop, reflecting the huge demand for beer; the amount of effort and care needed in growing them and the labour intensity of their cultivation and harvest. Any damage (hops bruise easily) would have resulted in compensation claims on the Railway Company as would any loss of pockets in transit. Hop pockets weigh around 1½ to 1¾ hundredweight each (51 kg) and stand around 6 feet high so losing one is not that easy.

However, in 1855 the station master was threatened with the sack if he did not make good the losses of hops. In order to produce prime quality crops, of course, good husbandry of the land is needed. Manure, in various forms, became a major form of traffic for the railway. Marden was no exception, but not everyone was happy. Records show that in 1893 the good people of Marden, or at least those living close to the railway, complained to the Company of the nuisance caused by the smell.

Shoddy was a particular type of fertiliser for hops. Shoddy is wool waste and was obtained from the woollen mills, clothing and carpet factories of Yorkshire. As it was light and fibrous, it was loaded into box vans rather than open trucks, though the heat and dark of the van made for a perfect breeding ground for flies and other insects. It made life easy for those unloading it, though. You only had to open the wagon doors and the shoddy walked off on its own! Shoddy was still being used until a few years ago by Peter Hall on his organic hop garden. However, the use of non-organic dyes in carpet manufacture has ended its use.

### ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

Sadly, over the years there have been a number of accidents and incidents involving the railway at Marden



A commuter train arrives from the London direction. The platforms were extended in the late 1980s to cope with 12 carriage passenger trains as usage increased.

## The Railway and Marden (continued)

and Marden people. Two of the most serious are in living memory.

On January 4th 1969 an electric multiple-unit passenger train ran into the rear of a parcels train that had stopped at a red light close to Longends Lane. Four people including the driver of the passenger train and a girl of 13 were killed. It was around 8.00 p.m; and dark, cold and in thick fog. There had been a problem with the signal reported earlier that day, but the subsequent investigation found nothing conclusive. The driver is believed to have passed a previous signal at caution (amber) in the fog that might have warned him of the stopped train in front, though that in turn had only been stopped as a precaution because of the earlier fault. A tragedy of circumstance and human error. A number of local residents, farm workers and firemen from Marden Fire Brigade were commended for their bravery in the rescue of passengers.

Twelve years earlier, just before Christmas 1957, one of the worst ever railway accidents in the south east took place at Lewisham. Again thick fog – or smog – was a major factor. Over 90 people died when a steam hauled commuter train bound for Kent over-ran a signal and ran into the back of another passenger train. The force of the impact pushed some of the carriages upwards, causing severe damage to an overbridge where another train was approaching. There were several Marden people on the commuter train though, thankfully, none were injured. The Kentish Gazette records that in November 1922, a foreman platelayer, Fred Hodgkin, was killed when he was struck by a train whilst inspecting the length of track for which he was responsible. Again, it was in poor visibility and, again the incident happened near Longends arch.

Just over 2 years later, in June 1925 one of the station porters, Henry Field, was killed by an express when he accidentally stepped into its path. He was assisting with shunting operations at the time, with the pick-up goods (see above) and it is thought he was so intent on his duties that he



The platform side of the main station building, sometime between 1963 and 1988

failed to see or hear the oncoming train despite a shouted warning from the stationmaster, Mr Archer.

Although not directly concerning Marden, another notable incident occurred in 1865 when an up boat train from Dover came off the rails at a small bridge over the Beult between Headcorn and Staplehurst. Track repairs were being carried out and the foreman had mistaken his timetable in the days when such trains ran according to the tides. A section of track was lifted when the train approached. Several passengers were killed or badly injured. The accident, which became known as the “Staplehurst Smash” is particularly remembered as Charles Dickens was on the train, returning from a holiday in Paris with his mistress. Uninjured himself, he is reported to have worked tirelessly to help those trapped in the wreckage and others injured or dying. It is widely thought that the affect the incident had on him mentally contributed to his early death five years later in 1870.

### ELECTRIFICATION

The Southern Railway was, arguably, one of the more innovative and go-ahead of the ‘Big 4’ railway companies, along with the LNER. It was one of the first to use concrete for the construction station buildings and lineside equipment as well as sleepers; it saw the value of publicity in named trains and locos to promote its services to tourist destinations and the Continent; and it developed electric traction way before the days of Pendolinos and Eurostars. In fact, all three of the major constituent companies of the SR (SECR, LSWR and LBSCR) had started to develop electric traction for London suburban services before the First World War. The problem for the SR was that they inherited three different systems using both third rail and overhead wires for electrical pick-up and at different voltages.



The street side of the main building, taken from the carpark



## The Railway and Marden (continued)



The current station building was built in 1988

Standardization was necessary and the third rail system operating at 660 volts D.C. was chosen.

In spite of the harsh economic times of the 1920s and 30s, the Southern invested heavily in electrification of its suburban routes and had plans to electrify all of the Eastern and Central divisions of its empire, something that would have happened but for the Second World War. In fact, electrification made sound economic sense to a company whose domain had virtually no major industrial areas and whose profits derived mainly from commuter and tourist (or holiday makers as they were known then) passenger traffic. Less staff were needed to operate and maintain locomotives and fewer and smaller servicing, repair and storage facilities were required for electric traction.

On our line, the 'juice' as it is known in railway parlance, had been turned on as far as Sevenoaks by June 1939. The plan was to reach Tonbridge by 1941 and the coast a couple of years later.

World War II, of course, intervened. It wasn't until the late 1950s, after Nationalisation and BR's Modernisation Plan, that electrification to the Kent Coast was re-launched. The north Kent line via Faversham was converted first, in 1959, with our line having the juice turned on from 12th June 1961. From that date, virtually all passenger services became electrically operated with only a couple of cross-country trains from Margate to Reading, for example, remaining steam-hauled. Freight plodded along behind steam for a couple of years longer to 1963 when Marden sidings were closed. Fast freight, never that plentiful, was hauled by either diesel or electric locomotives.

### ROAD TRAFFIC TAKES OVER

Goods traffic by rail had declined after the war, though in overall terms millions and millions of tons were still carried nation-wide, especially in bulk. But as more motorways were built and lorries became larger and faster, the nation's reliance on rail freight diminished,

not helped by negative Government transport policies and British Railway's constant ability to shoot themselves in the foot whenever possible. So it was that the majority of freight facilities at Marden ceased with the closure of the sidings and subsequent lifting of the tracks. Some facilities continued to exist – express parcels, for instance, which had always been treated as a 'passenger' rather than 'goods' service and the Red Star service worked very well into the early 1980s. Wallace and Barr's (later De Jaeger's) nurseries used to send a special consignment of cut flowers from Marden station most evenings, an express parcels train stopping at Marden especially to collect these at around 8.00 p.m

each evening (the nursery is now the new Highgrove Garden Centre). My own personal experience is of the current Mrs Tippen's mother sending us a loft ladder by Red Star from near Stoke-on-Trent, where she lives, shortly after we were married in 1981 (don't ask why!). The Red Star lorry picked up the ladder from her house, took it to Stoke station from whence it made its way by express parcels service to Marden station from where Kate and I collected it and carried it home. All in less than 12 hours. I suppose some of the private dispatch companies will do the same nowadays, but at what cost!

### END PIECE

At some point in the future, hopefully not too far distant, I hope to write a longer history of the railway and Marden, to be published in book form. I just need to find a large bag of round Tooits first.

Graham Tippen



Looking down the line in 1988. The platform extension can be seen to the left.

## Working on the railway

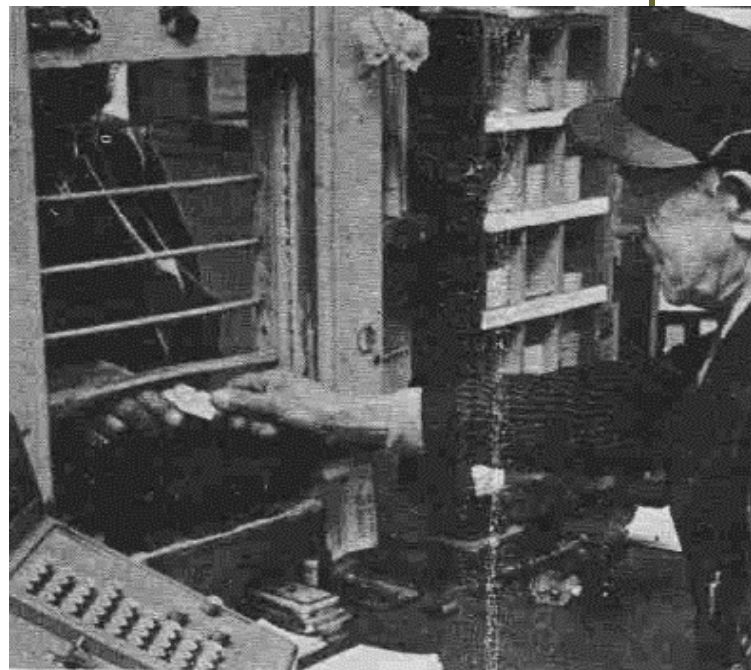
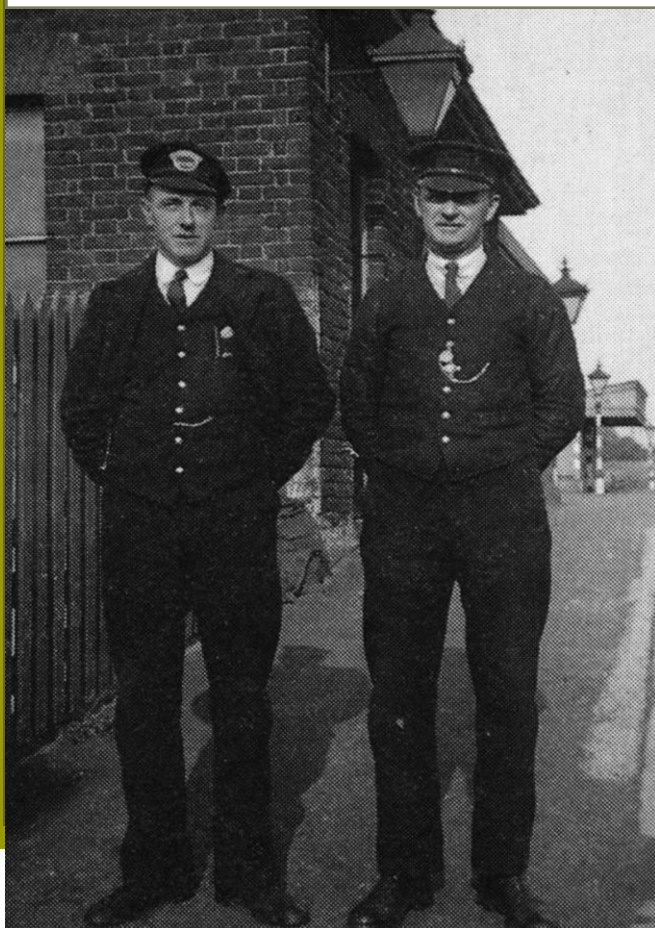
### Alf Winter talks to Phyllis Highwood about his fifty years with the railway.

When I left school I wanted to follow my father and brother in to the Docks at Dover, our home town. My Dad didn't like the idea - he said it was too rough, so I got a job gardening on a big estate. But when the land was broken up, I ended up as a casual dock worker, hoping to be put on the regular staff like my family. Then came the General Strike and after that all the casuals were stood off. But I was offered a job "on the traffic" at Paddock Wood; so I took it and after a year came to Marden in 1928 as a porter signal-man.

That meant I was on the platform and also relieved in the signal box when the signalmen were off-duty. The first job of the day was to fill all the oil lamps and light them - quite a job with a gale blowing in winter.

In the twenties and thirties Marden was a busy station. There weren't so many passengers but practically everything else came and went by train. Crowhurst & Tompsett's groceries would arrive first thing in the morning for them to collect later on. Then all the farm fertilisers were delivered by train. We used to have the yard full of the stuff sometimes - rabbit skins, feathers, shoddy. We had a man come once a week just to sweep the yard. We didn't have time - we were too busy handling and loading trains. All the farm produce went by rail. There was a train nicknamed "The Bullet" which ran all through the fruit season. It started from Headcorn, picking up loads but whatever it had on when it got to Marden we

Alf Winter (left) and Mr Coyle (right)



Left: Leading railman Alfred Winter (of Linton View)  
Right: Mr Jack Shard (of Chantry Road) inspected the line between Paddock

always doubled it. The farmers brought their loads during the afternoon and evening and we put them in specially fitted trucks. We tried to get most of it done over night because the train left at 11.30 each morning, travelling up to Glasgow and dropping consignments of fruit off at various towns on the way. They were all on sale at the next day markets.

Another hectic time was hop-picking. All the Londoners came down by train and the farm waggons collected them. We had to have extra staff at that time - three signalmen, two porter signalmen, five in the office and a railway policeman. We used to have 2000 visitors each weekend: they left London Bridge or Grove Park at four o'clock on Saturday afternoons and then we'd send three specials from Marden back on Sunday nights - before the pubs closed if possible.

A different kind of special train was the one which ran on Derby Day each year. It started from Dover and carried saloon cars - twenty-five comfortable seats round the outside and tables up the middle in case they wanted to play cards. Lots of the Marden businessmen liked to go, like Harry Cranham and Ken Ballard's father. It was probably the only holiday they had. I remember one year Mr. Flisher the policeman had his wallet stolen at the Derby.

We also ran a train for the School and Sunday Schools' outing every year. Everybody went; the shops shut and there was practically no-one left in the village that day. They always went to Margate because it was a quick, straight run. The helpers used to go to Church at eight o'clock that morning to pray for the excursion. Of course we looked

## Working on the railway (continued)



Wood and Marden

after the Golden Arrow and the Blue Train, the night ferry up from Dunkirk. Then, when the King travelled, we would have notice of it. Not like now, when they put it in the papers, but the ganger would have to put the plate layers to guard the stiles bordering on the track and the police manned the bridges, just in case anybody should want to harm the train - not that anyone ever did.

During the war the freight ran as usual but it was more difficult; we weren't allowed to show lights. The carriages were blacked out and all the station names removed. In 1940 we had the Army coming back from Dunkirk. There were so many trains that for the only time I can ever remember we

actually held four trains on the signals instead of two. The soldiers were hungry and when people from the village knew there was a train in they used to come with tea and food for them. Some of the ladies came up to the signal box to complain if we moved the train before they'd had time to feed the men.

We worked hard during the War; we didn't bother too much about hours. We just went on until we'd finished the job, even if it meant a sixteen hour day.

Jack Packham, railway clerk 1963-1974



I passed my signals exams and was signalman for four years but after electrification trains were signalled directly from Tonbridge to Ashford and eight boxes and Signalmen were lost. Then I went in the office.

I've had one or two unusual happenings in my time. There was a sailor once; I'd been talking to him earlier about his going to see where his mother used to go hop-picking. Then I missed him. I found him all right - stretched out unconscious (from beer and aspirin) in the waiting room. Apparently he had been depressed at the thought of rejoining his ship for a long voyage. He recovered in hospital.

Another time I was in the box at three o'clock in the morning when I heard footsteps coming up. Then a figure with a big scarf came in (we never locked up in those days) and all I could see was a nose and a pair of eyes. "Who the devil are you?" I asked, quite scared. After I'd fetched the station-master we discovered it was a woman who was mentally ill and she'd wandered out from the Vicarage where she was staying.

Am I glad I went on the railway? Yes, I am. I enjoyed every minute of it. We worked hard but we were all happy together. When you look at the Station now and see everything boarded up and the windows missing, it's very sad.

Phyllis Highwood

Mr. Winter retired many years ago and then continued to help the village for years as the "groundskeeper" of the Cemetery .



Percy Black, long time Marden Station master

## Charles Dickens trip report...

### Charles Dickens' account a trip on the railway line from London to Folkestone

- written in 1851

"Here we are – no, I mean there we were .... Flash! The distant shipping in the Thames is gone. Whirr! ... Dustheaps, market gardens and waste grounds. Rattle! New Cross Station. Shock! There we were at Croydon. Bur-r-r! The tunnel I am .... Flying for Folkestone .... Reigate Station ...

Bang! ... Everything is flying. The hop gardens turn gracefully

towards me, presenting regular avenues of hops in rapid flight, then whirl away. Now a wood, now a bridge, now a landscape, now a cutting – Bang! There was a cricket match somewhere with two white tents, and then four flying cows, then turnips – now the wires of the electric telegraph are all alive, and spin and blur their edges, and go up and down ... Corn sheaves, hop gardens, Stations ... now fresher air, now

## Marden rail crash 1969

### THE MARDEN TRAIN CRASH

This is my story of the Marden train crash that occurred on the night of the 4th January 1969. It is a night that I will never forget for as long as I live. I was still only 16 at the time.

The evening of Saturday 4th January 1969 was cold and very foggy, although there was no frost. I was spending the evening with two friends, Pete Judge and Chris Peen. We had been in the Chequers pub for a drink or two, the landlord there was sympathetic to our ages as long as we behaved and did not cause any trouble. At about 8.40pm we left to make our way home as our parents were quite strict in those days. As we walked home we suddenly heard a terrific rumbling noise like thunder in the distance. Of course the weather conditions were completely wrong so we knew it was not thunder. It was obvious that it was a major disaster of some kind. I had a strange feeling that it might have been a train crash and I suggested this to the others. At first they were scornful but as they could not come up with a better idea we agreed to run to the station and find out. This we did, as we were close anyway.

When we arrived at the station we told the Clerk what we thought had happened but he had not heard anything as he was in his office with the radio on and all the windows closed against the winter night. I think he suspected that three teenagers slightly the worse for drink were attempting a windup! Anyway, he sent us on our way and we left to make our way home still wondering what had caused that terrible noise. We had not got far when the Fire Siren up in the High Street began to blare out and once again we started guessing at what had happened. Suddenly Chris had an idea. As his father was in the Fire Brigade he knew that they always wrote down the callout in a logbook in the Fire Station. He suggested that we go down and have a look! So down to the Fire Station we ran. When we arrived, the Fire Engine had just left we heard it roaring down Pattenden Lane with its siren screaming. Chris took us into the Fire Station and into the office. We looked at the

logbook and there it was, "Train crash, Brook Farm." As we read the words the reality dawned on us that a very serious accident had occurred and we decided to return to the station to see if we could help in any way.

When we arrived at the station, the Clerk had received the news about the crash, so we asked if we could go and help. At first he was not sure but after a short while he received a telephone call from the signal box at Tonbridge informing him that the power had been turned off and the line closed to all trains. He asked if we could go and the signalman said that we could, providing that we made ourselves known to the Police who would be there by now. As we were, talking a man staggered into the station from the platform. His face was a complete mess of cuts and bruises and he



## Marden rail crash 1969 (continued)

could hardly walk. He had walked from the crash site to raise the alarm, not knowing that this had already been done. I will always admire this man's bravery in trying to help the people in the crash. He could not have known where the crash was or how far he would have to walk. He must have staggered blindly through thick fog and total darkness to reach the station. He left in an ambulance later on so I hope he was OK. Feeling a lot more apprehensive now we carefully made our way along the platform and down onto the railway track. After a short distance we were in total darkness as the lights of the station fell behind us. We knew that Brook Farm was about a mile down the line but that walk in the thick fog and cold darkness seemed much further. A bravado left by the alcohol was drained away in that cold, dark walk and nervousness was beginning to take over. I think that by now we all wanted to turn back but no one would suggest it so on

we went. After about twenty minutes walking there suddenly loomed out of the fog a huge diesel engine with its engine turned off but still ticking as it cooled in the fog. We saw that it was a mail train with boxcars stretching into the darkness. We carefully made our way alongside it towards the rear. Where we could now make out sounds and some light in the fog. As we walked along we noticed damage to the wagons, slight at first but getting worse with each one. The light was much brighter by now and we could see two fire engines in a field with their spotlights turned on. The scene they were illuminating was one of total devastation. In the dim light it was difficult to see what had happened but after a while we realised that another train had run into the back of the mail train. There was wreckage everywhere and we learned later that an express running fast from Charing Cross to Ashford had collided with the mail train, which had stopped for some reason. I never did find out why. As we took in the grim scene we were approached by a police officer and we told him that we had come to help. He thanked us and told us that we were almost the first on the scene as the emergency services were having difficulty finding the spot due to the fog. Only a couple of local fire engines had arrived so far. He told us that they were going to evacuate the passengers through the farmyard and some farm workers who had heard the crash were pulling out fences to get the people out. Because of the soft ground the only way to get the injured people to the farmyard was by tractor and trailer. There they would be treated and taken in ambulances to hospital. The policeman told us that we could help get the less seriously hurt people across the field to the nearest place the tractors could stop. We were quite happy to do this, as it was better to leave the serious injuries to the experts who were arriving all the time. Apart from that we were by now all scared stiff. As we looked around there were groups of people dotted about, some dazed and disorientated. Others were crying and shaking with shock. Some were bleeding from head wounds and some had fallen into the mud, as their legs were so shaky. We began to carefully lead them across to the waiting tractors. Some could barely walk properly and we had to



almost carry them. The field was wet and soft and it was hard work. We soon became plastered in mud ourselves but it didn't matter of course. When we had a chance we looked at the wreckage and it was obvious that people had died in there. The front carriage had totally disintegrated and the second one had split in half lengthways with one half sticking straight up into the air! We were surprised to learn later the next day that only four people had lost their lives, including the driver of the express train, although there were many serious injuries. I think that it was lucky that there had not been many people in the front part of the train or it would have been much worse. After some time, perhaps an hour or so, we realised that there were dozens of firemen, ambulance and police on the scene and we decided that we would go home. We made our way up into the farmyard, which was crammed with ambulances and other emergency vehicles. We also saw a coach that had come to take the uninjured passengers on their way. We were luckily offered a lift back to Marden, which we gladly accepted. After arranging to meet the next day, we all went home, arriving well after midnight with lots of explaining to do to worried parents! Then it was off to bed but of course I did not sleep much that night. The next day we met up again and decided to go and see the crash in daylight. We made our way back along a track, which runs alongside the railway, and when we arrived the clear up operation was in full swing. There was a huge crane lifting the damaged pieces away and lots of workmen scurrying about. As the crane lifted one section I saw a man pick up something red and slimy and put it in a plastic bag. I have no idea what it was, I can only guess. Deciding that we had seen enough, we made our way back home.

Steve Nye September 2000

The 21 page 1969 Department of Transport report:  
[http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/MoT\\_Paddock1969.pdf](http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/MoT_Paddock1969.pdf)



The Marden Society was formed in the 1970s in response to concerns about a particular development near the village. After that was successfully resolved the Society has gone on to both represent the views of the village, as far as it is able, and to promote interest in Marden, in Kent and in the countryside in general.

## From The Parish Pump, newsletter of the Marden Society

Was it a strange phenomenon that occurred at the October Marden Society meeting with the guest speaker Doug Lindsay? The audience comprised of more males than females; with the explanation being the subject was the Kent and East Sussex Railway. Until the 1830s most heavy goods were transported on the canal system. With the advent of the railways offering speeds of 30 – 40 miles per hour compared with 3 – 4 miles per hour there was no real competition, although passengers wondered if they would be able to breathe properly at this excessive speed.

Rail links came to Kent in 1842, but expansion to the southern part of the county had a rocky ride. The laws needed to give consent to various plans were expensive and this part of Kent was not highly populated. Particularly, plans for a railway between Paddock Wood and Rye never materialized. Riding to the rescue came a surveyor on horseback, Holman Stephens. He had a vision and the passing of a Light Railway Act of Parliament enabled his vision to be achieved more cheaply. Thus came into being the Rother Valley Railway with its line from Robertsbridge to Tenterden (actually this was really Rolvenden) opening in 1900. It extended to Tenterden Town in 1903 and to Headcorn 2 years later. This later became the Kent & E. Sussex Railway. After World War I better road surfaces challenged the railway transport, but this method had become indispensable to the farmers, with passengers almost being a side-line. In fact sidings took up a large area of the stations, each with their own individuality. Bodiam had a ticket office, a waiting-room, but no "Ladies". Wittersham Road dealt with a lot of milk. High Halden Road had a station agent not a station master, who was admonished for not selling enough postcards. They had a great number of sheep and cattle

passing through when it was the Biddenden Fair. Frittenden Road was at least 1 ½ miles from the nearest dwelling. Altogether this standard gauge line covering 10 ½ miles had 12 stations, 17 level crossings with 2 halts. Robertsbridge - Junction Road – Bodiam - Northiam - Wittersham Road – Rolvenden - Tenterden Town - St Michael's - Hawkhurst Road - Biddenden - Frittenden Road - Headcorn.

Stephens, now a Colonel after WWI, was a wizard at managing everything on a shoestring, ably followed later by William Austen. The company started with 2 new engines then bought a second hand one which was 32 years old for £600. He experimented with other contraptions. One was a self-propelled steam car, 2 model T Ford engines back to back with one man; but this didn't have enough power. They also tried with buses adapted for rail. Eventually 1948 saw the railways nationalized and 6 years later this railway closed. A group of 3 schoolboys from Maidstone Grammar School decided to fight to save the railway and 160 people turned up to the first meeting. Crossing over the A21 and A292 was a bar to progress and caused 13 years of litigation. Eventually, the line re-emerged thanks to the tremendous work of numerous volunteers repairing tracks, stations, locomotives, carriages and whatever else was needed. Ever careful with money a redundant road bridge from Aylesford was brought in to cover a river. By 2000 the line reached as far as Bodiam.

They are rebuilding the engine shed and are the proud owners of 13 engines. Much of this latest achievement has been funded by the Millennium Lottery Fund. Today you can just enjoy a steam train ride or dine in their Pullman car. Children can experience Thomas the Tank Engine days or Santa Specials. Long may the line flourish.

Eunice Doswell

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### Odd Spot

The Railway Disaster in 1865 Between Staplehurst and Headcorn. On the 9th June 1865 a railway accident occurred between Staplehurst and Headcorn, when the train

left the track, during which 10 were killed and 52 were injured. The SE Gazette of 13th June reported that the noise was heard a long way off, which attracted immediate help

## Odd Spot (continued)

to the scene. Help arrived from Ashford as soon as news reached the station there. Medical staff from London and local doctors all arrived as soon as possible and local houses were turned into makeshift hospitals. 150 men were set to clearing the line. 3 workmen were reported to be injured while undertaking this work.

Superintendent Ovenden apprehended Henry Bengé of Marden, foreman of the 9 men employed on the bridge at the time of the accident. He was a very experienced employee with 10 years service. He said he had consulted the time book but mistook the date and he was horrified when he saw the train coming towards the men. When the inquest opened Bengé was formally charged with manslaughter and released on bail. John Dawson, head carpenter, later gave evidence that Bengé directed all the work to be done and the rails were taken up after the uptrain had passed. As soon as they realised another train was approaching a man was sent back waving a red flag to warn the driver. Will Allen told the court that the train was travelling very fast and he had heard Bengé say that he had 'mistaken the train'. The Book of Rules was missing and some witnesses denied ever seeing a Rule Book. Supt. Ovenden was injured while travelling to the scene of the accident when the horse pulling the cart he was travelling in tripped and Mr. Ovenden fell on his head and face. However he recovered sufficiently to continue to the scene of the disaster. The provision of time books was discussed at length and whether or not they had been used.

Joseph Gallimore, District Inspector, said Bengé earned 1 guinea a week, the 3 men under him earned 18s (circa 90p). Bengé's responsibilities included seeing that the signals were correct, that the fences were in good repair, and to send in a report when necessary in addition to the Ordinary Weekly Report over a 2 mile length of track. Mr Gallimore was also on trial for his own part in the accident.

Bengé did not have a solicitor to advise him and a Mr

Bradbury arrived to defend him. Mr Eborall, General Manager of the SE Railway, said that team leaders were expected to read the Rules before signing and it was Bengé's responsibility to send the signalman to his proper place. Bengé was considered a steady worker, but his neglect and disregard of the Rules was not misconduct.

The jury consulted for 1 ½ hours. 28 people were in the jury, 12 voted against Gallimore, 16 voted against Bengé. The danger of this type of responsibility on the shoulders of poorly educated people was highlighted and a recommendation that a much higher wage was required in order to get men of higher education. Bengé had said he could just about read and write and had signed the Rules without his lack of literacy being questioned.

Gallimore was acquitted but Bengé was found Guilty - the braking time of a train was considered but could not be agreed upon. The Rule Book was consistently ignored because no-one had been responsible for enforcing its use. The train in question was a 'tidal train' because its operation depended upon the time of the tides.

Bengé was given a sentence of 9 months hard labour imprisonment for the Manslaughter of Hannah Cundliff. In fact he served only 6 months and he never recovered from this ordeal.

Was he a scapegoat for the deficiencies of others? He was a poorly educated man with systems in place which were ignored by his superiors. It can only be conjectured that everyone was trying to cover their own tracks and lack of responsibility and Mr Bengé, who must have had the most terrifying experience, was the man who took the blame.

The story of most subsequent disasters often show that human error and neglect are only rectified when something goes horribly wrong.

Some more on the train crash is here:

<http://www.kentishpeople.co.uk/article.php?id=1>

Maureen Clayton

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## Marden Jubilee Fete

The church bells rang, the sun shone (the best day of the Jubilee weekend) and Southons Field was crowded with stalls, games and villagers and visitors. The Wheelbarrow Race set the scene, which ran from the West End Tavern to Southons Field – and the event was opened by the new vicar, the Rev. Ali Duguid and John Warnett from Radio Kent.

Lots for the youngsters – Mini Olympics, Fancy Dress competitions, display of dancing by the Youth Group, local villagers being pelted in the village stocks, Welly Wanging, Tombola, Penalty Shoot Out, Giant Jenga, Skittles, Pimms to drink, strawberries to eat and much more. Keith from the Unicorn, Chairman of the Fete

Committee, M.C'd the event and everyone enjoyed the warm sunshine, the friendly atmosphere and the mass of things to do. Nearly all the village groups participated by holding stalls, brightly decorated for the Royal occasion. Finally, there was a prize giving and the Balloon Race balloons drifted up and away. The whole event had been a lot of hard work and organization by the Fete Committee and the feed back has been very encouraging. There will be another Fete on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2013, and you can see the 2012 photos on the website [www.mardenkent.plus.com/fete](http://www.mardenkent.plus.com/fete).

Maureen Clayton

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### Our current exhibition

#### PUBS PAST AND PRESENT.

The autumn Heritage Centre Exhibition. This current exhibition by Mari Gosling is accompanied by a book compiled by Chris Gosling, Trevor Simmons and Colin Whittle, with maps by Richard Adam and is fully illustrated. The number of pubs has decreased rapidly towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Marden was affected by the seasonal influx of workers to the fruit and hop picking trades, which provided the custom for a variety of different 'houses'. In Medieval times owning and running a beer house was one of the few trades open to women in their own right and drinking beer was safer than drinking water! Kelly's Directory in 1911 report a Mrs Foreman as the retailer of the Beech Inn House, which closed in 1952.

Many pubs were called after local industries or perhaps workmen or unions who held meetings in them, such as the Brickmakers' Arms (closed in 2010 as The Wild Duck). The Engineer is now a private house. Its landlady from 1951 to 1970 lived to be 105, attributing this to being teetotal but addicted to crisps and fresh vegetables. Built around 1550, The Woolpack Inn is named after the staple industry of England at that time. Legend has it that before 1850 the area was a green at which wool sales of local fleeces were held annually. 'Inns of Kent' (published by Whitbreads) report that smugglers used this isolated inn for their transactions. One of the oldest Grade II listed buildings in the village, 15<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, is White Lyon House. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it was a public house, which the Vestry are said to have

used. The spring in the cellar provided water for brewing and dyeing when a draper occupied the building. The spring still supplies water. The West End Tavern, still operational, was built around 1762 at the same time as the forge. It was a very popular venue for hop pickers in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Unicorn was the sign of an apothecary, powdered horn being used to counteract poison. The Unicorn has been a pub for at least 250 years and ownership can be traced back to the 1740s. It still successfully operates and has recently added a coffee shop at the side. Ballards the Butchers is on the site of The Telegraph, which ceased trading in 1921. Its extensive land allowed the butcher to operate an abattoir at the rear, which still operates. Many other pubs are featured in this exhibition, most now private houses. But the few remaining pubs have adapted to serve current requirements and it can only be hoped that they continue to flourish.

Maureen Clayton



From the first series of Whitbread Inn signs built at Watlingbury Brewery

### Marden History Group

The Marden History Group aims to seek, preserve, inspire and transmit knowledge of the history of the village of Marden. It is a working group of eight who meet each month to plan the work,

**Disclaimer** - All information in this newsletter is given in good faith and to the best of our knowledge is correct, however we cannot be held responsible or liable for its accuracy.

