

It has taken approx. 150 man-hours to make each one, so we had to spread the workload over the year in order to fit in many jobs for other customers. We made the first pair in February, the second pair in July and are just finishing the final pair. Our next job is a little less glamorous, producing some wooden covers to hide the dog waste bins at Ightham Mote! Still it's the variety of projects that makes the job interesting. There are of course around 200 other volunteers at Scotney, covering a wide range of roles in the house, garden and estate. Please contact me if you are interested in joining us.

Steve McArragher

THE SEABIRD'S CRY....



....is the title of a recent book by Adam Nicolson from Sissinghurst. This was taken from a poem by Simone Weil that also includes the line "Obedience to gravity is the greatest sin" – something rarely committed by seabirds of course. I recently attended a talk given by Adam and Prof Tim Birkhead FRS discussing whether we can recognise an equal coexistence with animals – specifically seabirds. Can we accept that birds are intelligent creatures, but in a completely different way to us? Adam has always had a fascination with seabirds after he was taken by his father Nigel to the Shiant Islands in the Hebrides which the family own, and he returns each year to commune with nature in a remote bothy which is the only accommodation on the islands.

Almost all seabirds are in decline, with the notable exception of gannets - the "ferocious dominators of the North Atlantic", under the pressures of climate change, shifting food supplies and plastic pollution of the oceans. Adam made a series of documentaries called "The last seabird summer" on this subject shown on BBC4 last year. When asked for his favourite seabird, he said shearwaters, whose name comes from the fact that they fly low and dip their wings in the water when they turn, leaving a wake behind them. They are members of the "tubenose" family with a strong sense of smell, and are great ocean wanderers related to albatrosses and fulmars. Many make enormous migrations from one side of the world to the other, for example sooty shearwaters cover 40,000 miles from Australia to Alaska and back every year, but the question is, how do they find their way?

Manx shearwaters on Skokholm (an island off the Pembrokeshire coast) have been studied for many years, and found to have remarkable homing instincts. In 1952 two birds were taken from the island and shipped to Boston in America. Only one survived the journey and was released on 3rd June. By 16th June it was back in its burrow on Skokholm, beating the airmail letter confirming its release! It had averaged over 250 miles a day for 12 days with no landmarks to guide it. Another more recent and rather cruel experiment was done in Italy. 24 shearwaters were fitted with miniature GPS trackers. 8 had loose magnets in boxes strapped to their heads to give a varying magnetic field, 8 had their nasal passages treated to temporarily destroy their sense of smell and the other 8 were controls. The birds were shipped to Lisbon and released. All the controls and all the magnetised birds found their way home with no problems, but only two of those deprived of their sense of smell made it back. The others, wandered across the ocean for thousands of miles, clearly lost. This appears to prove that these birds navigate vast distances around the world by smell alone. Does that not make them intelligent? You decide!

Steve McArragher.

The Parish Pump

THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY – NOVEMBER 2017

Our final meeting in 2017 will be on 25th November, by Peter Kershaw on the topical subject of "Fracking: The debate about Shale Gas - and will we see drill rigs in Marden?" This will be at 7.30 p.m. in the Vestry Hall with refreshments and raffle as usual.

TESTON AND THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT

Dawn Page began her talk on Teston and the Anti-Slavery Movement by producing a 10 year old bottle of beer. This was not for drinking but to reveal the label which showed the people most connected with the Abolition of Slavery Movement, including William Wilberforce, Sir John Middleton and Pitt the Younger.



James Ramsay

As Dawn pointed out, slavery is still with us. It is believed there are 13,000 slaves in the UK today and 21 million worldwide. However, it was the work of James Ramsay that Dawn was highlighting. James Ramsay was born in 1733 in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. He was apprenticed to a local surgeon, later educated at Kings College Aberdeen and continued his surgical training in London. He entered the Navy in 1757 as Assistant Surgeon aboard the Arundel in the West Indies, under the command of Sir Charles Middleton. He was esteemed by his fellow officers and in November 1759 he volunteered to board a slave ship where he found over 100 slaves living under appalling conditions, the dead and the living, sick and infirm all chained together. The scene from this incident stayed with him for the rest of his life and had a lasting effect. While at sea he had an accident which disqualified him from future service. In 1761 he left the Navy to take holy orders and following ordination chose to work on the island of St. Kitts amongst the slaves. On St. Kitts he attempted to improve the conditions of the slaves by welcoming them to his church (along with his white parishioners), and offering them free medicine and surgery. He strongly criticised the treatment meted out to the slaves by the plantation owners and was convinced conditions must be improved. This led to conflict with many plantation owners, involving personal attacks and abuse, even being challenged to a duel.

Ramsay left St. Kitts in 1777, exhausted by the conflict and lived briefly with Sir Charles Middleton at Barham Court.

Lady Middleton, wife of Sir Charles joined the anti-slavery movement. He briefly re-joined the Navy in 1778, accepting a



Sir Charles Middleton

chaplaincy in the West Indies but resigned his commission in 1780, at the suggestion of Sir Charles Middleton, who was by then Comptroller of the Navy. He became Sir Charles's personal secretary and was also installed as the Vicar of Teston and Nettlestead, these positions being in the gift of Middleton.

In the following years Ramsay became involved in the war of the pen, 'The Great Question'. He wrote and contributed to many essays and publications designed to improve the conditions of slaves and to put an end to slavery. He also became part of a group of influential politicians, philanthropists and churchmen based at Teston. He was persuaded by Lady Middleton to publish his account of the horrors of the slave trade. He met with William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp, and was invited to Downing Street to help and to advise Pitt.

Again he was verbally abused and attacked by the plantation owners and when he died in 1789, Molyneux, one of his opponents was heard to declare: 'Ramsay is dead – I have killed him!' He is buried in Teston churchyard and although he did not live to see the abolition of the British slave trade (1807), that law probably owed more to his integrity, arguments and proposals than any other influence.

Barbara Dubois

THE HOODEN HORSE

The Hoodening tradition is a folk custom that survives in East Kent, which entails the use of a wooden hobby horse known as a **Hooden Horse** which is mounted on a pole and carried by an individual hidden under a sackcloth. Thanet was the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement in Kent and, according to early chronicles, was given by King Vortigern to his Saxon Federati led by Hengist and Horsa (whose names mean 'stallion' and 'mare'). Horse disguise rituals survive in Germanic folk customs. Horse skulls seem to have had a ritual significance as far back as the Stone Age and Bronze Age cultures, judging from their use and alignment in burials. The horse cult was particularly strong amongst the Celtic peoples.



Hoodening and Mumming are rituals that are performed in the Midwinter period (mid-December to mid-January) and which therefore have relevance to the 12 Days of Christmas, the Midwinter Solstice and the New Year. A ritual is defined as a regular seasonal ceremony with set locations, actions, costumes, music and speech. Midwinter rituals in which men disguise themselves as horses and horned animals are widespread in Britain and parts of Europe. The church, although anxious to absorb as many aspects of paganism as were compatible with Christianity, was decidedly uneasy about anything to do with animal worship.

A Canterbury solicitor, Percy Maylam, first saw the Hooden Horse while spending Christmases in Monkton from 1888-1892. He realised the tradition was in danger of becoming extinct and researched and wrote the definitive book on the Hooden Horse in 1909. He interviewed men who had personal knowledge of the custom dating back to at least the 1840's.

The Kent Hooden Horse generally had a carved wooden head. A man covered in cloth or sacking takes the part of the horse, stooping to make a back, clasping the pole attached to

the head and opening and closing the horse's jaws by means of a string. A "Waggoner" is in charge of the horse and a "Jockey" attempts to ride him. There are attendant musicians and a man disguised as a woman, the "Mollie", with her broom. The sweeper figure is frequently found at solstice celebrations and in Mummer's plays, also in Shakespeare's A Midsummer's Night Dream.

I believe there are 6 surviving original carved horse's heads, 1 in Maidstone Museum, 2 complete ones at St. Nicholas at Wade and 2 horses in Deal Maritime Museum.

In its current form a small band tours pubs and private parties in the run up to Christmas performing a humorous play along the theme of death and resurrection, drinking a lot of beer, singing and collecting money for charity. The author knows of Sandgate Hoodeners, Whitstable Hoodeners, Deal Hoodeners and a group from East Kent Morris Men.

Diane Fisher

IF I WERE A CARPENTER.....

Well actually I am - a volunteer carpenter with the National Trust at Scotney Castle. Some 20 years ago the old Scotney Estate workshop had fallen into disrepair, but instead of knocking it down, a volunteer was given funds to buy some used machinery and set it up as a carpentry workshop to make outdoor gates and seats etc. This has now grown to a band of 6 "men in sheds" who work on two days a week making wooden items for National Trust properties across the south-east. There are usually three or four people working on each day, as the workshop gets crowded if we have more than four. We have a full range of machinery to play with including bandsaw, planer, thicknesser, morticer, circular saw etc.



Our products include gates, benches and seats of various designs, planters, leaflet holders etc. We are not cabinet makers, but do make some items for use inside properties such as tables, chairs, display frames and various educational items for children's activities. Our biggest project was building a boat some years ago, albeit only an 8 ft. long replica of Kipling's paddle boat to go on the lake at Batemans. This was intended to be used to give children a ride around the lake, but ran into some problems and is sadly no longer in use.

One recent job for Chartwell has been production of six oak "weaved seats", to replace some which are now showing the signs of age. They are understood to have been designed by Lady Clementine Churchill, and the back is a very complex design with interlocking curves. The originals are in the "Arts and Crafts" style with exposed double tenon joints, held together with dowels and wedges but no metal fixings. Making these has been a real challenge as we had to ensure their final appearance is as close to the originals as possible.

