

- (4) Sign our petition that will be circulating online and in paper form shortly.
- (5) Use your local vote wisely - make sure the Borough councillor that you vote for is behind our campaign and please do **USE YOUR VOTE** in the May local election. Your vote can and will make the difference.
- (6) Join in on **the 'March for Marden' on the 18th May**. We want to bring all of the village together on this special day. (If you can think of anything you would be willing to run/showcase/demo on the 18th please email mardenplanningoppositionpr@gmail.com).

There are lots of posters going up in the village, but more are needed, and banners too. We hope to see some of you on the march on 18th May.

And by the way, the Marden Neighbourhood Plan is still grinding on through its due process, but it contains nothing about future development anyway. We thought the 500+ houses currently going up were more than enough!

Steve McArragher

FOOTPATH NEWS: AT LAST KM275 IS OPEN!

In April 2016 we reported that KCC had agreed NOT to “extinguish” footpath KM275 from Copper Lane to Park Road as they had originally proposed. Instead they agreed a new route with landowners a little further south and published a formal Order to establish it. However the route required several bridges and gates, so it could not be used until this was done. Well it has taken almost 3 years but the good news is that the work has been done and the path is now officially open. It will now be added to the definitive footpath map of Kent. It is well marked with fingerposts at both ends and shiny new gates and bridges, as in the photos.



The path starts around 200m down Copper Lane from the north end and runs east to meet Park Road. It will be very useful as a route to Marden Meadow and will be used on the Walking Group Sunday walk on 5th May at 2 p.m. *Steve McA*

FOXES IN MARDEN: Since last year we have noticed foxes coming into our garden, sometimes up close to the house. I wonder if this has anything to do with the fact that we have building sites either side – the old cricket pitch and the meadow off Howland Road. I believe there were dens or earths on both sites so it is not just us humans who have been affected by the intrusive, noisy, house-shaking movements of the developer’s machinery and lorries. The foxes have had to move house. But where to?

The mating season lasts from around Christmas to February. The dog fox and vixen hunt and travel together for about 3 weeks and towards the end of this period will mate several times. She is pregnant for about 53 days and mid-March is the peak period for giving birth. Although there is no sign of a den or earth in our or our immediate neighbour’s gardens, I have no doubt that we will eventually see the parents hunting for food here. We can’t match the menu of voles, shrews or rabbits of rough grassland but, being fed annually with compost, our veg patch is teeming with worms, beetles and other tasty titbits. The foxes will be in competition with our frogs, toads, newts and hedgehog though. I wonder what the animal kingdom equivalent of a Michelin star is?

Diane Fisher

Our next meeting is on **24th April** when **Mary Smith** will tell us about “**A Schoolgirl’s War**”. This is the talk that we missed last year due to the “Beast from the East” and is an account of the lives of Maidstone Grammar School girls during World War 2.

Then on **22nd May** we have the “**History of the Red Arrows**” by **Guy Bartlett**.

Finally, after a last-minute change for our March meeting to “The Darker Side of Dickens” by Geoff Doel, we have a change to our November meeting as Geoff is unable to come and talk about Hopping in Kent. This talk will now be held next year. Instead on **27th November** we have **Wilf Lower** telling us “**Don’t sneeze at the microphone**”.

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

MO’S MOANS.... The delights of building sites

I really do not mind that I have

Houses to the Right of me, Houses to the Left of me, Houses in front of me,

(courtesy Alfred, Lord Tennyson). And even houses behind me, but with the closing of Albion Road and the change in access for lorries to the Countryside Homes development it could only end in tears. This morning (14th March) one of the many lorries that are now forced to u-turn and therefore back into Jewell Grove (even coming up right to the bungalows of Sally and myself), inevitably one has demolished half of my brick wall. A gentleman to his fingertips he has driven off without a word and it was some hit, so he hopefully has done some sizeable damage to his vehicle.

Now the fun begins, battling with Countryside! Their site manager – Paul Sparrow - will be contacted by my son – Mark Sparrow- regarding this so at least they can exclaim about the coincidence of the same surname before getting down to business.

PS: Friday 15th March at 7.00am - a lorry drew up, men got out, cordoned off Jewell Grove easterly entrance, cordoned off Albion Road starting from Stanley Road and erected even more barriers! Their Mr Sparrow talked to my Mr Sparrow and they have assured me the wall will be rebuilt. Well done Countryside Homes.

Mo Clayton

PPS: Thursday 21st March, they dug up our gas pipe, so in the words of Flanders and Swan, “Twas on the Thursday evening that the gasman came to call”and fixed it. *Steve McA*

ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE

When Mo Clayton introduced Nick Hall to an enthusiastic audience, she commented that she wasn’t sure if it was the local speaker or the opportunity to taste the product which had persuaded them to attend the meeting. Either way it was a good choice – the speaker was most interesting and the wine was delicious! Nick Hall, born and bred in Marden, planted his winery on the ten acres where his grandfather, Herbert Hall, first started farming as a tenant farmer. Herbert Hall had always said that that site was the warmest of his land, and, as the climate here is similar to that of Champagne in France, it makes an ideal site for a vineyard.



After spending several years in advertising and running an art gallery, Nick spent two and a half years at Plumpton College completing a wine production course, then between 2007 and 2008 he started planting and building his winery. In 2009, after a hot summer, he harvested the first crop of grapes to test out his equipment and produced 1,200 bottles. He took it to various restaurants to try, including Le Gavroche, who took it and put it on their list. Nick appreciated that the project was becoming serious and felt that he must get the image right. From his career in advertising he knew many people and one, Jonathan Ray, came up with the distinctive but apparently simple label on its blue background. He was also lucky that GT Magazine were writing an article about English wine and chose to feature his labelled bottle. At that time Nick had no wine to bottle, so bought a bottle of Cava and carefully put his labels on it for the photograph for the article.

Nick only produces sparkling wine, white and rose. The vines come from France and the grapes used are chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier. In his first year he produced 1200 bottles, in the second year 10,000 white and 2000 rose. He now produces 20,000+ bottles. From the start Nick decided that all the vineyard work in the production of this organic wine should be carried out by hand, i.e. pruning, bud rubbing, thinning, leaf stripping and harvesting. He felt that there should be the minimum intervention in the production of its unique, fruity flavour. The aim was for quality and taste to satisfy a unique, discerning niche market. From the start the wine received good reviews and is listed by Fortnum and Mason, Harrods, Le Caprice and Browns Hotel among others.

Nick also took part in the promotion of the Young Winemaker of the Year award, which gives the winner a chance to produce their own wine. The first winner, Kirsty Smith, after a number of years learning her trade in various parts of the world, is now back working for Herbert Hall as the winemaker.

Herbert Hall Wine is still produced on the original ten acres. The aim is to produce about 24,000 bottles of high-quality wine and to this end it has proved its superiority over the years winning many awards and enjoying excellent reviews. Locally there are not many outlets for the purchase of the wine, but visitors are always welcome at the winery in Plain Road, where it is possible to purchase the wine direct. Our warm thanks to Nick for allowing the Society to start its new season in such an enjoyable manner.

Barbara Dubois

PROPOSED NEW MARDEN GARDEN COMMUNITY

You will by now almost certainly have heard of the plan put forward by Countryside Homes to build a new Garden Community including 2000 new homes, two schools and shops and services. This would be on land north of the railway owned by Firmins and two other landowners and would roughly double the current size of Marden. This is in response to Maidstone Borough Council's recent "Call for Sites" as part of their review of Maidstone's Local Plan. They are specifically looking for large-scale developments of new "Garden Communities".

The "Call for Sites" is open from Feb 28th to May 24th, after this MBC will review all the proposed sites and issue a Strategic Land Availability Assessment which will be used in the Local Plan Review scheduled to take place in July-October this year. It is likely to be several years before final decisions are made and there will probably be many other sites. However, it is significant that this proposal was tabled almost immediately after the Call for Sites opened, and preliminary meetings have been held with MBC (attended by the Chairman of our Parish Council), but no formal application has yet been submitted. The Parish Council are unable to officially comment until there is a formal proposal.

Not surprisingly this has generated significant opposition in the village, and a group has developed to oppose the plans. They have a website at <https://www.savemarden.com/> but most of the activity is on the Facebook Group MardenPlanningOpposition, you can apply to join this via the website, currently (20 March) over 850 members. The issue was hotly debated at a recent meeting of the Parish Council Planning Committee on 5th March which was attended by over 180 people so had to move into the Memorial Hall.



The only map available is reproduced here. The area on the left behind Pattenden Lane industrial estate is to be new primary and secondary schools, the central paler area is for housing and the darker (original green) area at top and bottom right to be trees and green space. The Marden Society have decided to support the Planning Opposition Group, and the Committee will do what they can to help. This is what the Society was originally set up for back in the 1970s, when it successfully fought against the establishment of an airfield in Marden.

Here is a step by step guide about how to be involved in the campaign, reproduced from the Facebook page. Not many of us have a lot of spare time but even doing one of the things below will make a difference. Doing all of them would be marvellous!

- (1) Get a free poster from The One Stop or the West End Stores and display it.*
- (2) Order a banner (from P&P Signs) and display it.*
- (3) Write heartfelt letters to the following; Marden Parish Council, Your local Borough Councillors (Annabelle Blackmore, David Burton and Steve McLoughlin), Eric Hotson, the Maidstone Borough Council Planning Department and Helen Grant about the proposal. All of their addresses or email addresses are easily found online.*