

Therefore we have decided to keep our subscription fees at £5 per person, but this is a reminder that **SUBSCRIPTION FEES ARE NOW DUE**, and we will be collecting with this issue. The existing officers and committee all agreed to continue in 2024 and a new recruit, Kim Day has agreed to join the committee. All were elected unanimously.

The Walking Group continues to organise three series of walks. Long Distance Walks along well known trails are walked in 9-10 mile sections usually on Tuesdays during the summer. Sunday walks of 5-6 miles are held usually on the first Sunday of each month. Saturday walks of 1-2 miles are held every Saturday, with occasional train trips to walk further afield.

The History Group has a new Chairman, Imogen Wedd, and are looking to raise funds as MBC are increasing the rent they must pay for the library. Philip Day's WW2 film shows have been successful in doing this. They continue to collate historical records for Marden, and have just received a bible, found in a bookshop in Framlingham Suffolk, that originally belonged to previous owners of Jewell House.

On planning, the good news is that the Albion road/Copper Lane proposed development of 117 houses has been refused because "it would erode the sense of tranquility resulting in an urbanizing and visually prominent form of development". The Marden Society and the Parish Council had both objected to the development. The developer, Rydon Homes may of course appeal. The proposed solar farm off Sheephurst Lane has also been refused permission, but the developers have appealed. The Chainhurst Chicken Farm application has been resubmitted with only two chicken houses rather than the original three. *Steve McArragher*

#### **MBC REVIEW OF MARDEN'S CONSERVATION AREA**

MBC have carried out an appraisal of our Conservation Area and developed a management plan. The draft plan is now out for comments which are due by 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The plan was on display on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan in the John Banks Hall with MBC officers to receive comments. They divide the Conservation Area into three different character areas, High Street, Church Green and Pattenden Lane and West End. "The High Street is the historic core of the village with a range of buildings of different types including Wealden Hall Houses, Victorian terraces and detached buildings. Church Green around the Church of St Michael and All Angels is an important local landmark and community facility. Pattenden lane and West End comprise a mix of detached and terraced properties of traditional vernacular materials including brick built and weatherboarded properties dating from between the 18th-20th century and sited on irregular plots. The variety of architectural styles, materials and built form contribute to the special character of the conservation area." The appraisal does not recommend any boundary



changes, and states that there are few problems of buildings in disrepair. Their action plan proposes more outdoor seating to encourage an outdoor café culture and to plant more trees in the High Street and West End areas. They also encourage property owners to repair and redecorate properties regularly and to replace UPVC windows with wooden ones.

# The Parish Pump

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY – FEBRUARY 2024

We have had to rearrange our programme slightly so our first talk in 2024 will now be on **28<sup>th</sup> February** when **Eddie Asquith** will attempt to answer the question "**How Big is the Universe?**". This is a big subject, and he will try to reduce it to something that we can more easily understand, covering the size of the Earth all the way to the outer reaches of the cosmos itself.

Then the programme for the rest of the year is as follows:

**March 27<sup>th</sup>: Kent Spring and Summer Customs by Geoff Doel**

**April 24<sup>th</sup>: The Rother Levels by Melvin Smith**

**May 22<sup>nd</sup> The History of Aviation in Kent by Guy Bartlett**

**July 11<sup>th</sup> Summer visit to Cobham Hall**

**September 25<sup>th</sup> Pocohontas by Cristoph Bull**

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> Marden Wildlife by Ray Morris**

**November 27<sup>th</sup> A Magic Lantern Tour of Kent by Gerald Cramp**

All evening meetings are free and will be held in the Vestry Hall at 7.30 p.m. with a raffle followed by refreshments after the talk.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S CHAT – FA CUP 4<sup>TH</sup> ROUND: Maidstone United 2: Ipswich town 1**

Football: it's a funny old game as Gary Lineker and other pundits will tell you. Who'd 'a thought it, Maidstone United for the Cup! Now I'm no great football fan but I thought, local team, it's on the telly at lunchtime, let's watch it, and I'm glad I did! For the first half hour or so it looked as if Ipswich would thrash Maidstone 5 or 6 to nil. Their shots hit the goalposts, then the crossbar and several were saved by Maidstone's fantastic Brazilian goalie Lucas Covolan. Then Maidstone got their act together and fought back, I won't say they deserved to win, but they didn't give up and certainly made a game of it. Let's face it they were lucky, only two real shots on goal, but they both went in! Ipswich had over 30, but theirs didn't. Interesting to note that their results in the first two rounds of the cup were 2:0 against Chesham and 2:1 against Barrow, they seem to be setting a 2 goal trend, though only 1:0 against Stevenage.

Maidstone were 98 places below Ipswich in the League rankings, so real giant killers. It just goes to show that anything can happen in football, and in life, so the moral is follow your dreams and never give up. So now to the 5<sup>th</sup> Round of the cup, and they will be travelling to either Sheffield Wednesday or Coventry City. Come on you Stones! It's a pity they didn't get Manchester United, as then it would have been MU vs MU! *Steve McArragher*

## **TOM CREAN – UNSUNG HERO OF POLAR EXPLORATION**



In November Michael Smith told the amazing story of Tom Crean, a largely forgotten and unsung hero of three Antarctic Expeditions. Tom was born in 1877, in County Kerry, into an impoverished family, the middle child of eleven siblings. He received minimal education at the local Catholic school, leaving at the age of 12 to help on the family farm. At the age of 16 he left home, possibly after a family argument, and joined the Royal Navy, as a boy 2<sup>nd</sup> class in the Coastguards. By 1899 he had advanced to Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class serving in the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron, based in Sydney aboard HMS Ringarooma. At that time the Ringarooma was ordered to assist Captain Scott's ship, Discovery, awaiting departure to Antarctica. When one of Scott's crew deserted, Crean volunteered and was accepted as a replacement. He stayed with Scott for over 2 years and proved to be an efficient and well liked crew member. The expedition itself was poorly

equipped and managed. Dogs were taken to pull the sledges but were treated as domestic pets and the men themselves ended up pulling the sledges – Crean proved to be an excellent sledge puller. He made 3 sledging trips across the Ross Ice Shelf and helped lay the depots in support of the main southern journey, briefly holding the record for the furthest south. Scott did not reach the pole and in December 1902 the Discovery became locked in ice and was not freed until February 1904. After the expedition Crean returned to regular duty and was promoted to Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Class on Scott's recommendation.

After Shackleton's failed attempt to reach the South Pole Scott set out again for Antarctica in 1910 with his Terra Nova expedition. Crean was one of the first men recruited and one of the few with previous polar experience. Again the Expedition had immediate problems. This time ponies were taken instead of dogs, but food had to be carried for the livestock as well as the men. Their hooves sank into the snow so again the men ended up pulling the sledges. Food depots for 4 men were deposited along the way, and at the last depot before the push for the Pole, Scott had to choose his final group. For some reason he decided that 5 should go instead of 4 as originally planned. To his great disappointment Crean was not one of them. Instead, he was ordered to make the 750 miles return journey with 2 young officers, Edward Evans and William Lashley. Evans immediately began to show the signs of scurvy, becoming very weak and unable to walk. They also got lost and missed a depot. On reaching the top of a glacier they took the decision to rope themselves together on the sledge and slide down. Somehow they managed to avoid all the crevices and survived the 2000 ft descent. Evans, who was the navigator, had to be carried over the next 100 miles. Then 35 miles from base camp, Crean took the decision to leave the other two with food and the sledge and with only 3 biscuits and 2 sticks of chocolate he set out for an 18-hour trek to the camp. Somehow, he managed it and stumbled, exhausted, into camp where a doctor revived him with some brandy. As soon as he was able, he insisted on returning with the search party to rescue Evans and Lashley.

In November 1912, after Scott's party failed to return, Crean was one of the 11 men who set out to find them. They made the sad discovery of their bodies, which were buried at the site and then they returned to tell the tragic news to the world. The tragedy of Scott was a huge event and dominated the headlines. Surviving members were awarded polar medals and Crean and Lashley also the Albert Medal, (later the George Medal), for bravery.

In May 1914 Crean was back in the Antarctic with Shackleton on the Endurance. As is well documented in January 1915 the ship became trapped in the ice and slowly sank. The men were trapped on the ice for months and then had to sail three lifeboats to Elephant Island. There Shackleton decided to strengthen one of the boats and sail 800 miles to South Georgia and seek rescue, with Crean among the crew of 6. They had to sail over the Southern Ocean, with the boat often very low in the water and covered in 6 inches of ice. Crean's good spirits held during the 17-day crossing and he could be heard singing at the wheel while facing enormous waves. They arrived on South Georgia but on the uninhabited south side, so Shackleton took the decision that he, navigator Frank Worsley and Tom Crean would walk 30 miles over the uncharted, glaciated mountains to the whaling station on the north coast. There was no shelter and provisions had to be carried around their neck to keep them warm. Somehow they survived and stumbled filthy and dishevelled into the whaling station. They quickly collected the other three crew, but it took another 3 months to rescue the other 22 men on Elephant Island. Amazingly everybody from the Endurance expedition survived.

They returned via South America and Crean was immediately called back into the Navy and straight into World War I. He was stationed in Ireland, survived the War, and was subsequently asked by Shackleton to go on another Polar expedition but refused. He retired from the Navy in 1920 on medical grounds, married and fathered 3 daughters, one of whom died aged 3. In 1920 he opened a pub in Annascaul aptly named 'The South Pole'. The Irish War of Independence was raging and Tom felt vulnerable as one of his brothers, a sergeant in the police force, was shot and killed. Tom's pub was raided by the Black and Tans but maybe they left him alone because of his naval and polar connections. However he locked everything away and never discussed his Antarctic experiences with anyone.

He died in 1938 at the age of 61 suffering from a burst appendix. His pub still survives but his daughters died unmarried so there are no immediate descendants. When Michael Smith began to write his biography of Tom Crean it took him two years to find a publisher as the subject was considered to be of little interest. Now it is sold all over the world and is a recognised text in the Irish school curriculum. Deservedly Tom Crean is finally being recognised and lauded for the hero he was, a truly inspirational character.

*Barbara Dubois*

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Our AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> January was attended by 21 members, well above the required quorum of 10! We had a successful year running a full programme of lectures and with an enjoyable summer visit to Wildwood on a lovely day. We also have a full programme for next year, as shown on page one, including a visit to Cobham Hall on a Tuesday in July, the only date available. Our membership stands at 103 having lost a few and gained a few, but we are still not very successful at gaining new younger members. Our funds have increased slightly this year, as there were no Walking Guides printed and speakers' fees were slightly down.