

### MARDEN WILDLIFE GROUP WIN RADIO KENT AWARD....

Congratulations to Ray Morris, and all of the Marden Wildlife Group, who have won the Environmental category of this year's Radio Kent "Make a Difference" Awards. A lot of what Marden Wildlife has achieved has been down to Ray's inspired leadership, so it was good for him to have his moment in the spotlight. On the other hand, one of the qualities singled out by the judge was the inclusivity of the group! Thanks are due to all the fantastic volunteers and partners including the Marden Farmer Cluster, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the RSPB, BTO and many others.



### ...AND PETER HALL WINS NFU FARMING HERO AWARD



Our local MP Helen Grant was delighted to present the NFU's Farming Hero Award to Peter Hall of Little Mill Farm, in Marden this month. She said: "I have known Peter for the past 14 years and I am so very impressed with the contribution he has made to the community I have the privilege to represent. He is constantly looking for ways to improve our environment, land and wildlife for the good of everyone who lives in the locality. He is a farming star for sure." Peter was cited for his role (with Lou Carpenter) in setting up the Marden

Farmer Cluster to encourage more local farms to focus on wildlife alongside food production. His longstanding policy of encouraging local wildlife by welcoming local enthusiasts who enjoy finding and identifying it has led to strong ties with Marden Wildlife, and the wider village community. Clearly a winning combination! As a result of his award, Peter will now be entered for the NFU's Regional Community Champion Awards, which will be announced later this year.

Peter has worked with Ray and the Wildlife Group since 2006, integrating winter feed strips into his crop rotations. This has taken populations of some of the rarer farmland birds, particularly Yellowhammers, from near zero to significant levels (197 Yellowhammers netted, ringed and recorded in 2017 alone). In early 2020, he and a neighbour teamed up with what is now another 15 local farmers covering 2400 ha of almost contiguous land surrounding the village and The Marden Farmer Cluster was born. This cluster is supported by both Natural England and Kent Wildlife Trust and as a result of Peter's long-term association with the Marden wildlife Group, he was able to arrange access to a large, previously inaccessible tract of farmland. Subsequently, Peter and Ray obtained DEFRA funding for the volunteers to carry out a 'winter use of feed strips' study on Yellowhammers moving between farms in the cluster.

In 2021, as a result of this collaboration, Marden Wildlife won The NBN Atlas Group Award, a national Citizen Science award for biological recording, education, and impact. In the last two years MW has submitted 3,954 records for 1,055 species – of which 485 were recorded for the first time in Marden – from Cluster farms. Thousands more records of moths and birds are submitted via the Kent Moth Group and British Trust for Ornithology. Marden is now recognised as having many nationally rare plants, fungi, and animals. *Marden Wildlife Group*

# The Parish Pump

## THE JOURNAL OF THE MARDEN SOCIETY – NOVEMBER 2022

Our Autumn season of talks continues on **23<sup>rd</sup> November** when Mark Lewis will tell us about "**Sentinels of the Sea, the Amazing History of Lighthouses**". This is an introduction to "pharology", the study of lighthouses, from the prototype Pharos of Alexandria through the history of their construction, methods of illumination, operation and maintenance, and lives of the keepers, including some extraordinary heroic stories.

There is no meeting in December, so the next meeting will be our **AGM on 25<sup>th</sup> January**, which will be our usual short AGM followed by a wine and cheese social event. Then on **22<sup>nd</sup> February**, **Tony Singleton** will speak to us about "**Timber Framed Houses in Marden**".

As usual meetings will start at 7.30 p.m. in the Vestry Hall followed by refreshments and raffle. We look forward to meeting you there.

### CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

The Queen is dead, God Save the King! And so we enter a new "Carolean Age" with a new King and a new "Trusworthy" (really?) Prime Minister. I am one of the lucky ones who has lived through the entire second "Elizabethan Age" and consider myself and others of my generation to be very fortunate. As Macmillan said in 1957 "We have never had it so good" and things have generally got better, apart from a blip in the 1970s, but we survived that. We have lived through an era of relative peace with plentiful food, cheap energy, affordable housing and ability to travel and see the world. Not true for everybody of course, but our generation really do have a lot to be thankful for.

So what will Charles III's reign bring us? It will certainly not be as long as his mother's was, but at least he is not likely to cause a civil war and lose his head as Charles I did, or go into exile in France like Charles II. I think that he will be a good King, like Charles II, though perhaps not a "Merry Monarch" as he was known who had at least 12 illegitimate children by various mistresses, but left no legitimate heir! Let's hope our new King Charles is still allowed to champion environmental issues as he has done for so many years. The world seems to be going in the wrong direction at the moment and we need more environmentalists in positions of power. He is acknowledged as one of the pioneers of the "Green Movement".

We seem to be going back to the 1970s in many ways now, energy crises, national strikes, galloping inflation and long hot summers like 1976. At least we don't have flared trousers back yet! Still we all survived the 70s and things did get better, so let's be positive, they will get better again, and let's hope that to paraphrase a slogan "the future's bright, the future's green".

*Steve McArragher*

## HOPPING IN KENT AND THE HARTLAKE BRIDGE DISASTER



Geoff Doel began the autumn season with a talk about hopping in general and the Hartlake Bridge disaster in particular. The disaster took place on the evening of October 20<sup>th</sup> 1853. At that time hop picking was carried out by people coming down from London for the four or five week period, or itinerant labour, mainly comprising travellers and gypsies, often with three generations of family involved. He showed some idealised pictures depicting that time with adults and children happily camping and working together.

The hop picking in 1853 was late, normally it is carried out during August and September, but they were still picking in late October. The weather had been poor, with a lot of rain and many fields were flooded, so the pickers were taken across the river to drier fields. The farm, owned by a Mr William Cox, employed many itinerant workers, mostly Irish travellers. The River Medway was in full flood when two wagons, loaded with pickers returning to their camp at dusk, crossed the wooden Hartlake Bridge. One cart made the crossing safely. As the second cart, overloaded with about 40 people, crossed the wooden structure, the hind horse slipped and crashed into the rotten side of the bridge, which gave way. Most of the travellers were flung into the river and the screams, it was said, could be heard as far away as East Peckham. Three men jumped off and only eleven people survived while 30 died. The rest were carried downstream and in spite of help being immediately summoned, many bodies were carried away by the swift current and the inquest was held before they were all recovered.

The inquest was held at the Bell Inn in Golden Green on 25<sup>th</sup> October. The coroner returned a verdict of accidental death but found that the wooden bridge was defective and should be reconstructed in stone. The maintenance of the bridge was the responsibility of the Medway Navigation Company, who denied all liability and refused to contribute to any costs. They insisted the bridge was in a good state of repair, in spite of previous complaints about its condition.

The deceased were buried in St Mary's Church in Hadlow in one grave and included a 2 year old girl whose first name was unknown as her family died with her. The cost of the funeral was born by the parish of Hadlow. A memorial stone was erected in 1853 in the form of an oast. It was inscribed with the names of those who had perished. A new plaque was unveiled in 2013 as the names on the memorial had become difficult to read.

Gypsies came from all over to attend the burial service and to this day it is still visited annually to recall the disaster. The tragedy is remembered in song and verse and along with the pictures and photographs Geoff stood and sang 3 songs concerning the disaster and paying tribute to the hop pickers and those who were killed.

*Barbara Dubois*

## MARDEN MOTOR CLUB 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The Marden Motor Club was founded in 1962 and has had a presence in the village ever since. Its membership has ebbed and flowed but over the last few years has grown, partly due to the very popular 'Motor Show' now held annually in the centre of Marden. Members' vehicles range from veteran to modern, sedate to sports and all points in between.

To mark the club's 60<sup>th</sup> year, we enjoyed a picturesque drive with a fun treasure hunt to Stone House Country Estate at Rushlake Green, near Heathfield, for a champagne tea. The house is unusual in being part Tudor and part Georgian. The original Tudor Manor House was built in 1495 by the Roberts Dunn family who were gifted the thousand-acre estate when Henry VIII demolished Warbleton Priory. Then a Georgian wing was added in 1735. It is now run as a small country house hotel. We were welcomed by Fraser, who you may remember from the White Hart, who looked after us superbly including a tour of the amazing house and grounds.

*Clive Richardson*



## MARDEN IN BLOOM - SCARECROW SAFARI

Congratulations to Marden in Bloom for organising the Scarecrow Safari on 2/3 October, and well done to all the entrants for their imaginative ideas for book-related scarecrows. Twenty scarecrows were displayed all around the village and in Southons Field where teas were also being served. On a lovely sunny Saturday afternoon, the village was full of families with very excited children viewing and voting on all the entries. The entries were all very imaginative and the winner was the Scouts with their tableau of "Paddington at the Palace", with "The Owl and the Pussycat", "Where's Wally" and "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" in joint second place. Apologies to all that the Marden Society did not enter a scarecrow this year, we will try harder next year!

*Steve McArragher*

