

MARDEN'S WEATHER



“Where other countries have climates, we in Britain just have weather, a daily phenomenon that controls our lives, provides a perpetual topic of conversation and is totally unpredictable”.



This booklet has been prepared by Roger and Jenny Mallion as a permanent record of the 'Weather' exhibition held in Marden Library and Heritage Centre between 22nd February 2014 and 28th June 2014. Opened by Ken Jenner.

THE WEATHER IN THE EARLY YEARS

1236: The chronicler, Holinshed, described how a great tide pounded at the east “for several days with unabated fury, washing up the ocean in such tremendous waves that the banks gave way and the whole country lay completely exposed to its awful fury”. The toll of human life was appalling. According to Holinshed “in one village there were buried one hundred corpses”.

1624: On 3rd-4th October 120 vessels at anchor in the Goodwin Sands were wrecked. Twenty completely disappeared in “a terrible gale – the like of which has never been seen”.

1672: On 29th December at 11pm in “Benenden a pretty considerable town in the Weald of Kent, appeared a very great light. This lightning was seconded by hideous and distracted thunder which occasioned many inhabitants to hide themselves fearing the houses should drop in a heap of flame and ruins”. The anger of God was feared and confirmed when the church was struck. “The devouring flames and impetuous thunder found no great resistance from this stony pile. The steeple was quickly forced to resign itself to that earth it was first fixed so that the fabric and frame began to incorporate with its own foundations”.

1684: Persistent northerly winds in the coldest recorded winter swept polar ice south from the Arctic and through the Dover Straights, closing the seaports for some days.

1743: A great storm of thunder and lightning was followed by a sudden inundation of floodwater, which overflowed, into the greater part of the City of Canterbury. Several people were drowned.

1807: The entire coastline between North and South Foreland was strewn with wreckage as a severe gale hit Kent on 18th February. Thirty-six vessels were wrecked. There was heavy loss of life and property

THE WEATHER IN MARDEN HAS BEEN RECORDED IN LOCAL PAPERS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

Marden Journal 1844 – On Sunday evening during the thunder storm, a valuable mare belonging to Mr. Lansdell which was out in a field grazing, was struck by the lightning and instantly killed.

Kent and Sussex Courier, Friday June 26th 1936 – Storms have wreaked havoc in the Weald of Kent during the past week. The farmers on the whole, are pleased that the rain has come at last. Most of the damage was caused by lightning, the worst instant being at Marden where a terrific flash during Friday evening’s storm struck an old oak tree and killed ten sheep which were huddled beneath it.

Kent Messenger 1968 – Milk famine: Floods halted milk deliveries to Collier Street, Yalding and Marden and many villages along the Medway Valley were cut off.

The Frank Wood Papers after the outbreak of WWII

Later in January that year it snowed heavily and rabbits laid up in lumps of poles and faggots nibbling the bark for food. We could see the holes in the snow where their breathing gave them away. The snow was so deep that they could not run far and so we caught dozens of them and sold them to Bradford’s Fish and Game Shop in Maidstone.

WEATHER QUOTES - from A New Dictionary of Kent Dialect – Alan Major.

Bad inclement weather: “Tis middlin fine now, but there’s ever so much weather coming up”.

Rain bug: “A term applied to certain Black Beetles, usually the Ground Beetle family, found under debris and stones during the day. It was commonly believed that if one was accidentally or deliberately trodden on or other wise killed it would cause much rain to fall”.

An old Kent Rhyme about Thunder and Lightning:

If it sinks from the North
It will double its wrath;
If it sinks from the South
It will open its mouth:
If it sinks from the West
It is never at rest
If it sinks from the East
It will leave us at peace.

SOME FAMOUS STORMS

The Great Storm of 1703 claimed the lives of 8,000 people

26th November 1703 – After days of windy, often-stormy weather a dreadful tempest struck southern England in the middle of a dark November night and wrought havoc from Cornwall to Kent. The wind blew with such violence as to destroy over 1100 dwelling houses, outhouses and barns in Kent alone and claimed the lives of 8,000 people throughout the country and around our shores.

At its height the wind roared like thunder and the tales of the night read more like an adventure story than a narrative of fact. For example, in St Peters in Thanet a cow was found still alive in the uppermost branches of a tree.

19th August 1763 – A most dreadful and violent storm of hail and wind attended with thunder and lightning which passed as a tornado and with such rapidity and fierceness through the lands and grounds. The storm in a very short time beat, cut down and strip lay waste and destroy all or the greatest part of the corn grain, hops, fruit and other things then standing growing and being in and upon the said lands and grounds of the Farmers, Husbandmen and other sufferers in Kent.

February 1953 – A deep depression moved east north east from south of Iceland and then turned rapidly south-east into the North Sea, while pressure rose rapidly in the west, producing a steep pressure gradient. In southern England the gales were accompanied by heavy driving rain and low cloud.

At Sheerness the peak tide was 2.1 metres higher than expected. 20 people were trapped in a coach between Sittingbourne and Sheerness and had to be rescued the next morning by an amphibious vehicle.

10th and 11th January 1978 – A rapidly deepening depression moved across England towards the Netherlands and severe northerly gales developed behind it. The London weather centre recorded gusts of 81 mph and numerous roads were blocked by fallen trees. Round the coast the piers at Margate, Herne Bay, Hunstanton and Skegness were either badly damaged or destroyed.

HURICANE – 1987

Stories of the night – extract from a KCC document

Everybody in the path of the storm will remember vividly the early hours of 16th October 1987.

It was the night that many people thought the world was coming to an end as the hurricane winds approaching in terrifying bursts threatened to lift roofs off houses right across Southern England.

Nineteen people lost their lives, a tragic but nonetheless miraculously low toll considering the magnitude of the disaster and the unprecedented material losses. Vast industrial complexes were badly damaged including gas works and power stations. Railways were out of action and fallen trees blocked thousands of miles of roads.

The whole world heard the story of England's great storm and in many cases TV viewers received the wrong information. Italians were told that the "death toll ran into thousand" and the holidaymakers in Spain were horrified to hear "that the town of Sevenoaks had been flattened" and "homes blown off the face of the earth".

Frantic long distance telephone call to the town, blocked for several days by fallen wires, finally revealed the truth, which had been lost in translation. Six of the seven oak trees had gone. The town at least remained.



A typical Kent peg tiled house damaged by a fallen tree during the hurricane of 1987

Other typical damage caused by the hurricane was an uprooted tree in the churchyard and damage to oast houses.



PETER TIPPLES



For the duration of his working life at Reed Court (1951-2009) Peter Tipples kept a diary or Day Book. In this journal he recorded the daily routine of the working life on the farm. Also, he very quickly started to record the weather. During the first few years the records were intermittent, although the weather for important events was noted, e.g. Tuesday 2nd June 1953, 'Coronation - cold wet day'. On December 6th 1954 the word 'BAROMETER' is recorded. From that day, still occasionally at first, but from 1958 on a daily basis, a full weather report is given including temperature, wind direction and rain. The monthly rainfall was detailed and the annual total. Unusual weather was noted with capital letters, e.g. 'RIVER IN FULL FLOOD' or 'LAND PARCHED'. The report for Friday 16th October 1987 begins with the word 'DEVASTATION' followed by a description of the damage caused by the hurricane.

Reading these reports it appears that the weather described over 50 years is much the same as that we experience today.

His monthly articles for the 'South East Farmer' invariably mentioned the weather and how it was affecting the work on the farm and the growth of his crops.

He wrote his own views on weather watching, with his opinion on global warming and climate change. The recent stormy and windy weather would seem to concur with his views about the wind in this country.

Following the hurricane in 1987, Peter Tipples, then Chairman of the Marden Fruit Show Society, was depressed by the Government's lack of concern about the severe damage done to many farms in the South East. "It really has been a disaster in the South East which is the country's main horticultural area. I would like to think there was a greater awareness of this in high places but this has not happened" said Mr Tipples. He had considerable losses of trees and fruit on his own farm.

Despite the appalling destruction on Kent's top fruit farms that year, the fruit show got underway with entries up on the record last year.

HOT WEATHER

Britain's Hottest Day – or was it?

22nd July 1868

Dr George Hunsley-Fielding of Grove House, Mill Lane, Tonbridge was a meteorologist who faithfully submitted his readings to the Royal Observatory each week. When he stepped out into his garden on the sweltering hot evening of 22nd July 1868 to check his weather instruments he was amazed. The shade temperature was 100.5F (38.1C) – a reading that was to secure for Tonbridge a place in history books.

The good doctor looked again at his instrument and found he had made no mistake. In fact the temperature in the sun was 142F – a reading that provided a fitting climax to a most extraordinary year. Day after day the sun bore down from a cloudless sky on to a parched earth. Tonbridge like every town in Kent, wilted in the heat throughout May, June and July – and every day seemed hotter. Food had to be thrown away, people walked on the shady side of the street.

The reading on that July day in 1868 found its way into the Guinness Book of Records and for a long time was regarded as Britain's hottest day.

July 16th 1922 an extract from the exercise book of Ethel Walter aged 13 years

We have had quite a spell of hot weather lately. I have never known it to be so hot before. Last Thursday the temperature rose to 97 degrees. You want ever so much more to drink in hot weather although it is not so good for you and you eat less.

Sometimes you do not know where to get to keep cool. We do not feel as though we can do work in lessons and it has made some people ill.

When you go to bed at night you do not want any bedclothes on you and the flies torment you. Then again you are always afraid of a storm coming in the night.

But still we have no need to grumble because it is good for haymaking. It is not nice weather for butchers or milk-keepers.

We should have clean clothes on very often because we perspire and it makes you clothes nasty and sticky. A nice thing to do in hot weather is to lie in a hammock with a nice book and have some nice fruit. But it does not last long so we mustn't grumble.



SNOW

MARDEN NEW CEMETERY CONCECRATED IN SNOWSTORM, FEBRUARY 1932

The new cemetery at Marden was consecrated by Bishop Walmsley Sedgwick, Vicar of Detling, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Dover, when despite the fact that a bitterly icy wind prevailed and it snowed all through the ceremony, a goodly number of the parishioners attended the service.

VILLAGE IS TURNED WHITE BY DRAMATIC HAILSTORM - Kent Messenger 13th April 2012

A spectacular storm rained hailstones on Marden. Chainhurst resident Alan Reading took dramatic pictures demonstrating that residents were given fair warning of Wednesday afternoon's coming downpour. Alan said that his house was suddenly pelted with "3mm to 8mm balls of frozen ice". "As fast as it came, it went" he said "but for about 10 minutes the roof of the house, the garden, roads and cars were white".

THE VILLAGE CENTRE IN SNOW



SOME MORE SNOW SCENES OVER THE YEARS.



THE FLOODS OF WINTER 2013

During the floods of winter 2013 large swathes of farmland on the outskirts of the village were submerged. Some of the main routes into the village were impassable and many properties experienced severe flooding.



The Exhibition was based upon the need to record Marden's wide variety of weather conditions.

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