

# Society Outings

## MUSEUM OF KENT LIFE

Reported by Jack Woolford

I book up for Society outings without knowing what and where they are because, though some are even better than others all are good. So on May 20th, waiting outside the Railway Bell at 08.30 (to try, successfully, to grab the front seat), I could only hope that the Museum of Kent Life would be more attractive than it sounded. On a more beautiful day than usual, for May 2009, the cross-country ride itself, in good company, was a puzzling pleasure. I thought that Sandling was the railway station for Hythe but it turned out to be another Sandling, a stone's throw from Maidstone, and close

to Aylesford, in one of the best-conserved corners of the Garden of England.

As a nonagenarian I could, and perhaps should not be tempted to *Cuddle Corner*, *New Fun for Kids*, *New Piglet Racing*, *New Donkey Rides* or *Vale Farm Play Barn*, but I was. My camera and I were enchanted to renew acquaintance with the geometrical magic of cylinders and cones of four Oast Houses, to picture and smell unbelievable growths of herbs in a garden, and to stand and marvel at the higgledy-piggledy of lovingly preserved old tools and machines in a Smithy.





As a historian, I was delighted to observe the series of improvements to huts for the housing of hop-pickers from the 17th to the 20th centuries, and, as a beer-lover, to walk through a hop garden with its poles, strings and stilts. The Lenham cottages were full of bygone domestic delights of kitchens, parlours, bedrooms and more than a plentiful amount of steps. The Cuxton chapel boasts a splendid (!) pink, corrugated iron roof and I could not resist sitting on the teacher's chair in the

annexed classroom, in front of the desks of my childhood, and threatening them with waving arms and fists.

Having kept pigs myself in an Anderson Shelter on an allotment in Woodensborough, I could only envy the splendours of the piggery with its two, prize, black and white sows. It was unfortunate their racing piglets were absent.

I had no time for the Top paddock, the Victorian farmhouse, or the village hall etc, etc, because the shades of Aylesford Priory were beckoning, but I did drink the health of our wonderful social secretary Patricia and her jovial husband Pat in (un-hopped) tea for their efficient but unobtrusive organization in the excellent Tea Room.

I never enjoyed a Museum more. Roll on the next one: Wherever!

