



## Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society

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Maude in 1956 aged 100

**ADELAIDE MAUDE SPEED**  
**née MATURIN, later MARSH (1856-1958)**  
*by Clare Church*

**SUMMARY**

Maude Speed lived a colourful and varied life, and from an early age it was evident that she was more adventurous and pioneering than other ladies of her era. She was the eldest daughter of the Vicar of Lymington, the Reverend Benjamin Maturin, and her early childhood was spent in her home town before she was sent away to school to 'improve' her education. Her self-willedness was exercised when she eloped and married a former suitor (Harry Fiennes Speed) in London in 1883. Harry shortly afterwards trained as a priest and held several curacies before securing the rectorship of St. James's Church, Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight for 18 years. On Harry's retirement the couple returned to the mainland and built a house, Sedge End, at Keyhaven overlooking the Solent. Maude's final years were spent there. She continued to live a fulfilling life after Harry's sudden death in 1925, and marrying a man (Carl Marsh) 27 years her junior in 1933, when she was 77 years of age! Maude died in 1958 aged 102 at the end of a life which had involved a variety of activities from sailing in small yachts to travel in luxurious liners, from painting and sketching to writing articles and books recounting her many experiences. There were no children.

**CHILDHOOD DAYS**

Adelaide Maude Maturin was born at the old Vicarage at Highfield, Lymington on Easter Sunday, March 23rd 1856 and was the eldest of six children of the Rev. B. Maturin, Vicar of Lymington and the former Miss Adelaide Nora Daniel. Maude's father was of Huguenot descent and her mother the granddaughter of 'Guinea-a-minute' Daniell, of Trelissick, Cornwall, of tin mines fame.

In Maude's book entitled "Snapshots on Life's Highway" (Speed 1929), she highlights many incidents of her childhood. She led an outdoor life, and was given a pony as a child by her father. Carriages were the daily mode of transport which often conveyed the family on half-holidays for picnics to the sea-shore at Milford or into the Forest, "where we collected sticks and lit a gypsy fire for tea (Thermos flasks being unknown)". Maude took long walks "in woods and through lovely fields, and country then was country - not all stuck over with new bungalows and tin-roofed cottages, and the trees and hedges were allowed to remain along the high roads, not felled.... Children's

parties were simple affairs. Small people were not so blasé then and more easily pleased. A magic-lantern show excited us to trembling pitch, games and charades delighted us, dances were a rare event, chiefly of the fancy-dress species, and Christmas trees were a never-failing joy. Children now have costly play-things, but they are probably no happier than we were. Rag dolls that mother made, with faces painted by her were our favourites..." all of which implied that, despite her position in society, Maude still appreciated simple things and liked to undertake activities which required her own physical and mental effort.

Two years before Maude was sent away to school she embarked upon her first tour - to Ireland - where she visited relatives in north Donegal, the area of her father's boyhood. She records that the hospitality was tremendous and the family was deluged with invitations. An account of the journey to Donegal states that en route she spent some time in Dublin and also walking in the Wicklow mountains nearby. Thence the family journeyed north "taking from Carrickfergus a sixty-mile drive by mail-coach and jaunting-car (that horribly uncomfortable Irish vehicle) round the coast of Antrim to the Giant's Causeway, on to Londonderry and finally Donegal and uncle's Rectory at Gartan." She thoroughly enjoyed the new experience of fishing, in several different locations - the lake below uncle's ground, trout fishing in various streams, salmon fishing in the nearby river, and fourteen miles away catching fish from Lough Veagh. Horse riding also was a regular activity.

Maude writes about her uncle's church thus: "Services at Gartan's little church were well attended by people who came from great distance to this their one event of the week. For example, one family of seven had come from a mountain farm eleven miles away with one horse between them, on which they took turns to ride!" This visit to Ireland "my earliest tour, began probably the craving that grew in me to see more of this beautiful world of ours", and as will be described later, was certainly the case.

Maude attended school at Westbourne Terrace, London and was "left in the care of two terribly formidable old maids. Life there was an imprisonment. The only exercise we took in the day was a walk in Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens from 9 till 10. I was very homesick, and was always in hot water. I wanted to look at everything when taken out in a carriage, but was told 'young ladies sit back in a carriage, out of sight'. At Confirmation Classes the clergyman in charge (one of the extinct Puritan sort) told us that renouncing 'the world, the flesh and the devil' meant no balls and no theatres, and he asked us one after the other if we intended to renounce these. Each girl lisped a timid "yes" till my turn came, and then I said 'Oh dear no, sir! I am up here to fit myself for entering society. I am learning dancing of Madame

Michou in preparation for going to balls, and I am longing to go to theatre". From these comments it is obvious that Maude was quite a character at even a young age.

Maude begged her parents to let her change schools. This fortunate situation arose as a result of an epidemic occurring at the London school and all the girls were sent home. So Maude attended a school at Clifton, Bristol where there was a totally different atmosphere. The two mistresses in charge were kind and human and comparatively young. Maude was allowed to ride on the nearby downs twice a week with a master and two other girls. She also made excursions for sketching and was taken to concerts "and taught intelligently instead of being so crammed and hustled that we had time to digest nothing properly". She stayed at Clifton till the final term of her education, which was spent back "at the Westbourne Terrace house of gloom". However, things were not so bad as before because she was allowed to go with a great-aunt to concerts and oratorios.

After school and before marriage, Maude was able to take advantage of the opportunities for travel because in 1881 "a kind aunt took me first for the greater part of one winter to the Italian Riviera. We explored all the lovely valleys behind the coastline, and finally went from Genoa to the Italian Lakes and Switzerland. This was my first sight of foreign parts".

By 1883 Maude had become engaged to a cousin of Lord Wolsley, who had gone out to South America to inspect his sugar estates. When interviewed in later life, at age 95, Maude recalled the following memories. Despite the announcement of the engagement, she decided, however, to marry a former suitor, a young London barrister, and eloped from Lymington. She crept into the train and found to her horror that her father was also on the same train. She kept out of sight and he did not see her, but the strange thing was that when the train reached Brockenhurst there was a telegram awaiting her father at the station, which read: 'Come home; return at once.' He was very puzzled about this and walked down the platform talking to the guard and actually put his hand on the door of her carriage. It later transpired that her family had found the letter she had left informing them of her intention and had wired her father to return home to deal with the matter.

Maude married Mr. Harry Fiennes Speed, barrister-at-law, of the Middle Temple at the Parish Church, St. Marylebone. A newspaper article states 'Although the parishioners had not the opportunity of witnessing the ceremony, their good wishes for the future happiness of the bride and bridegroom will be none the less hearty on that account, and we are jointly expressing the feeling of all our readers in hoping that Mr. and Mrs. Speed



Rev. Harry Speed in the early 1900s

have a life of great usefulness and prosperity before them’.

Owing to Harry’s profound deafness he gave up practising law, and followed in his father-in-law’s footsteps and trained as a priest. He studied at Chichester Theological College, and whilst living at Chichester Harry and Maude developed a keenness for going on cycle rides. She remarks “I was the pioneer of it there, and people stood still to watch me riding through the city on a tricycle accompanied by my husband on his high 58-inch Timberlake bicycle - a penny-farthing”. On completion of the theological training, Harry was offered the curacy of Spernall in Warwickshire. Whilst there he was ordained Deacon in 1886, and the next year ordained Priest. Life at Spernall is described in the next Section.

## **HARRY’S CURACIES**

Harry was curate at Spernall Rectory from 1886 until 1888. The way of life for the Speeds has been eloquently described in a diary by Katy Speed, one of Harry’s sisters, who visited the Rectory with her younger sisters Mabel and Theodora (who lived at 15 Devonshire Place, London) for a month in the summer of 1888 between 25th August and 26th September. The contents of the diary are most entertaining with appropriate inkpen drawings to add to the delight. Here follow snippets from Katy’s diary describing the activities undertaken by the girls during their stay at Spernall Rectory.

Transport from the local train station at Great Alne was by waggonette, and it seems that a large amount of luggage accompanied the young ladies including a bath and a cat and kitten in a hamper!

The girls had visited the Speeds during the previous summer, because Katy comments that “the Rectory is much improved by having a tennis-court (which Harry personally had laid out), and Harry has made a dock for the punt”. It is obvious from Katy’s remarks that Harry was very keen on water activities despite living far away from the sea. “Harry spent much of his time out in the punt, which included a sail”, even though the river was probably quite narrow and not really suitable for navigating by sail.

Katy observed that Maude was very business-like in her day-to-day activities, ‘wearing a canvas apron and a white felt hat whilst watering the flowers in the garden’. Sketching was a regular pastime, undertaken by both Katy and Maude and many of Maude’s watercolour paintings have been retained in scrapbooks.

Maude became involved in parochial activities by acting as teacher for the local Sunday School, and training the church choir, with regular hymn



Maude Speed in the early 1900s



practices. The Church Choir and the Sunday School also enjoyed the annual 'treat' at the Rectory during Katy's stay, with Harry providing trips in the punt and organising races for the children concerned.

Even mundane activities are described in Katy's diary such as "The bath water was fetched by Harry from the stream," with an appropriate line drawing of him carrying two heavy buckets. Often there are comments concerning domestic activities e.g. preparing meals, mending clothes, general sewing, polishing silver, etc. Reading out loud was also a regular pastime (including part of the 'Song of Hiawatha'). A further observation (with drawing) was of Harry setting off to collect the money from the villagers who participated in the clothing club.

Much of the diary describes visits to local places of interest, such as Coughton Court, which was sufficiently close to walk to through the fields. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew were in residence, and Katy noticed the building contained a Ball Room with an Orchestrinet (a mechanical musical instrument) - much grander than at the Rectory! However, on the minus side, a further comment indicates "No tennis court had been laid out on one visit so we played nine-pins instead of tennis".

It is presumed that Mr. and Mrs. Andrew were merely leaseholders of Coughton Court, the owners for many centuries being the Throckmorton family. In 1946 the 11th Baronet Sir Robert Throckmorton made over the property to the National Trust, and details of the building can be found in the National Trust Guide 1976 (pp.99-102).

Towards the end of the girls' visit, Maude's brother, Charles Maturin, came to stay and he was required to chaperon the 'ladies' to a ball at Coughton Court, because Harry had to be away at Worcester taking a theological examination. On the day in question, Thursday 15th September, much of the time was spent in preparation for the Ball; checking the ball gowns, hairdressing and gathering roses for bouquets. The wagonette arrived at 9.10 p.m. so the evening was a late affair. The Speed party was received by 'stately footmen' on arrival, the hosts being Mr. and Mrs. Andrew. Katy's opinion of the dancing was that it was 'not so good as at an ordinary London Dance', despite the accompaniment of a live band with a harp!

Further day trips included travelling on the train to Redditch for shopping, and on other occasions to Warwick to look round the castle, and to Stratford-upon-Avon to see Shakespeare's Monument in the Church, and for a ride in a boat along the river, followed by tea at the Temperance Hotel!

The Harvest Festival was also a memorable occasion for the young ladies.

On the day before (Saturday) the church was decorated with grasses and berries, moss, flowers and fruit, with a final rehearsal of the Anthem being prepared for the next day. The Harvest Festival was "the eventful Sunday to which we have been looking forward so long!" Maude was nervous about singing the Anthem, according to Katy! A large congregation filled the church for the evening service. Flowers from the service were sent to London on Monday. Katy remarked, "The parish of Studley is so well off there are no 'poor' to give the Harvest Decorations to. The cottagers have a very good supply of fruit and vegetables - far better than Harry and Maude" which gives an indication of the self-sufficiency of the local community who were able to live off the land wherever possible.

On the final day, the Waggonette took the girls to the station accompanied by their large amounts of luggage, (bath, cabin trunk, cats, tennis racquets and box of jam) which must have been an amusement for the fellow passengers on the train back to London!

Harry became a Deacon in 1886 and was ordained as a priest, at Worcester Cathedral in 1887. Then in 1888 he obtained the position of assistant curate at St. Mark's Church, Pennington, near Lymington, Hampshire, where he remained for three and a half years. During this period Maude and Harry lived at Creek Cottage, Lower Pennington, overlooking the Solent, and Maude's sketches of the building and surrounding area can be viewed in her scrap book.

Maude, living near her parents, became involved in Lymington affairs, and on one occasion participated in running a stall at a Bazaar in July 1891 which was held in aid of the Infant School to clear off a debt on the School building.

Harry preached his farewell sermon at St. Mark's Church, Pennington on Advent Sunday 1891. This followed a presentation at a public meeting held at the Victoria Rooms the previous Thursday evening, 21st November, for the purpose of presenting Harry with an address and accompanying timepiece, upon the occasion of his leaving the parish. Harry was obviously popular because the Churchwarden Mr. Warr in making the presentation expressed the parishioners' deep regret at Mr. Speed's departure, "as they had always found him ready to do all in his power for the good and interest of the parish at large, and why he should have been separated from it they were unable to tell". Reading between the lines, it appears that Harry left St. Mark's against his will because the newspaper article regarding his departure quotes him as saying that owing to singular circumstances he was leaving, but upon this subject he would say but little. He did say however, that he had no desire to go.

After leaving St. Mark's, Pennington, Harry was appointed to two more curacies - at Hythe, Hants, 1892-93 and St. James's, Poole, 1894-95 - before being offered the Rectorship of St. James's, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, where he and Maude spent 18 happy years.

### **YARMOUTH DAYS - 1895-1913**

The Speeds settled in Yarmouth in 1895, where Harry had secured the Rectorship of St. James's Church. It has not been ascertained whether Maude became involved in church activities. However, a description of the church Sunday School outing (Winter, 1981) indicates that the children were "regularly entertained with tea and sports at "The Mount", a residence occupied by the Dashwood Family, which stood on the common overlooking the Solent. This beautiful old house with lovely grounds and gardens, eventually had to go to make way for a so-called new road to serve the needs of modern traffic through the town".

Nevertheless, this was the period when Harry and Maude spent all their available time sailing in various types of craft which Harry designed and had built to order. In her book "A Yachtswoman's Cruises" (Speed 1911) Maude describes several of her cruises - to Cherbourg and other Northern French ports; to Holland as far as the Zuyder Zee and also a mid-winter cruise to Belgium in a friend's boat. The couple also undertook liner voyages - to Lisbon, Scandinavia, and a three-month cruise and tour to Constantinople (now Istanbul) and the Near East. Maude and Harry were not short of connections and influential associates. For example, the cruise to Constantinople was given to them through the influence of Maude's brother-in-law, one of the five directors of the shipping line.

Whilst living on the Isle of Wight, Maude and Harry went many times to Farringford and enjoyed the friendship of Lord and Lady Tennyson, the great poet's son and daughter-in-law. Maude remarked "I always felt I was standing on holy ground there, but the poet had gone then *'to where beyond these voices there is peace'*". In fact Maude had met the great man himself (Alfred Lord Tennyson) when he witnessed her sketching during a childhood holiday at Freshwater. However, Maude had been too shy to introduce herself, because she knew that she was intruding on his private property, but she nevertheless regretted later in life that she had never spoken to him! Other prominent friends and neighbours on the Island were the Moulton-Barretts at Westover Manor, Calbourne, the husband being the brother of Elizabeth Barrett-Browning the poet.

Harry became involved in Yarmouth School, and besides being Chairman of



The Pipefish



Harry and Maude at Kingsley Vale, Sussex

the school's Foundation Managers after the Education Act of 1902, he also taught the children how to swim. Here is an account by Mrs. Blanche Smith (Winter, 1981), who recalled her experiences of swimming lessons at Sandhard when she was a schoolgirl at Yarmouth in 1902. "We children had to walk from the School, across the Bridge, which was a one penny toll bridge, and the undressing and dressing took place in a stone-built round shelter..... The swimming lessons were given by the Rector of St. James's Church, the Rev. H.F. Speed, who would be waiting offshore in his rowing boat, the oars of which must have been of a very strong type as the children, who were nervous, were suspended by a large towel round their middle to the oar, held firmly by the Rector in the boat. Yells of protest were of no avail, as the Rector was stone deaf." It is obvious from these remarks that Harry could not keep away from the water, and was actively involved in anything that involved messing about in boats! Since marrying, Maude and Harry rarely missed spending a few days during Cowes Week each year, anchored off the town in their little yacht.

Harry and Maude were very adventurous and pioneering in their activities. For instance, in 1904 they bought their first car, a Sizaire 2-seater, with maximum speed 18 miles per hour. There was no windscreen and the couple drove along like masked people, quite unrecognisable in goggles and (in winter) muffled up to the eyes. They covered 1,500 miles during a three weeks' tour in it. Having only one cylinder, the car was not a good hill climber and Maude described herself as having to jump out occasionally to push with all her might! Then in 1910 Maude attended the first show of flying boats and planes in the South of England. She remarks that she "travelled from London to Paris in a great 'air liner' in perfect comfort, except for the terrible noise, which is deafening". Here again is evidence of her enthusiasm for living life to the full. She is very critical of other women not being interested in sailing "except at Cowes Week when they could be 'noticed' and applauded if they steered a straight course!"

As well as sailing and travelling, the Speeds spent many a weekend visiting friends and relatives. One such occasion was attending a Shooting Party at Knowlton Court, Kent in September 1911 at the home of Major and Mrs. Elmer Speed, a younger brother and sister-in-law. In fact, Harry officiated at the wedding of their daughter Miss Enid Leyland Speed when she married Captain Edward Fitzgerald Campbell, King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Harry retired in September 1913 when he was aged 56. A newspaper article dated September 29th states the following: "THE RECTOR'S RETIREMENT: FAREWELL SUPPER - The Rev. H.F. Speed officiated at the celebration of the Holy Communion on Monday, this being his last service as rector of



Maude gardening at Sedge End, 1934



Carl Marsh, 1936

Yarmouth. He has since moved to his new home in Keyhaven. On Monday evening the choir entertained the Rector and churchwardens to a supper at the Bugle Hotel for the purpose of taking a reluctant farewell of the rev. gentleman..... The Chairman Mr. S.E.R. Nicholls (the organist) proposed the health of the Rector, highly eulogising his able and devoted services during the past 18 years, his unfailing geniality, many kindnesses to the choir, and his benevolence in the parish”.

After Harry and Maude had set up home in Keyhaven, Harry was presented with a polished oak secretaire-bookcase, suitably inscribed and a pair of silver candlesticks in recognition of many acts of kindness shown by him to one and all in the parish of Yarmouth.

### **MAUDE’S FINAL YEARS AT KEYHAVEN**

Maude and Harry moved to Keyhaven in 1913 on the latter’s retirement from the Rectorship at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. They bought some land from Colonel Cornwallis-West of Newlands Manor, and built a house which they named “Sedge End” in Saltgrass Lane, overlooking the Solent and the marshes. This was to be Maude’s home for the final 45 years of her life.

After World War I had ended in 1918, Maude twice visited the battlefields and brought back a journal full of sketches and notes such as chats with people in Arras and Laon of their experiences, their life in underground cellars, and their difficulty in getting the bare necessities of life. However, the editor of the magazine for whom she had frequently written articles was not interested in her article saying, “people want to forget about the war”. So for once in her life Maude did not get her own way!

Despite Harry and Maude’s advancing years they still participated in physical activity such as skating on Wainsford pond in 1916. Harry died on his yacht in Yarmouth Harbour on August 20th 1925 aged 68. When Maude returned to the small steam yacht ‘Pipefish’ in which she and her husband were visiting the Isle of Wight for the regatta she found Harry dead in his cabin. It was believed that his death was due to heart failure.

In Maude’s book entitled “Snapshots on Life’s Highway” (Speed 1929) written after Harry’s death, she recounted several experiences of her rich and varied life. In addition to those already described in this article, a further mode of transport was experienced in later life - “the latest and newest form of travel I have tried this autumn 1928 was when I ascended to a height of 7,560 feet by aerial railway in the Austrian Alps”. So despite being a widow, Maude did not hide away from society.

After eight years "of dreadful solitude", in 1933 Maude aged 77 married again to Carl David Marsh, 27 years her junior, at Milford Church. She had met Carl and became engaged to him on board ship when returning home from East Africa after one of her many adventures. Carl was a lecturer on travels, and he himself travelled extensively, collecting material for his lectures. Prior to meeting Maude, Carl had spent 20 years in British Columbia. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, was musical, and owned an electric organ. Other interests of his included photography and making and colouring his own slides (35mm. transparencies being a thing of the future!) for his talks. He lectured in Canada, USA, and all over Britain on Africa, Europe and America. He retired during World War II. The couple's common interest in writing, travel, music and art made a happy companionship during Maude's latter years.

Throughout her life Maude painted watercolours and drew sketches wherever she visited. She had the honour of selling her pictures to four Queens - Queen Victoria, Queen Alexandra, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. She also specialised in china painting and on one occasion she gained one of the 19 diplomas given to china painters all over the world in an international competition. At the grand old age of 99 she painted a New Forest landscape which experts appraised as the finest example of her work (according to the Lymington Times). This particular painting apparently took her four hours to execute, without the aid of spectacles!

Mr. and Mrs. Marsh regularly attended Milford Church and were very much part of the local community. Maude retained her interest in sailing and was appreciated by the local sailing fraternity. In 1956 she was presented with an illuminated framed notice from the Flag Officers and Members of the Keyhaven Yacht Club and the Hurst Castle Sailing Club offering their most sincere congratulations on the occasion of her HUNDREDDTH BIRTHDAY on March 23rd.

According to the Lymington Times "at the age of 100, Mrs. Marsh still gets up every morning at 7.30, and never goes to bed before midnight, although she may rest for a while in the afternoon. Alert in mind, vigorous in body, and in full possession of all her faculties, she still takes a keen interest in local affairs".

Mrs. Maude Marsh died in 1958 aged 102 at the end of a rich and colourful life which involved participating in many activities which the average woman of her era would not have dreamt of doing.



## SOURCES

*THE SKETCH BOOK, SCRAP BOOK, PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRESS CUTTINGS* of the Maturin/Speed/Marsh family are in the collection of the Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society.

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