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The Times is published weekly. We welcome your involvement and will be glad to hear your views.

Kent Regional news and media

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Dancers celebrate the blessing of the brewers' crop

WITH BELLS ON: The Oyster Morris group demonstrate their moves GIBG20120908C-005\_C



Hoodeners bring hop harvest to cathedral

Report by Lowri Stafford

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MORRIS Men, country dancers and hand bell ringers celebrated the harvesting of the hops at Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday.

The precincts were brought to life for the annual hop-hoodening festival, which is one of the longest-running events of its kind in the country.

The day's activities started with a procession led by Hop Queens Annalie Weitzel, Lizzy Beech and Jessica Maliphant, who arrived under a bower of hop-bines, while wearing halos of the distinctive green bud.

Thanksgiving

Country dancers and Morris Men then followed, along with traditional wood-and-sacking hobby horses with snapping jaws called hooden horses.

A short service of thanksgiving was then held, which involved the blessing of a bine of hops from a local hop farm.

There was also traditional morris dancing in front of the altar, followed by a display of dancing in the precincts and a walking tour of the city.

The hoodening, which traditionally takes place on the second Saturday in September, has been running at Canterbury Cathedral since 1957 – with a few exceptions.

In 1996, the service was forced to move locations after a police choir – which was due to perform a concert in the evening – blocked off the nave of the cathedral.

The following year, church officials



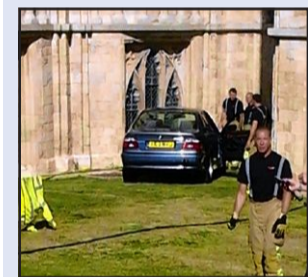
HOP TO IT: Hop Queens Annalie Weitzel, Lizzy Beech and Jessica Maliphant led the procession GIBG20120908C-002\_C

said it would not be appropriate to host the event in the Cathedral, because it coincided with the funeral of Princess Diana at Westminster Abbey.

A similar hitch occurred in 2004,

when the Hop Hoodening fell on the anniversary of 9/11.

The service was instead moved to St Peter's Parish Church in St Peter's Street.



THE hop-hoodening service was slightly delayed after a woman accidentally crashed her car into the side of the Cathedral, damaging a newly restored window.

Witnesses described watching the blue estate car plunge into the outside wall of the Crypt, after the driver lost control while attempting to park.

Among them was Ernie Warner, who said: "It looks like the driver was trying to reverse park outside the toilets, but something went wrong because the car came down the bank and crashed into the building.

"She seemed OK afterwards, but looked very worried."

Cathedral spokesman Christopher Robinson said: "Some minor damage was caused to a window, which is being assessed by our stonemasons. The emergency services were called, but no one was hurt."

Truda unveils her exotic tale of tropical romance

AUTHOR Truda Thurai will tell tales of a demon god, two lovers and a murderous king when she reads extracts of her new book, The Devil Dancers, in Canterbury next month.

Truda, from Ashford, will host a book reading at the Jolly Sailor pub in Northgate, ahead of the Canterbury Festival.

The novel is set during the ethnic riots of 1950s Ceylon, which is now Sri Lanka, and

draws inspiration from the country's legends and exotic culture.

Truda explained: "I wanted to transport my readers to another time and place.

"The book opens a door into an unfamiliar world, giving a unique experience of life on a tropical island."

She spent nine years researching her most recent novel, studying topics including history, language,

rice-growing, ayurvedic medicine and exorcism.

She said: "I even took an art course in order to understand the country's ancient paintings. Some of these, called the Maidens of Sigiriya, feature in the book as characters.

"The book is getting excellent reviews – including one from a reader in Russia who contacted me via my website to say how much he enjoyed it."

The book reading is organised by Canterbury's SaveAsWriters group, and will take place from 6.30pm on Sunday, October 7. Entrance is free.

For more information, visit www.thedevildancers.com or www.saveaswriters.co.uk

TELLING TALES: Right, Author Truda Thurai will read extracts from her book The Devil Dancers

