

Deputy Council Chairman Under fire over distasteful posts



Tony Cooper

27 August at 19:12 ·



Cooper thinks its funny to make Nazi jokes - calls for him to resign

Folkestone and Hythe District Council's Deputy Chairman, Tony Cooper, has found himself at the centre of a political storm after publishing a string of inflammatory social media posts – including references to Nazi swastikas – in response to local residents painting St George's flags on roundabouts.

The posts, which have circulated widely online, have been branded "distasteful" and "unacceptable" by members of the public, with calls for Cooper's resignation now landing on the desks of the local Labour Party and Folkestone and Hythe's Labour MP, Tony Vaughan.

This is not the first time Cooper has courted controversy. During the last county elections, he launched a

personal attack on Reform UK councillor David Wimble – only to be trounced at the ballot box, polling a meagre 555 votes against Wimble's commanding 3,903. Ever since, it is understood the Labour Party locally has been on a "war footing" to discredit Reform, fearing Wimble may well emerge as their parliamentary challenger at the next general election.

Andrew Davidovitch, a Hythe resident, spoke out angrily:

"Putting this sort of thing on social media is simply not acceptable. At a time when just saying the wrong thing on X can land you in prison, I find, as a Jewish person, this is akin to hate speech. I hope this has been reported to the police."

Continued on page 2

WHEN WILL THEY STOP?



Another solar farm threat to Romney Marsh as EDF and PS Renewables unveil new South Brooks plan

When you thought the Romney Marsh had already borne more than its fair share of industrial-scale solar farm proposals, along comes another – and this one could be the most controversial yet.

EDF Power Solutions UK and PS Renewables have launched a public consultation for South Brooks Solar Farm, a vast new project that would sprawl across farmland in one of Kent's most sensitive and historic landscapes.

The developers claim it could generate enough electricity to power 140,000 homes, equivalent to 20% of households in Kent, while cutting 225,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year.

But residents across Romney Marsh are asking the same burning question: when will they stop trying to turn our farmland into a dumping ground for solar panels and battery storage plants?

A familiar story

The proposals, unveiled this week, come hot on the heels of a string of similar schemes – from Old Romney New Church to St Mary in the Marsh, the foot

Continued on page 3

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Tony Cooper
27 August at 16:19

Reports suggest that at a recent Labour Group meeting at Folkestone's Alkali Stadium, much of the discussion centred not on serving local residents but on how to target Reform UK.

Sarah Bulmer, also from St Marys Bay, accused Cooper of only appearing when an election is due:

"Tony Cooper is very visible whenever there is a campaign, but does nothing locally for the rest of the time. He doesn't answer emails, he keeps a low profile, and yet he thinks he deserves people's votes. Reform may be seen as radical by some, but at least they're listening to what residents are saying. Wimble has pledged to oppose unpopular solar farms – which Cooper supported until he realised they were politically toxic."

The criticism has been relentless. Andrea Keple didn't mince her words, saying: "The man is vile and simply should resign."

Silence from the top

But if Cooper's conduct has raised eyebrows, it is the deafening silence from Labour MP Tony Vaughan that has inflamed matters further. Despite growing outrage and repeated calls for intervention, Vaughan has so far failed to condemn his Deputy Chairman's behaviour – let alone call for his resignation.



For many residents, that inaction speaks louder than words. As the area's elected Member of Parliament, Vaughan is expected to show leadership and moral authority. Instead, he has chosen to look the other way, leaving constituents to wonder whether he tacitly endorses the conduct of his local party officials.

Critics argue that Vaughan's refusal to act undermines his credibility not only as an MP but also as a representative of a party that claims to stand against hatred, intolerance, and divisive rhetoric. If Labour cannot even police its own house, how can voters be expected to trust them to run the country?

Political observers point out that the scandal comes at a particularly sensitive moment for Labour locally. With

Reform UK gaining momentum, Vaughan's team appears more concerned with smearing their opponents than addressing real community issues. The strategy, some say, is backfiring badly – painting Labour as a party of dirty tricks and double standards.

One local business owner, who asked not to be named, told The Looker: "It feels like Tony Vaughan thinks he's above answering questions. The fact he hasn't even acknowledged the anger people feel about these posts is shocking. If he can't deal with something happening under his own nose, how on earth is he supposed to fight for us in Westminster?"

Calls growing louder

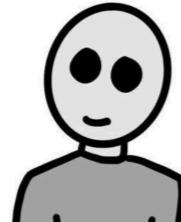
There is now growing pressure for Vaughan to show leadership by demanding Cooper's resignation. Residents want a clear signal that hate-filled rhetoric has no place in public life, and that elected officials – at every level – will be held accountable for their words and actions.

Instead, what they have seen so far is a wall of silence. At the time of going to print, The Looker had contacted Tony Cooper, Tony Vaughan, and Folkestone & Hythe District Council for comment. None had responded.

This silence has not gone unnoticed. Campaigners argue

Tony Cooper
27 August at 16:21

RUMOUR HAS IT THEY'RE ONLY PAINTING CROSSES BECAUSE SW*STIKAS ARE TOO COMPLICATED



that it smacks of arrogance and contempt for local people. Social media has been awash with posts calling for Vaughan himself to step aside if he cannot bring himself to deal with Cooper.

A crisis of credibility

The longer Vaughan refuses to act, the deeper the damage to his party's standing in Folkestone and Hythe. For a community that values straight-talking representation, the contrast between Labour's evasions and Reform UK's willingness to take on local issues could not be starker.

Wimble has publicly opposed unpopular solar farm proposals, championed local businesses, and thrown his weight behind community events. Meanwhile, Labour's contribution has been to indulge in online mud-slinging and internal plotting.

Andrea Keple summed up the mood of many: "It's not just Cooper who should go – Vaughan's failure to act is a disgrace. He's shown himself to be weak, out of touch, and completely uninterested in what local people think."

Unless Vaughan changes course quickly, this episode could haunt him well beyond the current row. For now, the message from Folkestone and Hythe is clear: enough is enough.

of Lympne Hill, and Otterpool Park.

Each time, developers arrive with glossy promises of "green energy" and "community benefits". Each time, local people express outrage at the sheer scale of what is being proposed. And each time, doubts linger about whether this is truly about saving the planet – or simply about lining corporate pockets by gaming the energy market.

South Brooks is no different. Despite its prime location next to the Dungeness National Grid substation, a key part of the application is not solar panels at all – but a large battery storage system. Critics point out that these systems have a poor track record when it comes to safety, with documented cases of overheating and fire risks.

What's more, campaigners argue, the batteries exist less to store solar energy for local communities than to buy up cheap off-peak electricity and sell it back at peak times – a practice that may be lucrative for multinationals but does little to help Kent residents already struggling with soaring bills.

The developers' case

EDF Power Solutions' Director of Solar, Storage and Private Wire, Matthew Boulton, insists the project will be a force for good:

"We're pleased to introduce South Brooks Solar Farm which has the potential to produce much needed low-carbon electricity here in the UK, helping to power thousands of homes and businesses every year. We are at a very early stage in developing our proposals and look forward to hearing the views of the local community."

Meanwhile, Matt Hazell, Co-owner of PS Renewables, describes the scheme as a chance to "make use of the existing capacity at Dungeness" and says the company is "excited to work with the local community to deliver a scheme which provides substantial benefits for the environment and the local area."

A six-week consultation has now been launched, with exhibitions scheduled at venues across Romney Marsh, Littlestone, Lydd and Camber.

Local anger rising

Yet if social media is any indication, public opinion is already turning sour. Comments flooding local forums reveal a community deeply sceptical of yet another large-scale energy scheme imposed on the Marsh.

One resident posted:

"Enough is enough. Romney Marsh is being sacrificed bit by bit. First it was wind farms, then endless solar panels – now batteries that could explode. Where does it end?"

Another wrote:

"EDF talk about 'saving the planet' but what they really mean is saving their shareholders' profits. This has nothing to do with us locals, who will be left with an industrial wasteland."

A third added:

"They want to cover up prime farmland at the very time we should be growing more food. We're an island nation – energy matters, but so does food security. This is madness."

Others were more blunt:

"Battery fires, water shortages, wildlife wiped out. All so a French company can make millions. NO THANK YOU."

And finally:

"Romney Marsh is not a dumping ground for every hare-brained energy scheme. We already host Dungeness power stations and pylons across our fields. How much

more do they want us to take?"

A nail in the coffin?

Campaigners warn that if South Brooks is approved, it could mark another "nail in the coffin" for Romney Marsh – a landscape already under immense pressure from energy infrastructure, housing development and tourism challenges.

The flat, wide-open fields of the Marsh are not just picturesque but highly fertile – among the best farmland in the country. Yet the push for large-scale solar farms risks sidelining food production in favour of speculative green investments.

Environmental groups are also questioning the wisdom of covering swathes of land with glass and steel when alternative sites – such as brownfield land, warehouse rooftops and urban car parks – remain underutilised.

Safety concerns

The issue of battery safety is likely to dominate much of the debate. High-profile fires at battery energy storage sites in the UK and abroad have highlighted the risks of thermal runaway and toxic smoke.

Kent Fire & Rescue has previously raised concerns about the strain such facilities could put on local emergency services, particularly in rural areas where access is limited.

As one local councillor put it bluntly: "If this goes up in flames, who is going to deal with it? Volunteers in New Romney? These companies play roulette with our safety."

Consultation details

Despite the fierce reaction, EDF and PS Renewables are urging residents to attend consultation events and provide feedback. Dates include:

Thursday 25 September (4:30pm–8:30pm) – Maude

Community Centre, New Romney

Friday 26 September (12pm–4pm) – XIX @ The Warren Golf

Club, Littlestone

Saturday 27 September (12pm–4pm) – Lydd Community Hall

Friday 10 October (2pm–6pm) – Camber Memorial Hall

Saturday 11 October (12pm–4pm) – Lydd Community Hall

The consultation will run until 30 October 2025, after which the developers will refine their plans and return for a further round of community engagement.

The bigger picture

The debate over South Brooks Solar Farm is about more than one project. It speaks to the wider tension between Britain's urgent need for clean energy and the question of where – and how – that energy should be produced.

Romney Marsh has long been seen as a convenient location for national infrastructure. But locals are increasingly demanding that the burden be shared more evenly – and that renewable energy development does not come at the cost of farmland, heritage and safety.

For now, the battle lines are drawn. EDF and PS Renewables will push their vision of clean energy powering Kent homes. Residents will fight to protect their landscape and way of life.

One thing is certain: the people of Romney Marsh are not ready to roll over.

And as one angry commenter summed it up: "You can stick your solar farm where the sun doesn't shine."

Former 'Inadequate' care home could reopen as Children's Residential Facility

A former care home in New Romney, once condemned for mistreatment of residents, could soon reopen its doors—this time as a residential home for vulnerable young people.

Cranmore, in Church Road, was shut down in 2021 after a highly critical inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Inspectors reported shocking failings, including residents being unlawfully restrained, locked out of kitchens, and even denied access to toilet paper. They concluded that the home fostered a "negative culture" which left adults with learning difficulties at risk of psychological abuse.

The closure brought an end to two linked services—Cranmore and Stepping Stones—which between them provided care for up to ten adults with complex needs. At the time, Deborah Ivanova, then CQC's deputy chief inspector, branded the inspection reports "distressing reading", highlighting staff's lack of understanding, knowledge and skills to support those in their care.

Since then, the two-storey detached property has remained empty, and was even listed for sale at auction in 2022 with a guide price of £600,000.

Now fresh plans have been lodged with Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) to give the site a new lease of life. The application, made by Nine Points Property Ltd, proposes reopening Cranmore as a residential home for up to six children aged seven to 17.



If approved, the home would be operated by Compass Children's Homes, a company described in the application as having a "longstanding and successful track record" of providing high-quality residential care for young people. The premises would also be registered with Ofsted, meaning the service would be subject to rigorous regulation and inspection.

Planning documents state: "The property has been in use for some time as a residential care home for adults with learning difficulties. It is now proposed to use the premises to provide residential care for up to six young persons. Compass Children's Homes has a longstanding and successful track record of providing residential care to young persons."

No structural building work is planned as part of the conversion. The application also places strict limits on capacity, capping the number of residents at ten, with no more than six staff on site at any given time unless otherwise agreed with the council.

FHDC is expected to reach a decision on the proposals next month. If granted, the move could mark a new chapter for the site—transforming a property once synonymous with failings into a potential safe haven for young people in need of stability and care.



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Editor's Word

Deputy Editor

Peter Martin



Well, it's been all go here at Looker HQ as we prepare for some quite substantial changes to your local newspaper in the coming weeks.

First of all, let me reassure you—these changes are being made to ensure that The Looker continues to bring you the very best in local news every fortnight. But after 19 years, we felt it was time for a refresh.

This edition also marks a small milestone for us. Many of you will know Holly, David's daughter, who has been helping deliver The Looker for more years than we care to count—in fact, since she was about five years old! Holly is now moving to Bristol with her partner Ryan, so this is the first issue without her involvement. We wish her every success for the future.

Another challenge we've faced recently has been the reliability of deliveries. With that in mind, we decided to take a bold step and give The Looker a brand-new look. Instead of the A4 format you've been used to for nearly two decades, we're moving up to A3—about the same size as a daily newspaper.

Why the change? Quite simply, it allows us to lay the paper out better, mix news and adverts more effectively, and respond to requests from readers for a slightly larger

print size. At present we use 10pt text; from now on it will be 12pt—easier on the eye and better for everyone.

The biggest change, however, is that The Looker will no longer be free. We've done our very best over the years to keep it that way, but the truth is that print, office and admin costs continue to rise. In reality, David has probably been subsidising the paper for years by giving his time without taking wages. To carry on and grow more professionally, we must charge a small cover price.

From the next edition, The Looker will cost £1.20, and as a result, we will also be reducing the number of "pick-up points" and the paper will only be available through retail outlets.

When you think about it, £1.20 is excellent value. You can't even buy a cup of tea for that, yet you'll be getting pages of local news and information—far more than you'll find in other paid-for papers.

We hope you'll continue to support The Looker, knowing that the alternative would have been to close it down altogether. In the next edition, we'll provide a full list of all the shops and outlets where you'll be able to pick up your copy of the new Look(er).

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Peter Martin

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All change for The Looker

Local newspaper to enter new era

For more than eighteen years, The Looker has been a household name across Romney Marsh and the wider South East – a familiar free newspaper that built its reputation on delivering trusted local news straight into the hands of residents. But now, after weathering the storms of Covid, rising printing costs, and the ever-changing media landscape, the paper is preparing for its biggest transformation yet.

Founded in 2009, The Looker began life modestly – a black-and-white publication with just 1,000 copies per issue, funded entirely by local advertising. Over the years, it expanded exponentially to become the largest free newspaper in the South East, with a reach that far exceeded its humble beginnings. For many, it became a vital source of community news, events, campaigns, and sometimes controversy – the very definition of a grassroots press.

But as founder and majority shareholder David Wimble now admits, the future of the paper depends on change: "In truth we have struggled a lot since Covid," he said this week. "We have worked so hard trying to keep it going as it was, but at the end of the day there is only so much you can do when it is paid for purely by advertising. We cannot keep asking our advertisers to bear the whole cost."

Printing challenges and rising costs

The newspaper's survival has always depended on the support of its advertisers – small businesses, local services, and community groups who have seen The Looker as a vital channel to reach local people. But in recent years, that model has come under immense strain.

The final blow came when the paper's long-term printer, which had been with the publication since near the start, closed its doors at the end of last year. Forced to find new suppliers, Wimble was confronted with the harsh realities of modern print economics.

"Obviously, we tried to keep the paper free," he explained.

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"But when our original printers closed down, we had to find a new company. We needed reliability, but the truth is, they are quite expensive. On top of that, we've had real problems with getting the papers delivered on time. That just adds to the pressure."

The mounting difficulties left Wimble with only a handful of options: try to sell the newspaper, wind it up altogether, or take the brave step of reshaping it for the future.

The personal toll

For Wimble, the decision is not just business – it is personal. He has poured nearly two decades of financial and emotional investment into the title, often covering costs himself to keep it afloat.

"Since being elected [to public office], I simply don't have the time to continue in the same way," he admitted. "It would be different if I was getting paid, but after supporting the paper financially for nearly 20 years, I cannot carry on indefinitely. I've kept it going out of love for the community, but I can't ignore the reality."

A bold new format

The solution, Wimble believes, lies in changing both the format and the funding model. Plans are now in place to relaunch The Looker as a mini-broadsheet style paper, which will not only allow for more stories and a clearer layout but also mark a symbolic shift in its presentation.

Crucially, for the first time in its history, the paper will carry a cover price. Readers will be asked to pay £1.20 per edition, with 20p going directly to the retailer.

"It's not a decision I ever wanted to take," Wimble said. "But when you think of the overheads, there really is no other way. Twenty pence from every pound goes straight in VAT, and then we have to cover office costs and pay our part-time team. If we want to keep the paper alive, it needs to pay its way."

Online access for all

Recognising that not everyone can easily afford the cover price, Wimble has also announced a digital edition, which will be available online for 50p per copy.

"We don't want anyone excluded," he said. "So for people who can't always get to the shops or who find it difficult financially, the online edition is there. But at the end of the day, it's simple – if people want the paper to continue, they will have to support it. We tried asking for donations before, but it's just not sustainable in the current climate. This way, the choice is clear."

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The move is not without risk. Across the UK, many local newspapers have folded in the past decade as free news online has changed reader habits. For Wimble, the challenge is to persuade the community that The Looker is worth paying for.

"If people don't buy the paper anymore, then I guess we've answered our own question," he said bluntly. "And we will have to close it down. That would be a real shame because it has been such a good mouthpiece for local news. But it's not just about sentiment – we have to be realistic."

A community institution

For readers across Romney Marsh and beyond, The Looker has long been more than just a newspaper. It has campaigned on local issues, covered countless community events, provided a platform for debate, and given small businesses a voice.

The shift to a paid model may be difficult for some to accept, but as Wimble points out, the alternative would be silence.

"Local news matters," he said. "Without it, who tells the stories that affect our communities? Who holds local decision-makers to account? If people really value that, now is the time to prove it."

The bigger picture

The struggles facing The Looker reflect a wider national crisis in local journalism. Dozens of titles have closed in recent years, leaving 'news deserts' across large parts of the country. In such an environment, community newspapers often rely on sheer determination and grassroots support.

Industry observers have noted that smaller, independent titles like The Looker often enjoy higher trust levels than national

papers, precisely because they are rooted in the communities they serve. The question now is whether that trust can be converted into financial backing.

Looking ahead

As the paper prepares for its relaunch in the coming weeks, Wimble remains cautiously optimistic. The new format, he hopes, will reinvigorate the publication and prove that local news still has a future.

"I don't want to sound gloomy," he said. "This is not the end – it's a new chapter. We're not winding down, we're adapting. If the community gets behind us, The Looker can continue to be that strong local voice. But it has to be a partnership. The readers have to play their part."

For now, all eyes will be on the next edition – and on whether the community that has relied on The Looker for eighteen years years is ready to invest in its future.

From mid October The Looker will be priced at £1.20 and be in a A2 Newspaper format and available from most of the current stockists.

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Lydd In Bloom 2025

The 2025 Lydd in Bloom presentation evening was held on Monday 1st September in the Council Chamber at the Guild Hall, Lydd where prizes and certificates were awarded to this year's competition winners.

The Lydd in Bloom gardens were preliminary judged by members of Lydd Town Council who were allocated an area and the final judging was carried out by the Mayoress Cllr Mrs Jean Jones and Roger Hooper, Chairman of the Lydd Allotments Association who selected the winners from the shortlists.

The presentation evening was chaired by the Mayor of Lydd Cllr Bob Jones who welcomed everyone to the presentation evening and congratulated the winners on their efforts in creating such lovely garden displays.



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All winners were presented with a Lydd in Bloom 2025 certificate and a gardening gift voucher. The Third prizes were presented with a voucher for £10 by Roger Hooper second prizes were presented with a voucher for £20 by the Mayoress, Cllr Mrs Jean Jones, and the First prize winners were presented with a £30 voucher by the Mayor, Councillor Bob Jones.

The prize winners of Lydd in Bloom 2025 were as follows:

TOWN Tubs and Hanging baskets

3rd PRIZE 23 Oakham Drive
2nd PRIZE 40 Skinner Road
1st PRIZE Star Cottage

COAST Tubs and hanging baskets

3rd PRIZE Caithness, Dungeness
2nd PRIZE 32 Pleasance Road North
1st PRIZE 6 Toby Road

TOWN Gardens

3rd PRIZE Goldsithney, Robin Hood Lane
2nd PRIZE 72 The Derings
1st PRIZE 45 Station Road

COAST Gardens

3rd PRIZE 39 Baldwin Road
2nd PRIZE 126 Leonard Road
1st PRIZE 49 Coast Drive

BUSINESS

2nd PRIZE The Memorial Institute
1st PRIZE The Royal Oak

The prize for the well-tended and productive **Allotment Plot** went to Plot 76A and the Barry Arter cup was presented by Roger Hooper along with their certificate and a garden voucher for £30

The **OVERALL WINNER** prize for the best floral display in the Parish of Lydd for Lydd in Bloom 2025 went to 96 High Street. Their prize is a garden voucher for £40 and the Rose Bowl which they will keep until the judging of Lydd in Bloom 2026

Lydd Town Council funded and awarded the prizes and certificates and continues to be impressed and encouraged by the planting schemes which brighten up our Parish, both Town and Coast and the hard work that our Allotment Plot holders put in.

The Mayor of Lydd, Cllr Bob Jones would like to thank and congratulate all the winners of this year's competition and Lydd Town Councillors, the Mayoress and Roger Hooper of the Lydd Allotments Association for judging this years' competition.

The planting schemes bring a wide range of benefits which include improving the visual aspect and local environment of the parish of Lydd and attracts bees and butterflies to the gardens.



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Bright future ahead for Folkestone Sports Centre

Work is progressing at pace to restore Folkestone's much-loved Sports Centre, with its new custodians promising to deliver a facility that will serve the town for generations to come.

The Sports Trust – which stepped in earlier this year to secure the site following the collapse of the previous operating charity – says a "huge amount of work" is already underway behind the scenes. Although no official reopening date has been set, the charity is urging patience, stressing that long-term success is more important than rushing.

In its latest update, the trust said: "We know many of you are eager to hear an official reopening date. While we are working towards this, projects of this scale often face unexpected challenges that can impact timelines. Rather than rushing, we are focused on doing things properly to ensure the Sports Centre is built to last and able to thrive for years to come."

A Saved Landmark

The facility, originally opened by Princess Anne in 1972, closed its doors in July 2024 after the former Folkestone Sports Centre Trust went into insolvency, leaving 144 people without jobs. The closure sparked public outcry, with thousands signing petitions and campaigners warning of the potential loss of a vital community hub.



Chief Exec Dan Hulme and Sir Roger De Haan "Want to get it right and sustainable"

Those fears deepened when housing developers began circling the site. But in May, The Sports Trust – already responsible for F51 skatepark, Three Hills Sports Park, and Folkestone Sea Sports Centre – successfully acquired the centre, thanks to the crucial backing of Sir Roger De Haan's charitable trust.

Sir Roger, widely credited with driving Folkestone's regeneration, provided the funds needed to outbid developers and guarantee the centre's future. The trust has since been working closely with Sport England and industry specialists to ensure the building is safe, modern, and capable of meeting the needs of today's community.

A Community Vision

Since taking ownership, the charity has made it clear the Sports Centre will not simply be reopened as it was, but reimagined as a "vibrant home for sport, fitness, and community life in Folkestone". Feedback from residents has been central to shaping plans, with the trust emphasising its determination to create a facility that "truly serves everybody in the community, while also being sustainable for the long term".

A more detailed plan, including a clearer opening timeframe, is expected to be shared in mid-October.

Thanks to Supporters

The trust has paid tribute to the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust and Folkestone & Hythe District Council for their support. Chief executive Dan Hulme described the acquisition as a "turning point", made possible by the "incredibly generous support" of Sir Roger and his team.

With progress underway and the long-term future secured, the tone is optimistic. The site is once again being spoken of not as a lost cause, but as a community asset rising from the brink of closure.

For now, while residents may need to wait a little longer before diving back into the pool or returning to the gym, there is a strong sense that Folkestone Sports Centre's best days are still to come.

Britain's worst landlord attempts to offload seafront flats



Controversial buy-to-let tycoon Fergus Wilson – once dubbed "Britain's worst landlord" – is attempting to sell off the last remnants of his property empire, including two blocks of flats on Littlestone seafront.

Wilson, now 77, has instructed his agent Eddie Powell to approach local authorities, claiming he wants his properties to "help house the homeless." But locals say the reality is far less charitable.

The flats in Littlestone, which have stood empty for years, are said to be in a shocking state of disrepair. One building reportedly suffered a burst water main which was left unchecked for weeks, leaving parts of the property flooded. Residents in the area lodged repeated complaints, with some even calling on Folkestone & Hythe District Council to issue a compulsory purchase order due to the eyesore conditions.

A Littlestone resident, who asked not to be named, said: "He talks about wanting to leave a legacy, but his real legacy here is years of neglect. These buildings have been a blight on the seafront and nobody wanted to touch them because of the state he left them in."

Wilson's so-called "legacy offer" also includes a problematic block at Wateringbury crossroads, where in 2019 Tonbridge & Malling Council was forced to intervene after a major crack in the facade threatened to collapse onto passing traffic. The repairs caused months of traffic chaos and bus cancellations.

At the height of his property empire, Wilson and his wife Judith controlled nearly 1,000 homes worth an estimated £250m. But alongside wealth came notoriety. He courted outrage with his policies banning tenants on housing benefit, victims of domestic abuse, and even ethnic minority renters – the latter overturned by a court.



His career has also been punctuated with brushes with the law, including convictions for assault and harassment, and he remains embroiled in a case of alleged racially aggravated abuse of a Maidstone council officer, which has been delayed 13 times.

Now, Wilson insists his motivation is to ease the housing crisis, claiming the remaining portfolio could be converted into 70 units. But sceptics say this latest move is less about generosity and more about ridding himself of liabilities no private buyer would want.

One Folkestone councillor commented: "For years, residents have been stuck with empty, rotting blocks bringing down the look of the town. If the council can buy them cheaply and bring them back into use, then at least something positive may come of it. But let's not pretend this is some noble gesture – it's about offloading problems he created."

Wilson, who once boasted of becoming a multi-millionaire after starting as a maths teacher and part-time boxer, now says he wants his final years to be remembered for "helping others."

But in Littlestone and beyond, many argue that his true legacy is already written: crumbling homes, court cases, and a reputation as one of Britain's most infamous landlords.

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Leas Pavilion flats untouched for 18 months – but developers insist work 'will restart soon'

Developers behind the long-stalled Leas Pavilion redevelopment in Folkestone have apologised to residents and pledged that construction will finally resume "within the next three months".

The scheme – which promises a nine-storey block of 91 luxury flats above the restored frontage of the Grade II-listed Edwardian pavilion – has stood idle since April 2024, with its stark grey stair cores dominating the skyline and sparking anger from locals.

Work had slowed early last year as a new sprinkler system was fitted in the basement, before halting altogether in the spring. The site crane, once a landmark on the clifftop, was removed in October, fuelling speculation the multi-million pound project might never be completed.

But Belgian developer Mylecke NV, which took control of the site in September 2024, says it is close to securing finance to move the project forward.

A spokesperson said: "We are finalising the loan, and work should begin within the next three months. It has been very challenging to put everything together. We understand the situation has been difficult for the neighbours, and we are sorry for that, but we are doing our best to resolve it.

Once the project restarts, the past will be behind us, and it will become something truly positive for the town."

A chequered history
The Leas Pavilion, built in 1902, was once a fashionable tearoom and theatre before later serving as a nightclub and bowling alley. It fell into disrepair and was earmarked for redevelopment in 2020.

Original plans promised to safeguard the historic terracotta frontage, stained glass, and ironwork while creating high-end homes priced at up to £935,000 – seen as both a boost for Folkestone's seafront and a way of preserving the pavilion's long-term future.

But the project has been beset by financial issues and changes of developer. Leas Pavilion Development Ltd, the initial lead company, collapsed into receivership last year. The site was even listed for sale on Rightmove in March 2024 – a move Mylecke NV later described as a "complete shock".

Campaigners cautious but hopeful

The Friends of the Leas Pavilion group, which has long campaigned for the building's future, says it has been reassured by the latest assurances.



A spokesperson said: "We have been in regular touch with the developers, and they continue to assure us that work is due to restart as soon as funding is in place. We currently have no reason to disbelieve this, and remain optimistic that we will see work recommencing in the near future. The repeated delays have been nothing less than frustrating, not to say worrying – but having spoken to a number of people involved in the project recently, we do remain optimistic that once work recommences it will be seen through to completion."

Not all residents are convinced.

Sean, 60, a lifelong Folkestone resident who recalls performing school plays at the pavilion, described the current state as "a mess".

"It's like the twin towers in Folkestone," he said. "I'm not opposed to mixing new with old, but this is not sympathetic to the rest of The Leas."

I have fond memories of the old theatre, but what's there now is just an eyesore. It's pricing people out – young people can't afford to stay in the area.

I can't see it happening in three months; it's been left all this time. If this were done, it would look great, but it needs to happen soon."

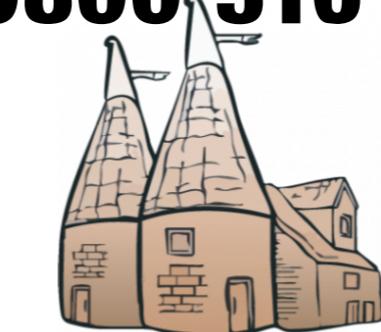
Looking ahead

Historic England has previously confirmed that items of architectural significance, removed during the 2022 demolition, are expected to be restored and incorporated into the final build.

Mylecke NV maintains that once work resumes, residents will see visible progress and renewed commitment to completing the project.

For now, the half-finished concrete towers continue to cast a shadow over The Leas – a daily reminder of a long-awaited vision for the town that has yet to materialise.

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SAVE OUR TREES

Elizabeth Halstead



I have only recently seen this attached picture of the proposed Folkestone Sandgate Road Precinct. The District Council have instructed Jackson Civil Engineering to remove all the existing trees.

Two trees in front of Debenhams/Folca were cut down on Monday 18th August, much to passers-by disgust.

Two more trees are under the sword: they are next to what was the Barclays Bank building near West Terrace traffic lights. These two trees are still in full bloom, with birds nesting in them, so they can't touch the trees until the birds have gone. Losing these trees would be a huge blow to the area, as they are an asset to the street scene. They will leave a massive hole in the precinct, and a festering sore on the District Council. These trees can't be diseased, as they are covered in leaves, and they are a whole eco system encapsulated in this natural habitat. Beautiful.

Jacksons will be planting nine semi-mature Silver Birch trees, as shown in the attached image. They give little shade, and birds can't nest in them. It is such a boring, dull, lifeless image of a town centre. Only one section of communal seating will be installed, to "bring the community together". They can't make people be overwhelmed by other, noisier people. We all like to be amongst people, in the open air, but not necessarily up close.

Nowhere in the pathetic "Magic Carpet Ride" video over Folkestone, did it say, nor show, that they would be destroying any trees. In fact, it gave the distinct impression, that they would be planting more trees, to add to all the greenery in the town centre.

Although works have started in the Sandgate Road area, there is not a large picture attached to the workmen's railings, to show the public how the new precinct is going to look. It is like a huge secret. Why won't they tell us, and show us now?

Please can your newspaper highlight this matter, as the general public are totally unaware. They will be confronted with a fait accompli.

I've tried doing my bit by sending one email to all 30 Folkestone District Councillors; and a second email to all the Folkestone Town Councillors, and Tony Vaughan MP, but I feel I'm a voice in the wilderness. It will take a massive public campaign to save our trees.

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Rotary Club News

ROTARY YOUNG ARTIST WINNERS

Every year Great Britain & Ireland National Rotary runs a number of competitions for Young People. The Young Artist competition is run locally by Folkestone Channel Rotary with winners going forward to the district and then onto the national final.

The theme this year was "Wonderful Water" and many excellent entries were received. There were three successful winners from the Folkestone area.

Eli Oestmann from Sandgate Primary who won the Junior Section (7-10 yrs),



Varsha Rao from Folkestone School for Girls who won the Intermediate (11- 13yrs)



Emma Hansen, also from Folkestone School won the Senior section (14-17yrs). Emma also went on to win the district final which gained her entry to the National final where her picture was highly commended.



David Jarvis Past President of Channel Rotary "As always the standard of entries was very high as can be seen from the pictures. This is a great competition for young people to enter a professionally run competition which comes with a chance of competing at the National level."

Each of the local Rotary clubs takes the responsibility for organising one of the Youth Challenges. In addition to Folkestone Channel Club running the Young Artist; Folkestone Rotary – Young Chef, Hythe Rotary – Youth Speaks and Romney Marsh - Young Writer.

There will be the opportunity for all local schools to enter again in the coming school year.

Channel Rotary's next fund raising event is a wine Tasting Evening on 26th November for full details www.channelrotary.co.uk

Photos Show

Varsha & Emma each receiving their prizes from past President David Jarvis Chairman of the Shepway Rotary Group Youth Committee. Also each of their pictures



Rotary Clubs supporting keeping the Marsh clean

The Rotary Club of Romney Marsh recently welcomed Chris MaCauley, volunteer coordinator from the Litter Picking Watch Romney Marsh (LPWRM), to one of our regular Thursday evening meetings.

Chris explained that the group was formed in 2016 by Eric Brown and now has a core membership of some 60 volunteers who regularly go out and collect litter. As well as the group members, the LPWRM is supported by members of the public who assist at the regular organised litter picking activities. Chris is very passionate about the work the volunteer litter pickers undertake across the Marsh and beyond and explained the range of activities they are involved with. Pictured here are Chris with Club President Colin Norgate.



In 2024 the group collected over 7,000 bags of litter and already this year around 5,000 bags have been collected.

The group is affiliated to Keep Britain Tidy and they organise regular events including beach cleans which includes a long-term project to clear the Lydd Ranges foreshore of waste and litter. As well as collecting the litter the group believes that today's young people are key to eliminating litter and waste for future generations. With this goal in mind, the LPWRM offers inspiration and practical solutions to help every child learn about their environment and understand their role in improving and safeguarding it.

Several members of the Rotary Club regularly support these events. For more information on how you can help LPWRM visit their website <https://litterpickingwatch.weebly.com> or their Facebook page.

If you are interested in joining the Rotary Club of Romney Marsh, please contact Stephen Hagues (07900 736018) for more details.

Rush for £5-a-day beach huts as Greatstone seafront makeover nears completion

Greatstone, Romney Marsh – The countdown is on to secure one of 90 colourful new beach huts on Greatstone's shoreline, with annual rent set at just £1,764 — the equivalent of under £5 a day.

The huts are the headline act in Folkestone & Hythe District Council's £1.6 million regeneration of Coast Drive, which also delivers a new visitor centre, café, public toilets and an education space. The finishing touches are now being applied along a 175-metre stretch of the beach, ahead of a planned completion by the end of October.

FHDC confirmed the chalets will be allocated first-come, first-served when registration opens, with up to 85% reserved for district residents to ensure local people benefit. "There is a real buzz about the Coast Drive project, so we anticipate significant interest in renting the beach huts," a council spokesperson said. "This scheme will provide a major boost to the local tourism economy and help actively support and promote the Romney Marsh for years to come."

Strong early demand



Demand is already high across the district, with around 600 expressions of interest logged for beach huts elsewhere — so many that the existing list has been temporarily closed. A new waiting list for the Coast Drive huts will be created and capped at 200 applicants. With 90 huts available, nearly half of those who register stand a good chance of success.

Each hut will be painted in a bright, seaside palette, creating a striking new frontage for Greatstone. The first year's rent is £1,470 plus VAT (totalling £1,764).

Part of a wider coastal lift
The beach-hut project sits within the council's Romney Marsh Coastal Destination plan, approved last June, designed to draw visitors year-round and support local businesses. While construction has required the temporary closure of the 100-space Coast Drive car park since 5 May for public safety, the council says the short-term disruption will deliver long-term gains for residents, traders and visitors alike.

Competitive pricing
Greatstone's rental model contrasts with approaches elsewhere in Kent. Herne Bay's new council-built huts went on sale for £30,000 each earlier this year, and many remain unsold. Annual rentals in the Dover district (St Margaret's, Kingsdown, Walmer and Deal) are currently £1,535 on a three-year lease. FHDC says it hopes the strong interest seen across its other sites will be matched — and likely exceeded — at Coast Drive.

How to apply
Registration for the new Greatstone beach huts opens at 10am on Wednesday, 10 September via the FHDC website. Allocations are first-come, first-served, with priority for local residents up to the 85% threshold and a waiting list capped at 200.

With the huts set to line up in a rainbow row by autumn, Greatstone is on course for a fresh, family-friendly look — and an affordable new way for locals to make the most of life by the sea.

Hotel plan for Alkham barn approved despite strong local opposition

Plans to convert a barn into hotel rooms on the grounds of a historic manor in Alkham have been given the go-ahead, despite vocal objections from residents.

The scheme will see nine guest rooms created within an agricultural shed at Great Everden Manor, a Grade II-listed estate located off Lockeringe Lane between Folkestone and Dover.

The decision came despite 31 objections being submitted, with just one resident writing in support. Many villagers fear the development will spoil the rural character of the area and worsen safety problems on narrow country lanes.

A resident, who asked not to be named, said speeding drivers travelling to the site

In their response, KCC said: "The proposal utilises an existing access and is not considered to be a significant increase as it is replacing current agricultural use and its associated movements.

The applicant has shown there is an acceptable route to the site with existing passing places utilised by current visitors, and the proposed development will not differ greatly from the existing arrangements or the potential movements generated with extant use."

Planning documents submitted by Archway Design Services, on behalf of the applicant, said the barn had been "carefully designed" to minimise its effect on the surrounding area.

They wrote: "This low level of guest

had already raised "serious and ongoing" safety risks.

"There have been numerous near-miss incidents involving horses and dog walkers. Local residents have repeatedly reported that drivers attempt to squeeze past walkers and horse riders in unsafe conditions."

Despite these fears, Kent County Council (KCC), consulted as the highways authority, did not object. Officers argued that while the rural access was "less than ideal", the impact of the barn conversion could not be judged severe enough to justify refusal.

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They wrote: "This low level of guest



accommodation is deliberate to ensure that the infrastructure and the nearby locality are not impacted in a negative way, yet still providing a high level of facilities for the guests within the footprint of the original building.

Our design is to ensure we can create the nine letting rooms with a minimum impact on the locality from a visual appearance by retaining the appearance of an agricultural building. We do appreciate that not all applications find favour with residents, but we believe that this development has been carefully designed so as not to negatively impact the locality."

It is not yet known when work on the barn conversion will begin. The applicant has been contacted for further comment.

Residents opposed to the scheme have vowed to keep a close watch on future developments at the manor site.

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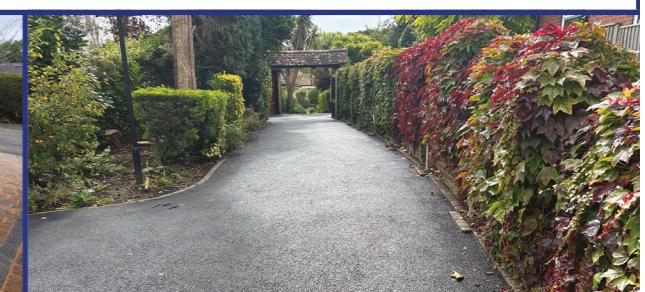
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Bus Rally Day Draws Hundreds to Romney Station

New Romney, Kent – A sea of vintage vehicles rolled into New Romney last Sunday as hundreds of enthusiasts gathered for the much-anticipated Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Bus Rally. The event, held in the railway car park, offered a nostalgic journey by steam train from Hythe down to New Romney, where classic buses were on show before free shuttle rides whisked visitors off to Dungeness.

Among the gleaming exhibits were a variety of iconic makes and models. Buses like the Dennis Dart (registration G29TGW), Transbus/ADL (GX06DYW), AEC Regent (VKR 470), AEC RF (MXX 463), the open-top Bristol (CAP 229) and the AEC RT (KYY 529) drew particular admiration. Also on display were Leyland PD2, Daimler Fleetline, AEC RM, Bedford CA Dormobile, Bristol LHS, Leyland National, Leyland Titan PD2A, AEC Reliance, Seddon Pennine, Leyland Tiger and even an Austin London Taxi – to name just a few of the heritage rolling stock that caught the eye.



With free bus services running every fifteen minutes from New Romney to Dungeness between 10:15am and around 4:30pm, attendees were spoiled for transport choice. – From the open tops to the classic double-deckers, the rally showcased a lovingly preserved snapshot of British bus history.

Among light-hearted complaints overheard at the rally was the familiar quip: "You wait ages for a bus, and then thirty come along at once." In truth, it was a welcome problem — for a brief spell, the folds of Romney Marsh seemed overrun by heritage buses, creating a moving museum on wheels.

All in all, the event proved a triumph — nostalgic, well-run and popular, bringing together generations of transport fans on a perfect Kentish Sunday.

providing entertainment for all ages.

Enthusiastic onlookers gathered to watch vintage and modern ploughing techniques in action, while local stalls offered refreshments and crafts. One farmer commented that "with weather like this, the ploughing runs smoothly and the soil responds just right," encapsulating the spirit of the day.

The turnout — estimated at over a thousand — reflected both the appeal of traditional farm skills and the community's eagerness to reconnect with rural life. Many visitors stayed into the afternoon, chatting with competitors and enjoying the sociable atmosphere.

Organisers said they were delighted by the response and hope that the event will continue to grow in future years — especially if the sunshine returns.

Romney Marsh Ploughing Match



Last Sunday saw the Romney Marsh Ploughing Match in full swing under what organisers and attendees alike described as perfect weather — clear skies, gentle breezes and sunshine that stayed just warm enough to bring out the crowds without wilting the fields.

The event, held by the Romney Marsh Ploughing & Cultivations Society on Old Ashford Road, Brenzett Green, drew well over 1,000 visitors, drawn from local villages and further afield for a day packed with traditional rural spectacle. Activities included competitive ploughing classes starting from 10 am, followed by a dog show at noon,



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The Great Gatsby – 8th May, £86.00

Wakehurst Gardens - Royal Botanic Gardens Kew – 13th May, £48.00

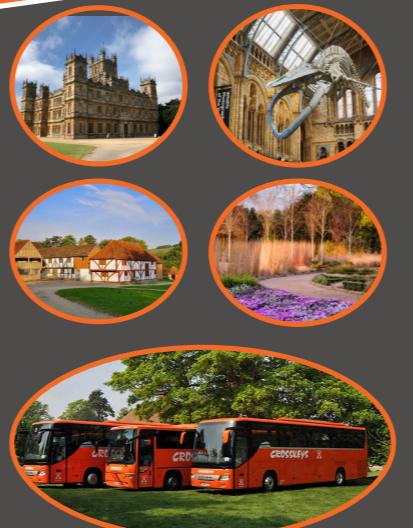
Seaside Sundowner with Fish & Chips and Live Music – 27th May, £60.00

Elvis Evolution – 4th June, £88.00

Weald and Downland Living Museum – 7th June, £54.00

Deben River Cruise & Two Course Lunch – 12th June, £67.00

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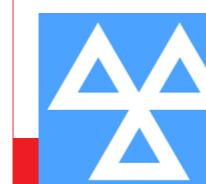
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It's my turn to write the political bit in this edition of The Looker! I had already written it during the week, but replaced it with this version instead

How's Labour Doing? Don't All Laugh at Once

So, remember that shiny Labour manifesto — full of hope, fairness, and "no more broken promises"? Well, buckle up, because if you were expecting a new dawn, what we've actually got is a power cut and no one's topped up the meter.

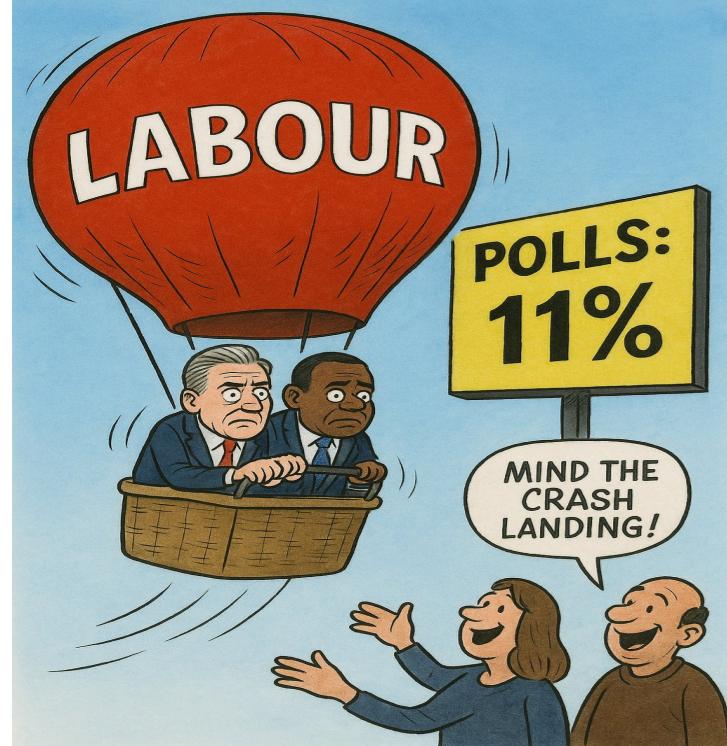
And right out the gate, Angela Rayner bows out in a cloud of dodgy dealings over her property empire. Who knew the "girl next door" with the broad vowels and louder mouth was also a tax-dodging landlord on the side? And her replacement? None other than David Lammy — yes, the bloke who managed to get every single general knowledge question wrong on Mastermind. This is the man now one heartbeat away from Number 10. Britain: where quiz-night losers get promoted to Deputy Prime Minister.

Resignation Bingo

Honestly, you need a flow chart to keep up. Sue Gray's gone. Tulip Siddiq's gone. Louise Haigh's gone. Rushanara Ali's gone. At this rate they'll be giving out loyalty cards — resign four times, get the fifth one free.

The Great U-Turn Olympics

One day they're cracking down on grooming gangs, the next day they're not. One week they're cutting disabled benefits, then they're definitely not. A woman is a woman — unless it's Tuesday, in which case we'll get back to you after lunch. If Labour were a sat nav, you'd end up back



where you started, only poorer.

Lords, Lies and Dodgy Donors

Step forward Lord Alli. The man's got more free suits than Savile Row, more apartments than Airbnb, and still insists donations don't buy influence. Pull the other one, it's got Rachel Reeves's dodgy CV attached to it.

Reeves: Tears, Taxes and Tall Tales

Rachel Reeves is crying in the Commons — don't worry, Rachel, the rest of us are crying at our fuel bills. Meanwhile, those "no tax rises for working people" promises? Gone. Instead, we've got stealth taxes, revenue-losing VAT on schools, and random giveaways in trade deals. Oh, and her CV? Let's just say it's more fiction than fact.

Ed "Solar Farm" Miliband Returns

Yes, he's back. The man who couldn't eat a bacon sandwich without looking like he'd dislocated his jaw now wants to plaster Kent in solar panels the national grid can't even handle. Genius. Farmers go bankrupt, food prices go up, but hey — the seagulls will be lovely and warm.

Fish, Riots and Free Cod for France

Six billion quid in fishing rights given away — while we cut winter fuel allowance and release prisoners early. Don't worry though, the French are dining like kings while we're sat here in the cold eating beans. Progress, Labour-style.

Local Politics, Same Circus

And if you think Westminster's a mess, let's take a look at home. Folkestone and Hythe's very own Labour MP Tony Vaughan has gone missing in action — a man so invisible he could moonlight as a magician. Meanwhile, his deputy chairman at the district council, Tony Cooper, has decided that showing pride in your country is basically the same thing as being a Nazi. Yes, really. Because nothing says "public service" quite like equating national pride with goose-stepping fascism.

Sir Keir: The U-Turn King

And then there's Starmer. Sir Keir, patron saint of spinelessness. Never answers PMQs, re-joins EU laws without a mandate, calls everyone who disagrees with him "far-right", and somehow still expects applause. He's less leader of the opposition, more manager of a very confused pub quiz team.

The Punchline?

Approval rating: 11%. Lower than the price of a pint in London. Record small boat crossings, riots in the streets, inflation back up, and more broken promises than a dodgy double-glazing salesman.

So, how's Labour doing? Well, if you like resignations, riots, dodgy donors, failed promises, broken economics and more U-turns than a learner driver on a one-way street — they're smashing it.

And what am I missing? Oh yes, probably the next scandal they'll be announcing by teatime.

Landlord seeks new future for struggling New Romney pub

A New Romney landlord has put forward plans to give a new lease of life to The Plough Inn, after admitting the historic pub can no longer survive in today's challenging climate.

Dean Miller, who has run the town-centre pub since 2021, says he has worked tirelessly to keep the business afloat — investing heavily in renovations and even trying creative ideas to attract customers — but soaring costs and dwindling trade have left the venue "unviable".

The pub, which was placed on the market in 2023 for £750,000 (later reduced to £680,000), has failed to attract a buyer despite more than two years of marketing. With bills rising, footfall falling and several other local pubs also under pressure, Mr Miller has now submitted a planning application to Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) to convert the property into two family homes.

Under the proposals, the three-storey building would be divided into a three-bedroom and a four-bedroom home. Living space



Landlord states he has tried everything but the people just are not drinking in pubs anymore

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would occupy the ground floor, with bedrooms above. A more recent single-storey extension at the rear would be removed, but the original fabric and character of the building would be preserved.

Planning documents state that although Mr Miller enjoyed two successful years of trading after taking on the pub, the cost-of-living crisis, combined with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, has seen customer numbers plummet.

"The Plough relies heavily on summer tourists to balance the quieter winter months," the report explained. "In recent years, that seasonal uplift has simply not been enough to offset poor cash flow. Rising running costs and essential refurbishment works have only added to the pressure."

Despite trialling new ventures — from family-friendly activities such as a bouncy castle to the introduction of a seafood stall — efforts to boost business were not enough to secure the pub's future.

The challenges facing The Plough reflect a wider picture in New Romney, where the Smugglers' Alehouse has already shut its doors and the Cinque Port Arms has recently been placed on the market.

Mr Miller, who has previously clashed with Kent County Council over safety improvements he made outside the venue, said he remains proud of his efforts to modernise and protect the pub during his stewardship. However, he insists that converting the building into much-needed homes is now the most sensible and sustainable option.

FHDC is expected to make a decision on the application later this year.

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Hythe and Saltwood Legion: A century of Service, Sacrifice and Community



The Hythe and Saltwood Branch of the Royal British Legion has stood as a pillar of remembrance and support for veterans, their families and the local community for more than a century. Founded in 1921 and celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2021, the branch continues to uphold the Legion's values through welfare, remembrance, fundraising and education. Meetings are held monthly at the Hythe Sports and Social Club, and new members are always warmly welcomed.

Poppy Appeal Success and Call for Volunteers
One of the branch's most visible commitments is the annual Poppy Appeal, which in 2024 raised over £42,000 across Hythe, Lympne and Sandgate thanks to the dedication of 52 volunteers. From street collections to

logistical support, their combined efforts reflected the generosity and compassion of local residents.

Looking ahead, the 2025 Poppy Appeal is now preparing to launch. Organisers are appealing for new volunteers who can spare anything from a few hours to several days to help sustain this vital tradition. Local Poppy Appeal organiser Ian can be contacted on 07841 056596 for anyone wishing to contribute.

Honouring Decades of Dedication

The branch recently paid tribute to its outgoing President, Mr Joe Moran, who joined in 1962 and has devoted more than 60 years to the Legion. His service has included over five decades leading the Poppy Appeal, tireless welfare work – including securing vital pensions and awards for veterans – and playing a central role in preserving community facilities. Joe's ceremonial leadership at key national events, his contribution to building the branch hall in 1976, and his continuing involvement in dementia support were all acknowledged during a moving ceremony attended by family, members and local dignitaries.

The service also paid tribute to Mrs Eve Moran, whose quiet support has underpinned Joe's lifelong commitment. Outgoing tributes concluded with the words: "Joe has carried our standard, built our halls, cared for our people, and honoured our history. His name is etched not only in our records, but in our hearts."

Former Chairman Major (Retd) Keith Miles was also honoured for his outstanding leadership. During his tenure, Keith introduced the Roll of Honour for deceased members, strengthened international links through Canada Day commemorations at Shorncliffe, and oversaw the branch's centenary standard renewal. He also guided the creation of the striking Poppy sculpture at Hythe War Memorial, commemorating the First World War centenary. His wife



Pat was warmly thanked for her invaluable support throughout.

A Pilgrimage to the Somme

In June this year, branch members travelled to France to join the 109th Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme. For many, it was a profoundly moving experience. Members visited the Ulster Tower, Thiepval Memorial and the Newfoundland Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel, as well as paying respects at smaller cemeteries including Ancre, where the branch honoured Private Ernest William Ball of Hythe, killed in 1916 aged just 22.

The trip concluded at the Menin Gate in Ypres, where members joined the daily Last Post ceremony, reflecting on the 54,000 names of the missing engraved on the memorial.

Remembrance at Homes

Closer to home, the branch has continued to mark key anniversaries with dignity. Services have included the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day, the Korean War Armistice, and the Somme commemorations, led by Branch Padre Dudley Shipton. Music from the City of Canterbury Band and performances from Brockhill Park Performing Arts College and Hythe Bay Primary School Choir have brought an intergenerational depth to ceremonies.

Branch President Major (Retd) Dennis Bradley MBE DL praised the growing involvement of local schools and artists: "These events are not only about honouring the past — they're about inspiring the future."

Carrying the Standard

The branch standard bearer, Alan Richardson, reflected on the privilege of his role, recalling the first time he saw the standard raised above a crowd: "A veteran once told me, 'The Standard doesn't just represent those we've lost – it carries the pride of those who stood beside them.' That shaped my understanding of what it means to be a custodian of remembrance."

Alan also highlighted the importance of sharing remembrance with younger generations, ensuring that the symbolism of the standard resonates beyond veterans and into the wider community.

Continuing the Legacy

The Hythe and Saltwood Branch continues to work on



preserving the history of those named on the town's war memorial, and is appealing for further information from residents with family links to the fallen.

As it enters its 104th year, the branch remains committed to honouring the past while serving the present. With social gatherings, welfare support, remembrance services and the Poppy Appeal, it offers camaraderie, community and continuity.

For anyone wishing to learn more, lend support or simply share in the spirit of remembrance, the message is simple: the door is open.

Contact details:

Secretary: hythesaltwood.secretary@rbl.community

Vice-Chairman (for war memorial research): hythesaltwood.vice-chairman.rbl.community

Poppy Appeal organiser Ian: 07841 056596



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When one door closes, another opens

As the end of the summer season fast approaches, Romney Marsh Morris will be having a grand finale on Saturday 4 October with a Day of Dance at Tenterden. Many other sides will be joining them to try and revive the spirit of the Tenterden Folk Festival which sadly ended last year.

Romney Marsh Morris are now turning their attention recruiting new members, both dancers and musicians. They will be having three 'Have-A-Go' sessions, starting Sunday 21 September (10.30am – 12.30pm) in New Romney, plus a 'Meet the Team' event at a local pub.

If you are a musician and play a traditional folk instrument and would like to join the musicians in the side to play for the dance, they'd love to hear from you.

Morris dancing dates back centuries and it is important to keep these traditions alive. It is a great way to meet new friends, visit lots of interesting places and have a great deal of fun and laughter.

WHO'S ABSENT? IS IT YOU?



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Further details of the side, and up to date information on their programme can be seen on their Facebook page **Romney Marsh Morris**, on their website www.romneymarshmorris.com, or you can contact them by email rmmorrissec@gmail.com

Dates for your Diary

Email your Dates for your Diary to: john@thelooker.co.uk

Thursday 18th September

Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves with Chris, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10.15 a.m.
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Friday 19th September

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.

Saturday 20th September

Old School Trust Open Morning, New Romney, 10 a.m.
(1st & 3rd Sat)
Book Sale, St. Nicholas Church, New Romney, 10 a.m.

Monday 22nd September

Sunflower Memory Café, Old School, New Romney, 10 a.m. (2nd & 4th Mon)
Dymchurch Meeting Point, Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 11 a.m.
The Games Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
New Romney History Society, Old School, 7.30 p.m.
(4th Mon)

Tuesday 23rd September

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 10.30 a.m.

Dymchurch Art Society, Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m.
New Romney WI, Scouts Hut, 2.15 p.m. (4th Tue)
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Wednesday 24th September

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
Bridge Meeting Point, New Romney Scouts Hut, 10 a.m.
(2nd & 4th Wed)
Woman's Wednesday Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Thursday 25th September

Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.
Pebbles Dementia Café, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 10.30 a.m. (2nd & 4th Thurs)
Dance Moves with Chris, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10.15 a.m.
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Friday 26th September

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Brookland Meeting Point, Village Hall, 1.30 p.m. (4th Fri)

Saturday 27th September

Autumn Art Class, Ivychurch Church, 10 a.m.
Harvest Village Supper & Raffle, Newchurch Church, 6 p.m.

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John's Marsh Memories

LYDD NURSING SECTION, ST. JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE

Early Days

In January 1934, a Nursing Section of the St. John Ambulance Brigade was formed in Lydd, and I was accepted. The Section used to meet every week at Miss Finn's house, Manor House. There weren't many of us and I can remember Mrs. Goble, Miss Mittell, Miss Russell, Mrs. Coleman, Miss Bailey and Miss White. A St. John Ambulance Brigade man from the Southern Railway used to instruct us. Our first certificates were issued in April 1935, and we were examined by Dr. McMillan, the doctor from New Romney. At that time, we didn't have a proper uniform, only white overalls with the St. J.A.B. badge embroidered on the top pocket.

Later we moved to the Hardy Hall and Mrs. G. Coleman became our leader, and we were allowed to accompany an ambulance driver in transferring patients to hospital.

Around this time, we bought our own uniforms which consisted of a grey dress, a starched large white apron, stiff cuffs and belt, black stockings and shoes and white gloves. Our great coats came much later, and they were quite expensive.

We attended the Cinema, concert parties at the Memorial Institute and sports events, all on a rota basis. I have a memory of an old lady at Belgar Farm needing to go to hospital. Ted Vidler and I had to go across a field in our old ambulance to get to her. We knocked on the door, and an elderly man opened it. He said that his wife was upstairs, and we had to go up a ladder through a hole in the ceiling to get to her. She weighed about 12 stones and looked very ill. With some difficulty, we managed to get her through the hole, down the ladder and into the ambulance.

Half-way across the field we discovered we had a puncture and some time later, two very dirty-handed first aiders arrived at Ashford Hospital with their patient!

I was very proud to be selected to represent the Lydd Nursing Section at a parade held in London's Hyde Park in 1937, when we were inspected by the Queen. A year later, the Duke of Kent came to New Romney and we were all lined up in the High Street and the Duke inspected us (see photo).



With the Second World War looming in 1939, we had to be instructed in and take examinations on the various poison gases, and in dealing with casualties and we were issued with Army type gas masks. The British Legion Hall was taken over as our headquarters, to which casualties were taken before being taken to the various hospitals. There were three full-time paid drivers and the voluntary Nursing Section and the St. J.A.B. men covered the air raid warnings.

Local children were evacuated to Haywards Heath, and the school was used as an Army cookhouse. 1940 saw the bombing of the Parish Church and there were a few direct hits on houses. The Nursing Section was invited to join the Civil Defence Ambulance Section, and we continued on a voluntary basis for a while.

I remember a call to fetch an invalid woman from a cottage on the coast and there was a mine bobbing up and down in the sea opposite. Ted Vidler and I sped down the Dungeness Road and soldiers waved us through the checkpoint where the railway crossed the road. We approached the cottage with many a glance at the great iron ball bobbing up and down in the foaming sea. We managed to extract our patient but half-way back to Lydd, there was a tremendous explosion, but our patient and we were safe.

We were having air raids most days and the nearby Army Camp lost its hospital and as a result, the hospital facilities were transferred to Skinner House. We worked with the Army in assisting with Sick parades with an average of about 100 patients every morning. With all the air raid damage taking place, a demolition crew was sent to Lydd from Rochdale. They moved into the British Legion Hall, and we moved to Elm Grove. The demolition crew cleared away the debris and we brought out the casualties. Sadly, the air raids resulted in the loss and injury to several residents and some soldiers. There was scarcely a house which escaped some damage.

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Dear Looker,

I have just finished reading the post by David Wimble on the Hands Off Our Marsh group and felt compelled to put pen to paper. I must say, I am utterly sickened by the relentless push for more solar farm development across our beloved Marsh.

My husband and I only moved down here in the 1990s, when he came to work at the power station. As David often jokes, perhaps in another twenty years we might finally be considered "almost locals"! But regardless of when we arrived, we very quickly fell in love with Romney Marsh – its openness, its peace, and that wonderful "big sky" you see as you drive through Hamstreet and beyond. The views are breathtaking. But what will become of them if, as suggested, 20% of the Marsh is swallowed up by acres upon acres of black solar panels? The thought makes my heart ache.

Please, do keep up the good work in exposing what Mr Miliband and his colleagues are trying to do. My husband, who is far more technically minded than I am, has pointed out that every one of these vast solar farms claims to generate enough energy for 120,000 homes, yet the reality is that the national grid cannot cope with such instability. Without massive investment in infrastructure, the system would simply be unable to manage the load, so one really must ask – what is the point?

And then there is the matter of these battery storage systems, which David so rightly raised at the recent Reform meeting. My husband was quick to agree that much of this drive seems to be a smokescreen. The plan, as he sees it, is to install these enormous batteries so that companies can buy electricity cheaply from France during off-peak hours, store it, and then sell it back to us at inflated prices during peak times. How is that in the best interests of local people, or indeed the country as a whole? It smacks of profiteering at the expense of communities and our landscape.

It is a complete farce. Many of us had hoped that Mr Miliband might be one of the ministers to face the axe in recent months, and surely it can only be a matter of time. In the meantime, I urge The Looker and all those who care for Romney Marsh to continue shining a light on this issue. Our countryside and our heritage are worth fighting for.

Yours sincerely,
Jill Lenahan,
(with my husband Tim in full agreement!)

Dear Sir/Madam

Once again, we are told that the country's birth rate is falling and that thousands perished in the

covid pandemic. We are also assured that the Prime Minister is being successful in re-patriating impressive numbers of illegal immigrants. This it would seem that perhaps we do not need anything like the amount of new housing that has been suggested or have I missed something? At least it would mean we would not require to cover the countryside with tons of concrete!

Yours sincerely,
Leslie Lake.

Dear Looker,

I am writing as a concerned resident who feels increasingly uneasy about how our sense of national pride is being portrayed in this country. Why is it now deemed wrong to be outwardly patriotic? I am English, proud of my heritage, and also proud to be part of the wider Union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

While I may not always agree with the outlook of our current monarch, I still believe firmly in the importance of the monarchy as a constitutional pillar of this nation. Like many others, I hope that when Prince William eventually becomes King, a sense of stability and normality will be restored to national life.

What troubles me is the growing hostility towards symbols of patriotism, such as the St George's flag. I accept that when painted on roads and roundabouts the red cross can, if not done with care, look untidy. But surely if you are British – whether English, Scottish, Welsh, or Northern Irish – you should be able to show pride in your country by flying your flag. It was once even the proud slogan of British Airways: "Proud to fly the flag." Why should that sentiment now be frowned upon?

I was particularly disappointed by comments from our MP, Tony Vaughan. In a recent video he suggested that if people want to show their pride in being English they should simply buy a football shirt, and he even made a show of scrubbing away an image of the flag with a sponge. I feel he completely misses the point. People are painting and flying the St George's Cross because they are fed up, because they feel ignored, and because they want change.

It is deeply ironic that Mr Vaughan's own party has created the very frustration and division that drives people to such gestures. For the record, I am not a supporter of Reform UK, and I have in the past voted Labour. But after the direction the party has taken, I can honestly say: never again.

Finally, if we are to condemn the painting of patriotic symbols on our streets as "vandalism," then how is it

acceptable for zebra crossings to be covered with rainbow colours in the name of Pride? I have nothing against anyone expressing who they are, but surely there must be consistency. It feels like one set of values is promoted while another is deliberately suppressed.

To me, this is not about politics, it is about fairness, respect, and the right of all people to take pride in their country without being mocked or silenced.

Yours faithfully,

A worried resident

(Name and address supplied but withheld)

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Then & Now



Brenzett Corner Garage, c.1960.

In the 1960s, as well as selling fuel, the garage had a 24-hour breakdown service and sold new and used cars. They gave 'Green Shield' stamps, and the garage was later renamed the 'Romney Marsh Garage'. For some years it was a 'Total' garage and the company also sold caravans.

The picture above shows the junction with the Ivychurch road before the roundabout was built.



PEOPLE FROM THE PAST

PETER SOUTHERDEN

Peter was born in Sussex Road, New Romney in 1931 and lived there for a few years with his two brothers, David and Michael. His father owned some land off Cockreed Lane which he farmed in his spare time and Peter helped him at weekends and school holidays. His parents moved to 'St. David's', on the Ashford Road, Hope, in 1938, and he was living there when war broke out a year later. His father worked for Ellis Bros., a local builder, and in 1940 with some other New Romney children, he was evacuated to Lindfield, near Hayward's Heath. He was there for about a year before returning to New Romney in September 1941. He came home in Carey's bus, a local company, and he had to walk home from North Street in the pitch darkness. The fields along both sides of the Ashford Road were mined, so he had to be careful where he walked. There were also tank traps (road blocks) in Ashford Road close to where Prescott House is today.

He went back to New Romney Primary School, but it was only open for half a day for some time. His friends at school included Bob Gillham and Bill Webb. He used to go fishing in the New Cut along Hope Lane and would also sit on the bridge there and watch the Typhoons take off and land at the nearby airfield. This created an interest in things mechanical, and he saw the Flying Fortress that crash-landed at 'The Hoy' at Littlestone and also the Mitchell bomber that crashed at Ivychurch. He used to cycle out with his friends when he heard that a plane had crashed. He was in the school gardens, off Tookey Road, when a Spitfire and a Thunderbolt collided and crashed between New Romney and Lydd. On Friday afternoons, he was let out of school early and he used to go the local WVS Centre at the Methodist Church Hall in the New Romney High Street and the ladies used the lads as guinea pigs and practised bandaging them up. Peter joined the local Gardening Club that met occasionally in the Church Hall, and he was also a member of the Fur & Feather Club which had its meetings in St. Mary's Bay. He left school in July 1945 and worked for his father for about a month. He then left and went to work for George Palmer at his farm at Brodnyx with Bob Jones,

George Noakes and Sid Ovenden. After a few weeks, He was asked to help out at Palmer's Corn Store in Rolfe Lane but soon afterwards his mother said he must leave because of the dust there. In 1946, he started work for Sid Waddell at Chapel Farm, on the Ashford Road.

A few years later an opportunity arose to join Wingham Engineering who had just opened their unit in New Romney and he stayed there until the firm closed down. By this time, he was a very knowledgeable engineer and he then joined the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway as a fitter in their works at Littlestone.

He was very friendly with Stan Ramsden who taught at Southlands and eventually got a job there as a technician in the woodwork and metalwork departments with Stan and Paul Reed. He stayed at the school until he retired and by this time, he was spending a lot of his time looking after his elderly parents. After they died, he remained in the bungalow with his brother Michael, and they sold eggs from their small holding in Cockreed Lane.

When one of his old workmates from Wingham Engineering died in the 1990s, because of his knowledge of all things mechanical, he was asked to go along and see the widow about the disposal of a lathe. One thing turned to another, and he married Jean in 1999. They initially lived in Greatstone, but because they wanted a quieter life, they moved to Ivychurch. After a few years, Jean's health started to deteriorate, and they moved just up the road to Snaves but after Peter had to give up driving they moved to Bilsington.

Peter was a real character, always happy to stop and have a few words, and many friends and relatives attended Bilsington Church for his funeral in 2015.




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Gardening

By Michael Gooch

It is hard to write this column thinking of Romney Marsh, we are in the Scottish Highlands as a support team for our son, doing the final part of a Land's End to John O'Groats cycle ride! The weather has been very good, so I presume it is as good on Romney Marsh. He had to abandon the first part in June when he was taken ill in the lowlands of Scotland, partly as a result of cycling through some awful weather!

If we were at home, we would be doing a lot of tidying with plants that had 'gone over.' It is probably still worth dead heading flowers, including roses, any warm weather will keep them flowering, right up until Christmastime and the first frosts. If you deliberately want to save seed, you can now let them 'go to seed' and not pick off the dead ones. This can be done with sweet peas, marigolds, cosmos (which are still glorious) and others. Wait until the seed head is quite brown and dried up. After gathering, place in a paper bag or old envelope, label with the flower name and date, and store in a dry place. It is important to be dark, but your envelope or bag will probably do the job well.

It is probably not too late to reduce the size of bunches on late apple crops like Bramley Apples or other cookers. Leave 2 or at most 3 on each clump. It is better to have fewer big apples than lots of little dried-up apples. This year's crop seems to be a good one, and it is tempting to try and store them. If you wanted to try, pick perfect ones off the tree, and wrap individually in newspaper, or place on a cardboard tray on newspaper, not touching. Then store in a dark dry place. Keep trying them and immediately you find one that has started to decay, throw it out. Most amateur gardeners don't go in for spraying in a big way, so the results may be disappointing, but worth trying.

If you wanted to 'have a go' at freezing apples, I will repeat what I mentioned a few weeks ago. Peel the apples with a peeler (it only takes a thin layer of skin off. Experts tell us most of the nutrition of fruit and vegetables is just under the skin.) Cut across the middle and slice all the good bits into a bowl of cold water. At the same time, boil about a third of a saucepan of water on the stove. When boiling, put the cut-up apple pieces in the pan and boil for about a minute. Then drain the apples into another pan through a sieve, and rinse under a cold tap. Repeat the process, until you have blanched all of your apples. Blanching is the process of just starting the cooking process, which stops some of the decay, and stops apples going brown.

I mentioned straining into another pan, it saves you boiling up more water, just to do another lot, and saves fuel. Important note. If you are dealing with

Bramley apples, do not boil. Just put them into the boiled water for 2-3 minutes and strain. They reduce to a pulp very quickly. When cool, I put them into plastic bags in 8oz batches, with a couple of teaspoons of sugar. You can freeze them in any amount, but 8ozs make a medium sized pie or crumble.

This may seem a complicated process, but when you get into a rhythm, it only takes a few minutes, and nothing beats the joy of getting a few bags of apples of the freezer in the middle of winter and making a warming pie or crumble. If you don't fancy making pastry, you can always buy some ready-made.

AND NOW FOR THE VEG

Talking of Scotland, there's a weekly gardening programme (well, weekly unless the BBC broadcasts tiddlywinks and other sporting programmes in the belief that all the nation wants is sport) called Beechcroft. It's set in the north of Scotland and it's amazing how much will grow in a climate much colder on average than Romney Marsh. Perhaps we've underestimated how much we can actually grow here during the autumn and winter months. Passing an allotment the other day we saw fine crops of "tatties", beans, peas, rhubarb and sweetcorn to name but a few. As we've mentioned in previous editions of The Looker, climate change may mean that we have to reassess what we can grow now, where in previous years we would probably have waited another month or two before sowing and planting.

As the seed catalogues for 2026 become available, it's worth browsing through and taking particular note of which varieties of vegetables can be sown as early-maturing crops instead of having to wait till later in the year. The availability of polytunnels in recent years has aided the earlier sowing and planting than would previously have been thought to be a waste of time and seed.

So this is a good time to plan ahead and perhaps try out new varieties and techniques which reflect warmer summers and milder and wetter winters. In the meantime, keep on top of those weeds, hoeing between rows and hand-weeding more delicate plants.

If your runner beans are about finished (perhaps due to recent high winds) pull up the plants and add them to the compost. These provide much valuable nitrogen when rotted down and added to the soil as compost.

In the meantime, happy gardening and good forward planning.

Budgeting Tips

By June Gooch

take them out in plenty of time to thaw! I know it is healthier to let things thaw naturally, but I'm not always that organised! I always remember my ancient freezer book said that items should be frozen as quickly as possible and thawed as slowly as possible!

Slow cooker. If you have a slow cooker, any combination of meat and vegetables, makes a wonderful dinner, and is especially useful if you are out all day at work, or enjoying leisure time. You can also cook joints in the slow cookers, and they come up so tender, they are amazing.

Toad in the hole (or anything else in the hole)

One of my economical "end of the month and running out of money" dishes! You can feed 6 people with as many sausages! Cook your sausages beforehand. To make a simple batter measure 4ozs or 110g plain flour, 1 egg, a pinch of salt and half a pint of equal milk and water. Put the flour and salt into a bowl and break in the egg. With a balloon whisk, start to add the liquid to the mixture a little bit of a time. At first it will be lumpy but eventually it will be a smooth, flowing mixture. Put cooking oil in a shallow baking tin, with at least 1" sides, and place in a preheated oven at 210d C or mark 7 on gas. When sizzling hot, withdraw from the oven, and place the cut-up sausages, and the well mixed batter mixture in the tin, and replace in the oven. It will cook quickly in about 10 minutes. You can also add cooked vegetables or chopped onions. I found even fussy children will eat any amount of vegs hidden in batter! (Note, it is hard for modern young people to grasp that there was a time before plastic, when the only money you had was in your purse, wallet or bank account. When you ran out of money, you ran out of money!!)

Curries, stews and casseroles. There are a thousand recipes that can be used for these! Since ancient mankind realised fires and heat made food easier and tastier to eat, and pottery was invented, meat and vegetables in one big pot has been the basis of our nutrition. People are put off these because of long cooking times. Look up some recipes, and make as much as you can afford. With conventional ovens, it makes no difference how much is in there, it will take the same amount of time, so use your oven time wisely, and make as much as you can afford.

Modern generations who never learnt cooking at school, may see all this as time consuming and hard work. But it is like everything that is worthwhile, the more you do it, the easier it will be, as you get into a routine. It has been proved without a shadow of a doubt, that home cooking is much healthier, and it needn't be a chore. Give it a try, and experiment if you like your food spicier or to include more unusual vegetables. If you can cut down on UPFs and convenience food, your long-term health will benefit.

By local democracy reporter Peter Bird

A Nation on edge: Labour's winter of discontent looms as Reform rises

When Parliament reconvened this September, one might have expected a refreshed, re-energised Labour Party ready to seize the political initiative after a summer break. Instead, what the country saw was a government returning to Westminster looking weary, battle-scarred and, in truth, more divided than ever. Far from being reinvigorated, Sir Keir Starmer's administration looked like a party already halfway through a long and painful decline – and it has only been just over a year since they took office.

At the centre of the storm stands Rachel Reeves. Once presented as the sober, steady hand on the Treasury tiller – “Rachel from Accounts”, as her colleagues affectionately but somewhat patronisingly dubbed her – the Chancellor is now poised to deliver an autumn statement that the entire country is bracing for.

Reeves had promised that tax hikes would not be the tool of choice for repairing the nation's battered finances. But promises, as many self-employed workers and small businesses already know, have proved cheap. A series of stealth taxes introduced over the past year have disproportionately hit the backbone of Britain's economy – the entrepreneurs, tradespeople and small business owners who keep communities alive.

Now, whispers in Whitehall suggest that Reeves' upcoming statement may spread the pain even further. Those “targeted measures” she once claimed were unavoidable are set to hit not just the strivers and grafters, but ordinary families and households already struggling with food, fuel and mortgage bills.

From £20 Billion to £55 Billion – A Black Hole Multiplied Let's not forget the rhetoric from Labour's campaign trail. The mantra was constant: they had inherited a £20 billion black hole from the Tories. Twelve months of pain, Reeves told us, would be enough to put Britain back on track. One year on, the pain has certainly been delivered – but the hole has not closed. Instead, it has ballooned.

Like feeding a gremlin after midnight, the black hole has multiplied into a monstrous £55 billion shortfall. The Chancellor, once seen as a safe pair of hands, now finds herself presiding over economic chaos that even the most hardened Labour supporters cannot spin into a story of progress.

The Rayner Factor – Stockport to Downing

Street? Compounding Labour's woes are persistent rumours about Angela Rayner's ambitions. The Deputy Leader, whose rise from a Stockport council estate remains one of Labour's favourite “authenticity” tales, looks increasingly likely to inherit the leadership sooner than many expected.

With Sir Keir looking haggard, perpetually abroad, and increasingly out of touch with the domestic crisis facing Britain, bookmakers are slashing the odds on Rayner stepping up within six months. Her critics joke about her having more homes than GCSEs – three, if you count the grace-and-favour residence that comes with her post – but her supporters see her as the “real Labour voice” of the working class.

Yet the prospect of “Angie from the Bloc” in Number 10 is hardly reassuring. Her holiday preferences may lean more towards Brighton than Brussels, but her policies remain firmly anchored in the same failed thinking that has led Labour governments into crisis before. If Reeves is already on borrowed time, a Rayner premiership by next spring could plunge the country into uncharted waters.

A Tired Prime Minister – Abroad More Than at Home Meanwhile, Starmer himself increasingly looks like a man who regrets winning. His grand vision of becoming a modern-day Henry Kissinger, shuttling between capitals as a global mediator, has left him more absent from Britain than present. Great for the air miles, but hardly reassuring for a country in crisis.

As domestic problems pile up – from crumbling public services to unchecked illegal migration – the Prime Minister appears distracted, detached, and exhausted. His government, already fractious, is starting to implode under the weight of its own contradictions.

Lessons of History – Callaghan All Over Again The spectre of James Callaghan's government looms large. Just as in the 1970s, Labour now faces the possibility of financial markets losing faith. If Reeves is indeed “the best Labour's got” at the Treasury, then the whispers of IMF intervention grow louder.

Back then, it took billions in international loans to prop up the Bank of England against the tide of Labour mismanagement. Few in the City will have forgotten that lesson – and many already wonder whether history is about to repeat itself. A sacking of Reeves, a panic reshuffle, and another Labour Chancellor floundering in the storm could send Britain hurtling towards another vote of no confidence.

A Snap Election on the Horizon? Which brings us to the possibility of an early general election. Many commentators dismissed such

speculation a few months ago. Now, with Labour's poll numbers wobbling, backbenchers muttering, and voters restless, the prospect of going to the country sooner rather than later cannot be ignored.

Even Labour MPs themselves are quietly preparing for the worst. Local party groups have been told to remain on “war footing”. At his annual constituency meeting, Folkestone & Hythe's Tony Vaughan – already ranking as one of Parliament's least efficient MPs by independent watchdogs – admitted as much. With a reduced majority won on a historically low turnout, even Vaughan confessed that the Reform UK surge represents a serious threat.

Reform UK's Bold Stand

And what of Reform UK? Far from being cowed by media mockery or establishment sneers, the party has doubled down on the issues that resonate most with ordinary Britons.

Most notably, the announcement of a zero-tolerance approach to illegal migration has struck a powerful chord. No ifs, no buts: every person entering Britain illegally would be sent back to their country of origin. To achieve this, Reform pledges to leave the European Court of Human Rights and invoke emergency powers to suspend obstructive legal challenges.

Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Conservatives all laughed. The media labelled it an “own goal”. But the people spoke differently. Within 48 hours of the policy being unveiled, Reform surged eight points in the opinion polls. The message could not be clearer: voters are tired of excuses and half-measures. They want action.

The Months Ahead – Britain Holds Its Breath

So what awaits the nation in the coming months? An autumn statement likely to deliver more pain than relief. A Prime Minister increasingly out of touch and out of the country. A Chancellor staring down a financial black hole she can neither explain nor contain. And a Deputy Leader circling overhead like a hawk, waiting for the moment to swoop.

Meanwhile, the British public grows more restless, more disillusioned, and more open than ever to a genuine alternative. Reform UK, once dismissed as a fringe movement, now looks poised to step into the vacuum created by Labour's failures and the Conservatives' collapse.

If the coming winter is indeed one of discontent, it will not simply be the cold weather that bites. It will be the chilling realisation that Labour, elected on promises of change and competence, has delivered neither. Instead, they have dragged Britain further into crisis – and in doing so, may have paved the way for Reform's rise.

The next election – whether called in 2026 or brought forward by Labour's own implosion – will be a reckoning. And on the current trajectory, it may just be the moment when Britain finally says: enough is enough.

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Wildlife

September Warbler Migration

For many birdwatchers September is their favourite month and full of anticipation for that hoped for rarity lurking amongst a host of common migrants. Seeking out land birds such as warblers helps if weather conditions are favourable; particularly if the systems originate from the east along with a bit of cloud cover and rain. Migrants moving out of northern Europe often get disorientated and drift across the North Sea pitching down on headlands along the Channel coastline, either on the near continent or, hopefully, here at Dungeness where they seek refuge amongst the scrub cover across the peninsula.

Many millions of our summer visiting warblers will be on the move this month as they steadily vacate their breeding grounds and trickle south towards the vast African land mass. Most will pause and feed en-route and some, such as the Blackcap and Chiffchaff will winter around the Mediterranean Basin, thus avoiding the hazardous journey across the Sahara Desert; increasingly, due to climate change, both species now regularly also occur across southern England in the winter months with the Blackcap a frequent visitor to garden bird feeders.

But for the true long-distance migrants Willow Warblers are in the vanguard and can be encountered just about anywhere there is cover; I've already seen them filtering through our garden in New Romney picking off insects amongst the tangle of runner beans and sunflowers. These active, yellowish warblers will continue to dominate throughout the month until they are gradually replaced by the duller plumes of the similar Chiffchaff into late autumn.

The majority of common breeding warblers such as Whitethroats and Sedge Warblers have already departed, but Reed Warblers often linger well into October. September is also the best month to encounter the handsome Lesser Whitethroat, particularly in coastal scrub and thickets where they supplement their insectivorous diet with sugar-rich blackberries and elderberries.

Already this autumn scarce warblers have been noted at Dungeness with several Grasshopper Warblers captured



and ringed at the bird observatory, plus a stunning Icterine Warbler in the bushes in the moat. However, the rarest of the tribe so far has been a Fan-tailed Warbler that recently graced the wet grasslands of Galloways and was a long-awaited first record for the area.

As the season progresses Yellow-browed Warblers from the taiga forests of northern Russia begin to arrive. They should be on their way to south-east Asia for the winter but having 'reversed' their biological compass small numbers of inexperienced juveniles often end up on the shingle headland at Dungeness about now.

For many of our south bound warblers this will be their one and only migratory attempt, such are the challenges of the great journey into Africa. Those that survive the natural hazards and bird-catchers along the way will be among the fittest, and luckiest, while we can only hope that enough will make it through to their winter quarters and return to the lands of their birth next spring.

By Paul Trodd



Vinny's Media

Welcome readers to another batch of reviews. This issue I've got two films that I initially missed at the cinema that are currently on Sky/Now TV and Amazon Prime. Three B-Movies from Sky/Now TV and an interesting comedy about the start of Saturday Night Live. The latest in the Alien franchise from Disney+ and the return of assassin Hutch Mansell.

I missed **Kraven the Hunter - Sky/Now TV** at the cinema but decided to watch it on the small screen despite mixed reviews.

When Sergei's mother dies his father and drugs baron Nikolai (Russell Crowe) prepares Sergei and his younger brother Dmitri for the family business. While on a hunting trip Sergei and Dmitri encounter a Lion and in protecting his brother Sergei is attacked by the Lion. The Lion then takes Sergei to Calypso who heals Sergei with a serum. Sergei soon discovers he has heightened physical prowess and when he learns his father killed the Lion Sergei leaves in disgust for an animal sanctuary owned by his late mother.

Fast forward sixteen years and Sergei is now Kraven the Hunter a vigilante who hunts and kills criminals. When Kraven visits his brother in his club in London Dmitri is kidnapped and when Nikolai refuses to pay the ransom Kraven seeks the help of Calypso, now a lawyer, to find Dmitri. Kraven is soon pitted against Aleksei Sytsevich who himself has developed the strength and attributes of a Rhino through experiments. Aleksei employs the service of the Foreigner an assassin who uses ocular hypnosis to render his targets helpless. Kraven battles the pair in order to rescue his brother but not before he realises that his father is involved.

Kraven the Hunter is a decent attempt at bringing another Marvel character to the big screen. It is dark in a Batman style but has the necessary action scenes. I did struggle with Russell Crowe's OTT attempt at a Russian accent but he still had the screen presence to deliver a good performance.



Another movie I missed but is currently available on **Amazon Prime is Novacaine**.

Nathan Caine is an assistant manager at a trust credit union in San Diego. Nathan is a quiet and unassuming character happy to plod alone with life. Nathan also

has CIPA and doesn't feel pain. When his co-worker Sherry shows some interest in him he is initially reluctant due to his condition and inexperience with women but begins to replicate the interest and they begin a relationship.

When an armed gang rob the bank on Christmas Eve Sherry is taken as an hostage and Nathan goes after the gang after his boss is killed. Nathan tracks down one of the gang and kills him after sticking his hand in the fryer to retrieve a gun. Nathan enlists the help of his gamer friend Roscoe to track down the source of a tattoo that was on the dead robber and he then sets about finding the rest of the gang and Sherry.

Novacaine is a very funny film about a man who finally finds love, loses the love of his life and then becomes a reluctant hero putting his life on the line in some hilarious set pieces. Jack Quaid is fast establishing himself as a major player in Hollywood and Novacaine doesn't hurt his reputation. There are some very funny scenes like the fight with the robber in the restaurant and a torture scene in which Nathan pretends to be in pain.

There is a subtle twist at the end which you won't see coming but there is still a happy ending as Nathan saves the day.

Long Gone Heroes is the latest B-Movie action film from Sky/Now TV. When Gunner's (Frank Grillo) niece Julia, a reporter, is kidnapped by a drug lord in Venezuela he sets about assembling a crack squad to rescue her. But behind the scenes is Roman (Andy Garcia) who has his own crack squad and ulterior motives.



Long Gone Heroes is a low budget thriller that is well acted and with plenty of action. The story follows a similar plot to many 'rescue mission' films and you can expect valiant sacrifice in the name of friendship. Grillo is a decent lead and Garcia an adequate adversary. I've seen worse and this isn't one of them.

Another B-Movie action film from Sky/Now TV is Gator Creek the film starts with an unsuccessful DEA drugs raid on a Louisiana den which sees everyone wiped out and a large consignment of crystal meth let loose in the Louisiana everglades. Meanwhile Kyle and her friends, on their way to scatter Kyle's brothers ashes in Florida, along with the other passengers are on board of a plane that crashes in the everglades. With no means of communication the group are forced to make their way to safety but they quickly discover, well the co-pilot does, that they are being pursued by a group of angry alligators high on meth.

Well we've had Bears on cocaine so why not Gators on meth. The only difference is where as Cocaine Bear played

it for laughs Gator Creek plays it straight. Gator Creek is low on plot and high on gore and while it delivers as a action movie it is a low-key no brainer.

An interesting little low-budget movie on Sky is **Sharp Corner - Sky/Now TV**. When Josh and Rachel move into their new home, they don't realise that in front of their house is a traffic hazard in the shape of a sharp corner. The film follows Josh's initial intention on saving lives but as the accidents continue Josh's behaviour and actions become more bizarre as he descends into obsessive madness ignoring his family in the process.

This is a creepy little psychological thriller that takes the viewer on a descent into madness as Josh gives up everything in his all consuming attempts to make things safer. Sharp Corner is a strange little movie that is owned by Ben Foster as Josh. It isn't a classic but it is still worth a watch.

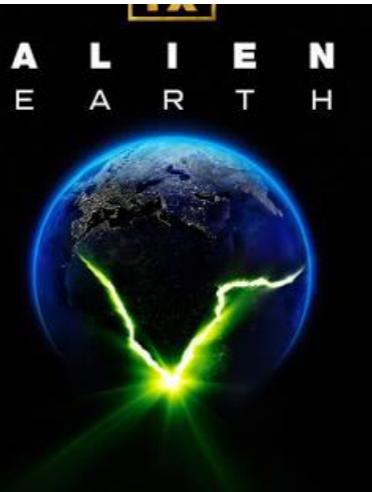
On 11th October 1975 a new comedy show Saturday Night Live hit the NBC network. The show which consisted of up and coming comics in a series of skits and sketches alongside music, wasn't without controversy but it stayed strong and outlived many of its competitors.



Saturday Night - Sky/Now TV - is the story of the opening night and the three hours leading up to the show first being screened. Producer Lorne Michaels oversees a chaotic night as he tries to steady the ship. With NBC executive David Tebet (Willem Defoe) breathing down Michaels neck and increasing the pressure on the novice producer things don't run smoothly. With the stars causing a commotion John Belushi is throwing temper tantrums, Jim Henson defending his muppets, Billy Crystal demanding more time Michaels is struggling to pull it all together. When the crew start to mutiny Michaels takes himself off. As you can guess Michaels manages to drag his actors and crew together but it is a struggle.

Saturday Night is a well shot film that captures that first frantic night of what was to be a legendary TV show. The pace of the film reminded me of September 5 which also dragged the viewer into the action as the drama unfolded.

It's an interesting look into the early careers of Dan Aykroyd, Chevy Chase, the late great John Belushi, Billy Crystal and Andy Kaufman. Hats off to Nicholas Braun who played both Kaufman and Jim Henson. I really enjoyed Saturday Night as a spectacle and a homage to Saturday Night Live.



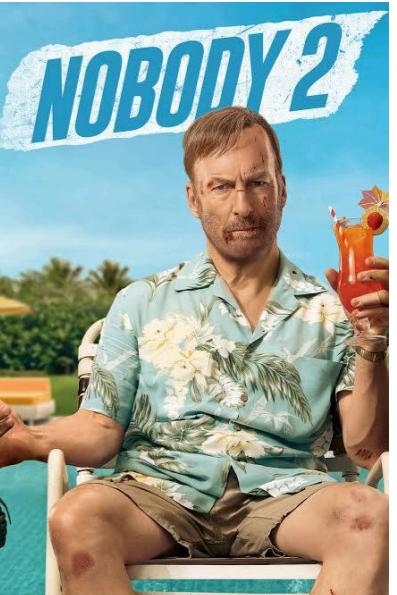
Disney+ have got a new series worth catching **Alien Earth**. As the title

suggests the plot is set around the xenomorph's landing on Earth via a crashed space ship.

Alien Earth is set 2 years before the original Ridley Scott film. The first episode introduces us to three alternative life forms on Earth Cyborgs - cybernetically enhanced humans Synths - AI beings and Hybrids - synthetic beings downloaded with human consciousness. Wendy was the first Hybrid created after she had a serious illness. Her brother Joe is a medic with the Prodigy corporation one of the five corporations that rule Earth. Meanwhile The USCSS Maginot a space research vessel has had a malfunction and has crash landed on Earth. The only survivors are Morrow a cyborg and the xenomorphs. When the Maginot crash lands in New Siam, which is part of the Prodigy corporation, a rescue team are sent in along with Joe. Meanwhile Wendy is part of a special team also sent in to the crash site. Both teams soon realise that there is a greater menace to contend with.

Alien Earth is a slow burner that takes time to tell the story and then explodes into action. The placing of the xenomorphs on Earth makes it very interesting as mankind faces its greatest challenge. I've seen the first two episodes and wasn't disappointed.

Nobody was a surprise hit as Bob Odenkirk played Hutch Mansell a former government assassin who is now working in a mundane office job. When his house is burgled and he fails to confront the attackers his family think he is a failure. When he gets involved with a Russian gangster Hutch is dragged back into his old world.



Nobody 2 - on general release sees Hutch take a much needed vacation with his family. Hutch, against the families wishes, takes them to Plummerville a place where his father took him as a young child and which holds many nice memories. When Hutch's son Brady is confronted by a bully, Max, in the arcade and blamed for the commotion the family are kicked out but as they leave an employee slaps the back of Hutch's daughter Sammy's head. Once the family has left Hutch goes back to the arcade, which is owned by the bully's father Wyatt, and issues his own form of justice. This leads to the corrupt Sheriff Abel trying to kill Hutch who loses a finger in the process but dispatches Abel's men.

Hutch soon learns from his brother Harry that Plummerville is a known bootlegging route run by Lendina (Sharon Stone) and when Wyatt tells Lendina he wants out she kidnaps Max. Hutch decides to rescue Max and in doing so burns Lendina's cash and drugs. With Lendina now after Hutch, Hutch joins forces with Wyatt and enlists the help of his father David (Christopher Lloyd) who is on vacation with them, and brother Harry in a final showdown with Lendina.

Nobody 2 is a riot, literally, Odenkirk steals the show as the assassin in need of a vacation but who cannot stay out of trouble. There's some great set pieces which are played out in Tom and Jerry fashion. I'm sure Nobody 3 will follow and who is complaining after this one.

That's your lot for now and I'll see you next issue.

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Club Scouts | Brownies & Guides-update

Creating Champions of Change

KIJ 2025 – 1st Dymchurch; 1st New Romney & 1st Lydd

Kent International Jamboree 2025 - The UK Festival of Scouting and Guiding, was held at the Kent County Showground, Detling, near Maidstone this summer. The festival offered a unique opportunity for 7,000 young people and their leaders, to have fun, create friendships and enjoy great adventures. With participants from over 30 different countries from across the world the event provided cultural exchange experiences that will last a lifetime. This cultural exchange can be eye-opening and educational, fostering an understanding of different faiths, beliefs, and customs. The sheer size of the festival meant participants could experience hundreds of different activities, including many they might not have encountered before. The theme of 'sustainability and protection of the environment', encouraged participants to become Champions of Change to create a more sustainable future.



Scout leaders say that there is 'so much opportunity' for young people to learn skills for future careers. Young people say there is nothing to do - the Jamboree is proof that there is. Scouting gives a good foundation for life. Comments from parents:-

Simply amazing! Both my children attended and had an amazing time. Scouts, Explorers and Guides having fun. Good coverage from BBC Kent, who have been onsite for a couple of days. All the leaders and volunteers make this happen and deserve the recognition, many taking a week off work or spending time away from their families to make this a success.

This has been an epic adventure in my daughter's life. She has had a fabulous time and I'm so grateful to our scout group and leaders.

Huge thanks (from a grateful grandparent) to everyone who has made this possible. Thank you for your generosity, your time, your expertise, your energy, and your enthusiasm. The planning and commitment for many months is all the volunteers time as well, so hats off to them!!!!

The sheer size of the Festival allowed participants to engage in activities and discoveries that they might not have encountered otherwise in their lives. Moreover, The Festival provided a platform for participants to explore a wide range of activities, spanning hundreds of different options some of which, for the festival, was a first for Scouting. The diverse array of activities helps young



people broaden their horizons and develop new skills and interests.

The Festival offered unique and amazing ceremonies, shows, and live music performances by professional artists, talented young people, and participants. The arena events created a lively atmosphere, and everyone came together to enjoy the music and dance. In the evening participants were able to enjoy an extensive range of entertainment and activities on a scale they had not experienced before. There were themed evenings for older Scouts and Guides while leaders and staff



teams were able to relax the purpose-built 'Urban Hub'.

Scouting undoubtedly offers remarkable experiences that bring young people together on an international level, fostering friendship, understanding, and personal growth. Its offers a unique combination of fun, education, and cultural exchange that can have a lasting impact on the lives of participants, their leaders, and the communities where they live. Well done to all involved. To join your local Group ages 4 – 100+ please find us on Facebook or contact Janet on 01797 363657.

MYSTERY ON THE MARSH – 'The Reunion'

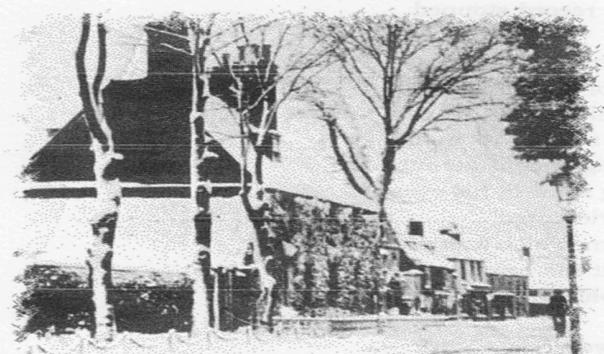
Just published - available now.

A glimpse of what it was like living on the Marsh in the late 1950s. It is mostly a true story (with a little bit of fiction as well), and over 90 local people are mentioned in the book.

Only a few copies left.

Purchase your copy from Premier, High Street, New Romney, Community Hub, New Romney, Lyons, Coronation Square, Lydd, Foords, St. Mary's Bay, Kent Model Exchange, High St. Hythe or from John Wimble 01797-362295.

Mystery on the Marsh "The Reunion"



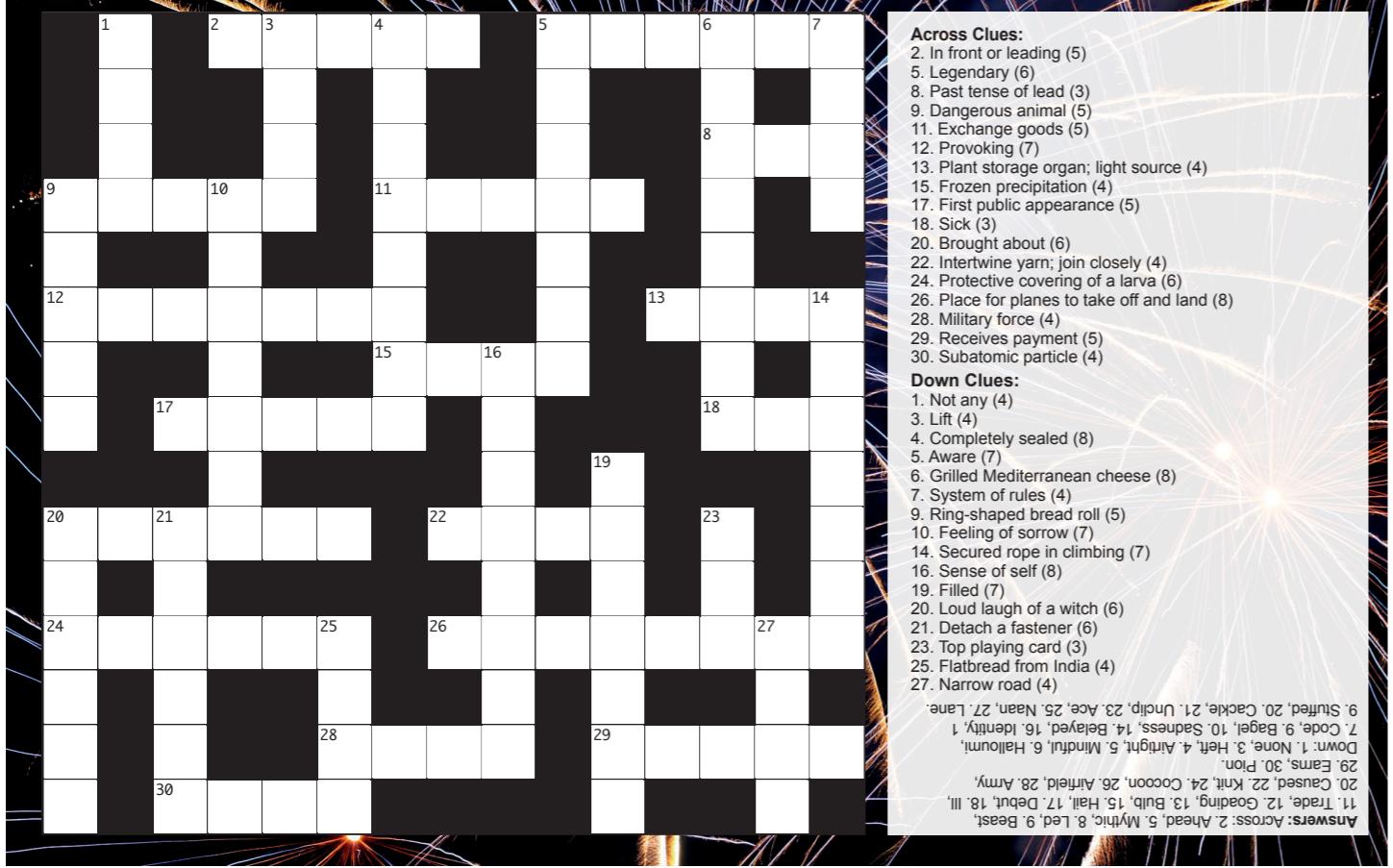
Featuring local people who lived in New Romney and district in the late 1950s

by John Wimble

£6

General Knowledge Crossword

#057



Hidden Message Wordsearch

Autumn Days

Once you find all the words. Copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

A N D B Y N O S M I R C A P B
C L L R P R E B M A T H S I E
H T L O O I V E S W E I R E V
I H E N N F O G G Y R C R L Y
L G I Z A V E D L C H A N V E
L I D E C A L L E O N T I H Z
E L P A M E R E L G O W I V E
E I E S T E O N B E A M O A E
R W E A K F U I L L E I O R R
F T T N V R E P E S A G L N B
O D O G M E C H A N G I D O N
A C O S I G S B R A M B L E F
K L S T S U R N R O C A L E H
D O A V T F R O S T W E D E S
M D R I Z Z I E T E I R A C S

Write the hidden message here:

Sudoku Challenge

			3	6	4		8	2
6	2		8	1	9	7	3	
				5		9		4
3		6	7	2				8
	1				8		5	6
	9		6	3				
9	4			8		5		3
8	3				2		4	
	6	5	9		3	8	2	

Spot the Difference!

**There are 10 differences between the two images below.
How many can you spot?**





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LOOKING BACK

Take a step back in time with us as we look at a series of past events to have occurred in the month of September.

1 year ago

Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars make it to the top of the UK singles chart with the hit Die With a Smile.

10 years ago

Jeremy Corbyn is elected as leader of the Labour Party, though his tenure would ultimately be labelled with defeat at the 2019 General Election in which the Conservatives, under Boris Johnson, claimed a parliamentary majority.

20 years ago

The fall-out from Hurricane Katrina, the costliest natural disaster in US history – which hit New Orleans and surrounding areas – becomes apparent, with \$125billion of damage and over 1,800 lives claimed.

30 years ago

Frank Bruno defeats Oliver McCall to win the WBC heavyweight title. The British champ, 33 at the time, sees off the American on points at a packed Wembley Stadium.

40 years ago

England win The Ashes, triumphing over Australia 3-1 in the series. They will also clinch the next series 'Down Under', before a long period of dominance set in by their great rivals.

50 years ago

The first episode of Fawlty Towers, named A Touch of Class, is broadcast on the BBC. The sitcom, starring John Cleese, Prunella Scales and Andrew Sachs, is well received, yet only 12 episodes are made.





Jealousy – the Great British Sport

Jealousy. The most thoroughly British pastime after queueing, moaning about the weather, and pretending we don't like Eurovision while secretly watching the whole thing with a takeaway curry. Forget cricket, forget football, forget the Women's Institute bake-off — the real national sport is seething envy. It requires no skill, no training, and certainly no ambition. All it takes is a sofa, a benefits cheque, and the ability to mutter, "Who does he think he is?" at the telly whenever someone slightly shinier than you flashes a smile.

Now don't get me wrong. Not everyone on benefits is like this — of course not. But isn't it funny how the loudest professional critics, the ones who have never so much as lifted a finger to risk a pound on their own business idea, are always the ones quickest to sneer at those who did? You could take out a loan, gamble your house, live on Pot Noodles for five years while building something from scratch — and the moment you buy yourself a halfway decent watch or nip off on a holiday to Spain, out come the pitchforks of jealousy.

"Oh look at him with his smart shirt... probably thinks he's better than us."

No, Darren. He doesn't think he's better than you. He just thinks he deserves a holiday that isn't on the isle of Sheppy. And you know what? He probably does.

The British Tradition of Cutting Down Tall Poppies

There's an odd cultural quirk in this country. In America, if you take a punt, work your socks off, and make it, people clap you on the back and say, "Good job, buddy. Living the dream." You drive past in a flash car and half the neighbourhood wants to know how you did it. They admire the grind. They'll even ask for tips.

In Britain? Different story. Buy a new car here and three things immediately happen:

Your neighbour squints through the curtains and decides you must be dodging tax.

Your second cousin says you're showing off.

Some bloke in the pub mutters, "Well, it'll get nicked round here anyway, mate."

We don't celebrate success — we resent it. We whisper

about it, chew it over, and secretly hope the successful person falls flat on their backside. Nothing gives certain people more joy than the sight of someone else's dream going up in smoke. You could start a business selling gold bars for a fiver and half the village would be delighted when it collapses, because it means they were right all along: "Knew he was getting too big for his boots."

Self-Employment: The Crime of Wanting More

Let's talk about being self-employed, shall we? It's not glamorous. It's sleepless nights, juggling bills, chasing invoices from people who vanish faster than a magician's rabbit. It's stress, sweat, and spreadsheets at 2am. But eventually — if you're lucky, if you're stubborn, and if you work like a dog — it pays off. You buy yourself a decent suit, maybe a nice watch, because frankly you've earned the right to look like you're not perpetually on the breadline.

And what's the reward for all that risk and toil? Congratulations! You've just won the grand prize of being slagged off by Sharon on Facebook for being "flash." This from the same Sharon whose greatest risk in life is deciding whether to buy Lambrini or Blossom Hill at the off-licence.

The Sofa-Based Critics

It's always the same crowd, isn't it? The ones parked on the sofa, daytime telly blaring, telling anyone who'll listen how "lucky" you are. Lucky! As though success fell from the sky and landed on your lap while you were scratching your backside watching Bargain Hunt. They never saw the years of graft, the nights of doubt, the times you stared at the ceiling wondering how on earth you'd pay the rent.

No, all they see is the outcome. The watch. The holiday snaps. The car that's actually got air-con. And that, apparently, is a personal insult to them.

"Oh, off to the Maldives, are we? Must be nice."

Yes. Yes, Darren, it is nice. And you know what else is nice? Knowing the trip wasn't funded by taxpayers footing the bill for your third "stress-related" sick note this year.

A Peculiar Pleasure in Failure

The nastiest part of it all is how people enjoy seeing others fail. It's not enough for them to suspect you're getting above yourself; they want proof. They want you to stumble so they can laugh and say, "Told you so." They want your car repossessed, your business closed, your watch on eBay. Then, and only then, will they feel content, because the universe has been "restored to order."

Americans call failure a learning curve. Brits call it a punchline.

Imagine two scenarios:

America: Guy opens a café, it tanks, he shrugs, opens a burger joint instead, and the community rallies around. "Good on you for trying again!"

Britain: Guy opens a café, it tanks, and within seconds there's a smug mob saying, "Ha! Thought he was Gordon Ramsay. Now he's back on Jobseeker's."

The Designer Watch Problem

Let's be honest: half the jealousy stems from visible success. If you buy a nice watch, you're not wearing a timepiece — you're wearing a bullseye. Never mind that you worked 70-hour weeks for years to afford it. To the sofa-based jury, you've become a criminal. How dare you? Who do you think you are?

Same goes for clothes. Turn up looking sharp and suddenly you're "pretentious." Apparently, dressing well is an insult to those who prefer to live in sportswear 24/7. And heaven forbid you drive anything more than a 12-year-old Ford Focus. If you do, you've clearly joined the Illuminati.

Why We Should Stop Apologising

The saddest thing is that so many of us end up apologising for doing well. We play it down, pretend we just "got lucky," mumble something about "hard times too" just to keep the mob off our back. Why? Why should anyone have to downplay graft and grit?

In America, you can shout about your achievements from the rooftops and people clap. In Britain, if you so much as mention you've had a good week, you're met with silence, side-eye, and someone whispering, "Well, we'll see how long that lasts."

The Punchline

So here's the truth: jealousy is a disease. And the worst carriers are those who've never even tried. It's easy to sneer when you've risked nothing, built nothing, done nothing. It's safe to sit on the sofa and pick holes in the people who got up and had a go.

But maybe — just maybe — instead of moaning about the bloke with the nice car, try being inspired by him. Instead of hoping he fails, try asking how he succeeded. And if that's too much effort, fine — but at least do us all the courtesy of keeping your bitterness off Facebook.

Because the rest of us? We'll be over here, working, risking, grafting, and yes — sometimes even enjoying the fruits of our labour. Designer watch and all.

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18 September - 30 October 2025

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We are keen for as many people as possible to share their feedback during our consultation, which begins on Thursday 18 September 2025.

Find out more

Come along to a public exhibition:

Maude Community Centre Station Road, New Romney TN28 8LQ	Thursday 25 September 2025 (4:30pm - 8:30pm)
XIX @ The Warren Golf Club, St Andrew's Road, Littlestone, TN28 8RB	Friday 26 September 2025 (12pm - 4pm)
Lydd Community Hall, Manor Rd, Lydd, TN29 9HU	Saturday 27 September 2025 (12pm - 4pm)
Camber Memorial Hall, Lydd Road, Camber, TN31 7RJ	Friday 10 October 2025 (2pm - 6pm)
Lydd Community Hall, Manor Rd, Lydd, TN29 9HU	Saturday 11 October 2025 (12pm - 4pm)

Visit southbrookssolarfarm.co.uk

Pick up a copy of our consultation booklet and paper questionnaire:

The Romney Marsh Community Hub,
Rolle Ln, New Romney TN28 8JR

Get in touch

For further information or to request a copy of our consultation materials (free of charge), please get in touch:



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Apps are your friend

Budgeting apps are a brilliant way to keep track of your cash, they can help you budget, alert you about excessive spending and you can even upload receipts.

Some bank accounts offer a service to help create different cash pots, whilst breakdown your average monthly habits, so you can keep it all in one (virtual) space.

Second-hand everything

Textbooks, clothes, furniture you found on the street - it's all a part of that student aesthetic. Remember, cheap is good, but if there is a story behind it, even better.

Seek financial support

Don't hesitate to reach out for guidance, and while you're there, check if you're eligible for extra funding based on academic performance, extracurricular activities or financial need. These can significantly ease your financial burden.



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A Design for Life... The Kevin McCloud Column

Designer, writer and television presenter, Kevin McCloud leapt into our consciousness with his vastly successful *Grand Designs* show on Channel 4. This month, the affable architectural business owner explores industrial style in our home



I've always had a soft spot for the industrial look inside a home. There's something incredibly honest about it; and it doesn't try to disguise what things are made of, or where they came from. Instead,



it celebrates structure, material and utility place – the factory, the warehouse, the railway arch – in a way that feels both contemporary and rooted in history.

One of the great joys of this look is its adaptability, yet the key is in how you deploy the elements. A concrete worktop here, a steel-framed door there; floorboards sanded back and sealed rather than carpeted. Essentially, you can just let your space breathe.

Lighting is crucial because the industrial look is defined by its shadows as much as its surfaces.

Think of anglepoise arms, bulkhead wall lights, or vintage pendants with enamel shades. Go for warm, diffuse bulbs rather than anything too stark. You want atmosphere, not an interrogation room.

And of course, there's wood. In a style that leans heavily on cold, hard materials, timber brings the warmth, whether it's a butcher's block island, that chipboard hipster look from a decade ago, a reclaimed floor, or the simplest of shelves.

The irony of Industrial Style, of course, is that it takes great care to look effortless.

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**HUB
ON THE BEACH**

We start this month with saying a massive THANK YOU to David Stokes who completed his Wing Walk experience last month and raised an impressive £1,358.81

Most of you may remember Paul Kingdon, our Dungeness to Folkestone and back, Marathon runner. Well, he has now decided to up the stakes and compete in an Ultra Marathon which is being held in Wales on Saturday 6th September. All monies raised will provide ongoing Health & Fitness classes and our Peer Support groups. Please help to show your support by visiting our JustGiving page https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/paulkingdonultramarathon?utm_medium=CA&utm_source=CL

Romney Marsh Community Hub.

Wednesday 17th – Hallett & Co Solicitors – 10am-1pm. Will be holding a legal advice surgery.

Wednesday 17th – Creative Writing with Emma Batten – 1:30pm-3:30pm - £7.

Wednesday 17th - Cancer Peer Support Group Coffee & Catch Up – 9am-10:30am.

Wednesday 24th - Diabetes Peer Support Group Meeting - 1:30pm-3:30pm.

Friday 26th – Ex Armed Forces Breakfast Club - 9am-11am.

Friday 26th – Quiz Night – Arrive from 6:30pm for a 7pm start, bring your own drinks & nibbles – Maximum teams of 6 - £6pp.

Mondays – Fitness – 9:30am-10:30am & Seated Exercise – 11am-12noon - £7 each.

Mondays - Crafty Club and Games Club – 1:30pm-3:30pm - £3.50 each.

Tuesdays – Walking Group – 10am-12noon - FREE.

Tuesdays – Yoga – 11am-12noon and Pilates – 3pm-4pm - £7 each.

Wednesdays – Seated Exercise, tailored for those with Arthritis/Stroke/Parkinsons – 9:30am-10:30am - £7.

Thursdays – Tai Chi – 9:30am-11am and Seated Tai Chi – 11am-12noon - £7 each.

Thursdays – Line Dancing – 4pm-5:30pm and Yoga – 4pm-5pm - £7 each.

Fridays – Legs, Bums & Tums – 9:30am-10:30am and Seated Exercise – 11am-12noon - £7 each.

1st Wednesday of the month – Stroke Peer Support Group Meeting - 1pm-2pm – FREE.

2nd Wednesday of the month – Arthritis Peer Support Group Meeting - 1pm-2pm – FREE.

Hub on the Beach, 103 Coast Drive, Littlestone.

3rd Wednesday of the month – Bereavement Peer Support Group - 1pm-2pm – FREE.

Mondays – Dance Fit - 6pm-7pm - £7 each.

Tuesdays and Thursdays - Seated Exercise - 3pm-4pm - £7.

Tuesdays – Salsa – 6pm-7pm - £7.

Wednesdays - Legs, Bums & Tums - 9:30am-10:30am, Fitness Pilates - 11am-12noon, Seated Tai Chi - 3pm-4pm and Zumba – 6:30-7:30 - £7 each.

Thursdays – Yoga – 9:30-10:30am - £7.

Fridays - Sunflower Singing Group – 1:30pm-2:30pm - FREE.

Saturdays – Washinkai Karate - 10:30am-12noon – Adults - £7, Under 16 - £5.

For further information and bookings please check our website/Facebook page or contact us on 01797 363888 for the Community Hub or 01797 458876 for Hub On The Beach or book online at bookwhen.com/HOTB



Church Update



By June Gooch

Food Bank. The main food bank for the area, continues in Romney Marsh Community Church on Tuesdays from 4-5.30pm. If you are struggling to feed yourself or your family, ring for a voucher to the Citizens Advice Bureau on 08082 082138. This will enable you to have 3 days' worth of dried and tinned food adapted for the size of your family. Fresh food is also now being made available.

The food bank relies on donations, which can be left in the foyer of the church on North Street during the morning. Most supermarkets have food bank bins.

With the extra heavy demand during the summer holidays, the warehouse is very short of nearly everything in regular use. So, anything that you would use normally, will be very welcome. Please respond to the urgent need. As more people are struggling with food poverty, the donations are not matching the need.

At present they have plenty of tinned soup and potatoes, tinned tuna, pasta and rice.

The mobile pantry van calls at All Saints Church in Lydd, on Mondays from 10-11am. You can register as a member by calling 07913 573403 (the Rainbow centre) or CAB, number above. After that you can buy a bag of basics for between £5 and £7 depending on the size of your family.

The Mobile pantry van is also calling at the Sunflower Community Hub on Rolfe Lane, New Romney, on Fridays between 10.30-11.30am. The conditions are the same, as for the Lydd van.

It has been reported that the HQ warehouse needs to be replaced, where all the food is collected together, audited, and all the paperwork and sorting is done. Friends from the churches could remember this need in prayer. For efficient running of the foodbanks, and accountability, all food has to be collected, audited, and sent back to the various outlets as necessary.

On September 21st, which is World Alzheimers Day, the dementia friendly communities on Romney Marsh are hosting on information event at the Maude Community Centre. This will run from 11am-2pm and all are welcome to come along and find more about dementia care and concern.

Brenzett, St Eanswith.

There will be a Patronal Evensong on Sunday, September 21 at 3pm. All welcome to this interesting church. St Eanswith was a 7th century princess who founded a priory in Folkstone in her time. The only other church with this designation is St Mary and St Eanswythe in Folkestone. In the 19th century, some relics (bones) were unearthed hidden in a wall in that church, and recent scientific research has established that they probably were the bones of St Eanswith, from the 7th century. They were probably hidden in the time of the reformation to save them from the dissolution of the Catholic church, which was taking place.

Brookland, St Augustine.

The next sung Evensong will be on October 12th at 6.30pm. For those in the choir, there will be a rehearsal on the previous Thursday, October 9th at 1.15pm.

Don't forget the pantry table in the church porch, both for donations and those in need.

Dymchurch, St Peter and Paul.

The church is still in need of help with prayers and intercessions, and an organist to play for the Sunday services. A bible Study group meets at the church on Tuesdays at 10.30am for refreshments and the study starts at 11am and finishes about noon.

The next fund -raising event will be a quiz night with fish and chips on Saturday October 18th in the church. The Fish and Chips will be provided by Beach 48, and the cost is excellent value at £12 per head. To book a place, contact Liz on 07811 614229.

There will also be a coffee morning on Saturday, November 8th from 10am with music from the Seaside Singers.

Dymchurch Catholic church, St Monica's on Chapel Road, is open for worship. There will be a regular Sunday mass at 9am.

Greatstone, St Peter.

The much-enlarged craft fair take place on the 3rd Saturday of each month. The next one will be on September 20th 10am-2pm. All invited to this really interesting fair, with many stalls of craft and edibles, spilling out into the church as well as the hall.

The new hall is very much used and enjoyed by many groups. See the noticeboard for details of any groups you may be interested to join. Especially if you are new to the area, or need company. One of the many groups is a drop in for anyone with children or babies, or anyone else, on Wednesday mornings from 8.30-10.30am. Drop in for a chat and a coffee. All welcome. Also on Wednesdays is a lively seniors club in the afternoons, from 2pm.

Ivychurch, St George.

The repairs to the church stonework are continuing and progressing well, and a specialist company has been consulted about mending the clock, and has made an assessment of what is required. The PCC is investigating grants for this purpose. If you have spare garden produce, the "Produce in the Porch" shelf would be delighted to receive it, and the proceeds go towards the church funds.

As a new venture, there will be an art class on Saturday, September 27th from 10am-noon. This will be led by local artist John Hoffman, and will be an introduction to the use of charcoal. The cost will be £10. To book a place email artinthechurch@gmail.com or ring 01797 344283.

The harvest supper will be on Saturday, October 4th and will be a three course meal with coffee. The cost is adults £15 and children £7. To book your place, email Margaret on mlwaite@hotmail.co.uk or ring Ellan Crooks on 01797 363461.

The village and church colleagues of Margaret Waite recently celebrated her 80th birthday. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the church as church warden for many years, and organised so much on behalf of the

village. Without her efforts, the community would be much poorer. Thank you, Margaret.

Lydd, All Saints.

The church hall for all Saints is the Hardy Hall on the Rye. It is, happily, very much used, with events happening nearly day. See the notice board for details. To hire, for one off events, or regular events, ring Maggie Clifton on 07905 433302.

A group of people in Lydd, collect items to help in Ukraine. They accept practically everything, in good condition, that would be useful to people in need. Big items like bikes and sewing machines, medical supplies, toiletries, household equipment etc. They don't want general clothing, but hoodies, jog bottoms, T shirts, thick socks, hats and scarves. They buy and convert 4 * 4s as ambulances. If interested in helping or donating, ring Gina on 07874 399422.

New Romney, St Nicholas.

The church is in a similar situation to Lydd church, with a reducing band of people to clean a very large church. Any help would be appreciated, even if you don't normally worship, but just feel for such a historical place.

The next book sale and coffee morning will be on Saturday, September 20th from 10am-noon. All welcome, and there will be the usual delicious cake available. The church was open for refreshments and tower tours on the day of the Country Fair, and £651 was raised. The church was also open for afternoon teas on 3 Sunday afternoons in August, and another £696 was raised. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make these occasions such a success, and all who supported them.

New Romney Methodist Church.

There is a service every other Sunday, so see notices to know which Sundays. A meeting point meets on Thursday mornings from 10am-noon, open to anyone who would appreciate some company. There is also a coffee morning, with refreshments on Saturday mornings. All welcome.

Newchurch, St Peter and Paul.

The harvest supper will be on Saturday, September 27th at 6pm for 6.30pm, in the village hall. The cost will be £12 and half price for children under 10. To reserve your table, ring Diana on 01303 311779. Please bring your own drink.

The next coffee morning with book sale will be on October 4th from 10am-noon. There will be none in November, but the Christmas and Craft Fair will be on December 6th. If you like to have a stall please ring Diana on the above number.

Romney Marsh Community Church.

There is a Sunday service every week at 10.30am, followed by refreshments and fellowship. Youth and

Children's teaching available during the service. Come and visit this time of vibrant worship and say hello, you will be very welcome. For any help or advice ring the church office on 01797 366855.

The midweek activities, the Youth Space, and the Toddler Group on Thursday morning. The toddler group meets on Thursday morning from 8.45 – 11am.

The food bank continues to meet at the church from 4.30-5.30pm on Tuesdays.

Snargate, St Dunstans.

There is a Holy Communion service every 2nd and 4th Sunday at 9am, followed by refreshments and fellowship. All welcome. There will not be a morning service on September 28th, because of the Harvest service in the evening, at 6pm. All welcome.

The church works closely with Brenzett church, and parishioners might be interested in a patronal service at Brenzett on September 21st at 3pm. See Brenzett for more details.

St Mary's Bay, All Saints.

Monday mornings at 10am, "Café Church" informal worship with a difference. All welcome to this informal approach to "church." There will be a Bingo session on Monday 22nd at 2.30pm in the church hall.

St Mary in the Marsh.

The Haywardians Choir practices every Friday evening in the church at 7.30pm. They raise large amounts for Charity and have regular local concerts, the next one will be held on October 4th, and will be a supper concert, beginning at 7pm. The evening will include the annual harvest supper. More details later.

Church Chuckle.

An honest politician, a good bloke with integrity, passed away and presented himself at the pearly gates. St Peter checked his clipboard and ticked off his name, and handed over to a guide to show him around. He passed down the street, and saw lots of ministers, some of whom he knew, in and out of their neat little terraced houses. Eventually he came to a mini stately home, and was handed the keys. His natural reticence wanted to hand them back, "Why" he said "have I got a big place like that, and all those good ministers and men of God have little terraced places?" "Well," said the guide, "godly ministers are ten a penny up here, but you're the first politician we've had for a long time!"

Wit and Wisdom.

Any fool can criticise, complain and condemn, and most fools do. It takes character, and self-control to be understanding and forgiving. Dale Carnegie.

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