

Ambitious plans to restore Folkestone Library but who's paying the bill?



A bold proposal has emerged to bring the much-loved Grace Hill library building back into public use — but while enthusiasm is high, the question of who will foot the multi-million-pound bill remains unanswered.

The Grade II-listed Folkestone Central Library, once the pride of a pioneering Victorian philanthropist, has stood dark and dormant since December 2022 after severe structural concerns forced its closure. Kent County Council estimated earlier this year that repairs could cost at least £2.9 million, a figure some experts believe may rise once work begins on the crumbling interior.

This week, arts charity Creative

Folkestone announced it has formally submitted an expression of interest to Kent County Council, aiming to restore the Grace Hill building and transform it into a hybrid site combining arts, education, digital spaces and a fully-functioning public library.

Creative Folkestone's chief executive, Alastair Upton, described the building as "one of the town's most treasured places", adding:

"It represents more than a century of learning, sharing and creativity. By bringing it back into use, we hope to give it a new life that continues that legacy and benefits everyone who lives, works and studies in Folkestone."

Continued on page 2

All aboard again! Kent on track for Euro comeback as Reform helps get the deal rolling



Kent's long-held dream of welcoming back international rail services has taken a giant leap forward — with Ashford International back in the picture and local leaders hailing a landmark moment for competition, connectivity, and Kent's economic future.

Virgin Trains has officially been granted access to the Temple Mills International depot in East London — the Eurostar Engineering Centre — after approval from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

It might sound technical, but it ends nearly 30 years of Eurostar's monopoly, unlocking the door for new cross-Channel operators and potentially restoring international stops at Ashford and Ebbsfleet.

Eurostar stopped calling at Kent's international stations in 2020, blaming post-Brexit border checks and falling

Continued on page 3

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The proposal is backed politically by Folkestone & Hythe District Council, which says the vision aligns with its cultural and community strategy.

Cllr Mike Blakemore said: "Creativity and community are the lifeblood of Folkestone and what could be better than combining them with learning in a newly restored library?"

But beneath the warm words sits the cold reality: wanting to save the building is one thing — paying for it is quite another.

The plan relies on future government grants, heritage funding and partnerships that have not yet been secured. And while Creative Folkestone say they hope to "work with community partners" to shape the funding case, locals have heard grand promises before. With public budgets stretched thin, many fear this may become another Folkestone landmark stuck in planning limbo.

One long-standing local campaigner, who asked not to be named, said bluntly: "Everyone loves the idea. But love doesn't fix a leaking roof and collapsing plasterwork. If £2.9m is the starting estimate, how high can it actually go?"

Another resident joked: "Maybe Alastair is planning to tap up 'Uncle Roger de Haan' again. That seems to be how half the town gets rescued!"

Even Cllr Blakemore conceded that enthusiasm does not equal funding, warning that "there is a long road ahead".



Alastair Upton plans to save the building... But who will foot the bill?

The building, first opened in 1888 and extended in 1910 thanks to a donation from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, remains under the ownership of Kent County Council. At present, library services continue from a small temporary site while KCC hunts for a permanent home.

A spokesperson for the county council said no commitment has yet been made to fund the restoration, and that any bid would require "significant external investment".

Local historians say the loss of the Grace Hill building would be devastating. But many taxpayers are equally wary of a blank cheque. As one Grace Hill neighbour put it:

"Folkestone is full of brilliant ideas. We just need someone with a brilliant chequebook."

For now, the town waits — caught between heritage, hope and a hefty price tag.

demand during the pandemic. But the ORR's decision has now cleared the first major hurdle towards competition on High Speed 1, paving the way for up to £700 million of private investment and 400 new jobs.

Martin Jones, ORR Deputy Director for Access and International, made it clear:

"With this decision, we are backing customer choice and unlocking investment. While there's still some way to go, we stand ready to work with Virgin as their plans develop."

Reform UK and KCC played a decisive role

Although nothing about international rail moves quickly, this breakthrough didn't happen by accident.

Kent County Council — led on this campaign by Reform UK's Linden KenKaren — staged a major rail summit at Ashford International earlier this year, bringing together 54 different operators and industry leaders to make the case for returning Kent to the European timetable.

At that event, Transport Minister Lord Hendy publicly confirmed that Ashford would be reinstated as a destination under the new operating licence. Virgin Trains also pledged that Kent would form part of its international ambitions.

Despite BBC Radio Kent's Dominic King insisting there was "no promise" to reopen Ebbsfleet or Ashford, Cllr KenKaren reminded listeners that both Virgin and the Rail Minister have confirmed their intention to bring Kent back into the fold — and she added that if operations don't start until 2029 or later, a new government could take over.

"And if Reform UK are in that position by then," she said,



Putting Kent back on track KCC Leader Linden KenKaren

"we'll simply reopen it as a matter of policy."

Kent's gateway to Europe could be revived Cllr Noel Ovenden, Leader of Ashford Borough Council, said the town "stands ready" to welcome international passengers once again.

"We are delighted," he said. "This decision is pivotal in opening up the cross-Channel rail market. It creates the conditions for the return of direct international trains to Ashford and Ebbsfleet."

More competition means more destinations, better prices for customers, and major economic benefits for Kent and the wider region."

While Virgin must still reach a commercial agreement with Eurostar, secure financing and safety approvals, the signals are finally pointing the right way.

For now, the station remains quiet — but Kent's international future looks more promising than at any time since 2020, thanks to national regulators, commercial ambition, and a strong push from Kent County Council and Reform UK.

After years of being left on the platform, it looks like Kent could soon be back on track to Europe.



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MEETING CANCELLED – BUT NOT BECAUSE OF PLANNED PROTEST, SAYS LYDD TOWN COUNCIL

Britain First protest fizzles out as nobody turns up – Council says meeting cancellation was unrelated

Despite being widely advertised across social media, no supporters of Britain First actually turned up outside Lydd Town Hall on Monday 3 November – and councillors say this further proves that last week’s cancelled Town Council meeting had nothing to do with the proposed demonstration.

The Looker understands that Kent Police had been notified in advance. In correspondence seen by this newspaper, an officer confirmed the force was aware of online claims that activists would gather in the town and would “try and get to the bottom of it.”

However, Lydd Town Council says the scheduled meeting was called off purely for procedural reasons, not because of any threat of disruption. A council spokesman told The Looker that the required paperwork and statutory notice were incomplete, meaning the meeting could not legally go ahead.

“It is absolutely untrue to say the meeting was cancelled because of any demonstration,” the spokesman said. “The agenda was not ready, therefore a lawful meeting could not take place. The fact that nobody appeared outside the Town Hall on the night shows just how much misinformation was circulating online.”

Far-Right leaflets distributed

The failed protest followed the circulation of leaflets around Lydd advertising a so-called “First Action Meeting,” promoted with inflammatory slogans including a call for “mass deportation.” Photographs of the leaflet, using Britain First branding, were widely shared by residents and caused concern across the town.

Local police officers are continuing to monitor the situation and encourage anyone with information or worries to contact them through official channels.

Reception Centre context

The tension comes as Peacock House in Lydd is being prepared as a reception centre for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The Looker reported earlier this year that Kent County Council had issued a comprehensive explanation to residents, outlining how the site will operate and why it was chosen.

Local charities, councillors and safeguarding professionals have all stressed the importance of calm, accurate information – warning that attempts by extremist organisations to provoke anxiety only undermine trust and community safety.

No Link to Reform UK

For the avoidance of doubt, this article makes no suggestion of any formal or informal link between Reform UK and Britain First.

Who are Britain First?

Britain First is a far-right political party registered with the Electoral Commission (Party ID PP12823). It is not a proscribed organisation in UK law.

The group has a history of controversy. In 2018, its leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen were jailed for religiously aggravated harassment following activities linked to criminal trials in Kent. Several social media platforms later removed accounts associated with the group after repeated policy breaches. Although re-registered in 2021, the party has faced Electoral Commission compliance action for late accounting returns.

Community over confrontation

Lydd is a town known for resilience and neighbourliness. Residents say the sight of an empty pavement outside the Town Hall on 3 November shows that most people reject outside agitators bringing hate slogans to a community that prides itself on cohesion and common sense.

Peaceful and lawful protest is a democratic right. Targeting vulnerable groups is not.

Residents with verified concerns about public safety should continue to report information to Kent Police via the usual non-emergency routes.

For factual details about the Peacock House project, Kent County Council has published public information on safeguarding, services and operational plans.

Residents urge council to keep Dungeness “raw and untouched” as latest quirky carriage-home plans emerge

Folkestone and Hythe’s newest planning applications have landed, including a proposal to extend a historic railway carriage home on Dungeness Road – but not everyone is thrilled.

The plans seek to re-roof the existing property and add a single-storey extension linking a 19th-century railway carriage to a second vintage wagon, both of which once formed part of the Lydd Railway Company line. When the branch closed in 1937, redundant carriages were sold off and dragged onto the shingle by workers who turned them into makeshift homes. One of those originals survives within the current building, its distinctive curved roof still visible.

A neighbouring Great Eastern Railway carriage would be restored to its original deep red finish and both structures united beneath a train-shed-style canopy – a nod to historic engine houses of the early railway era. Architects SJM Design say the concept was inspired by the area’s

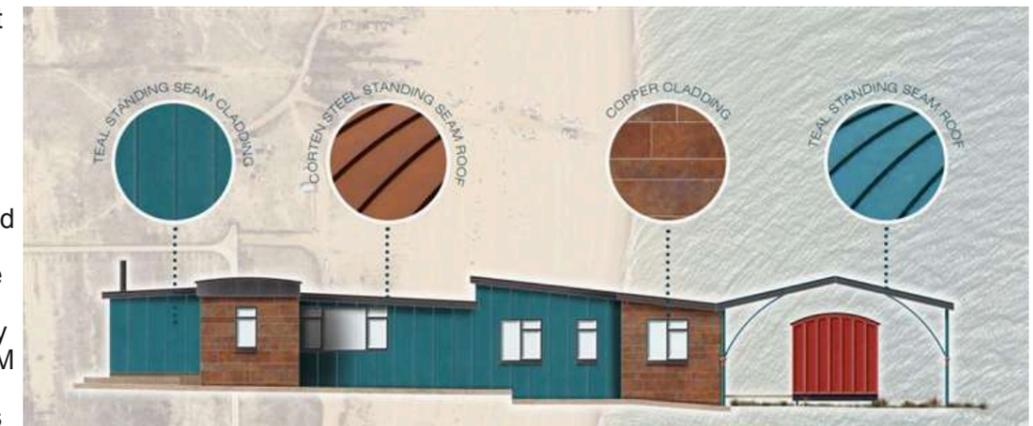
industrial architecture, including Pobble House and the WWII Pump House. They also point out that Folkestone and Hythe District Council’s recent approval of Mr Doodle’s “art-house” demonstrates the authority’s willingness to embrace bold, expressive designs.

However, some long-time residents argue that Dungeness is already saturated with modern “statement homes” and fear the latest plan could open the door to even more experimental builds. They say the shingle headland – one of the UK’s most unusual and fragile landscapes – should be preserved rather than used for ambitious architecture.

One resident commenting on the application said the area “should be left as it is, not blighted by designer homes that look like they’ve been dropped from outer space”. Another added that while the history of railway-carriage dwellings should be celebrated, “there is a big difference between restoring heritage and turning Dungeness into a brochure for London architects.”

Elsewhere in the district, plans have been submitted to convert part of an office building on Dover Road, Folkestone, into four self-contained flats, including new shopfronts at street level.

Both applications remain open for public comment before a decision is made by Folkestone and Hythe District Council. Whether Dungeness will see another chapter in its long tradition of quirky homes, or whether locals’ calls for a development slowdown will prevail, remains to be seen.



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Editor's Word

Deputy Editor
Peter Martin



Remembrance & Armistice Day Photos – And a History of the Armistic

Readers will notice that this issue does not include our usual photographs of local Remembrance services and the Armistice Day commemorations held at war memorials across the district on 11 November. Due to print deadlines coinciding with the weekend's events, and the paper needing to go to press before our photographers could process and upload their images, we were unfortunately unable to feature them in this edition.

However, The Looker will carry a full photographic report of both the Remembrance Sunday parades and the Armistice Day commemorations in our next issue, including services in New Romney, Lydd, Hythe, Folkestone, and across the Marsh. We believe it is important to acknowledge the solemn pride with which our communities continue to honour the fallen, and readers can be assured full coverage is on its way.

In the meantime, with Remembrance fresh in people's minds, we look back at the history of Armistice Day itself — how it began, what it has come to represent, and why 11 November remains such a significant moment every year.

The History of Armistice Day

Armistice Day marks the moment the guns finally fell silent on the Western Front, ending more than four years of carnage during the First World War. At precisely 11am on 11 November 1918,

fighting between Allied forces and Germany ceased, following the signing of an armistice agreement in a railway carriage in the Compiègne Forest in northern France. Although often mistaken for a surrender, the armistice was in fact a temporary ceasefire — but one that ultimately paved the way for a permanent peace settlement the following year.

By the time hostilities ended, the First World War had claimed an estimated 17 million lives, including around 887,000 British and Commonwealth service personnel. Almost every town, village, and family in Britain had been affected. The need to mark the moment of peace was widely felt, and in the years that followed, Armistice Day became an occasion for national reflection.

The First Two-Minute Silence

The idea of a two-minute silence was first suggested by South African statesman Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, whose own son had been killed in the war. King George V endorsed the idea, declaring that "the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance". On 11 November 1919, the nation halted for two minutes for the first time. Traffic stopped in the streets, factories shut down machinery, and people stood still in their homes and workplaces. The silence proved deeply moving and was quickly adopted as a national tradition.

From then on, Armistice Day was marked each year on 11 November with official ceremonies, church services, and silent reflection at 11am. Cenotaphs, war memorials, and Roll of Honour plaques were erected across the country to remember the fallen. The most famous, the Cenotaph in Whitehall, became the focal point of national remembrance ceremonies from 1920 onwards.

The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior

Also in 1920, the body of an unidentified British soldier, killed on the Western Front, was brought home and buried with full honours in Westminster Abbey. Known as the Unknown Warrior, the grave represents all those who died without known graves. The funeral was witnessed by vast crowds and became one of the most symbolic acts of remembrance in modern British history.

Remembrance After the Second World War

Following the outbreak of the Second World War and the enormous losses that followed, the meaning of Armistice Day changed. In 1945, millions more lives had been lost and the British Government decided that Remembrance should honour the fallen of all conflicts, not just the First World War.

To make it easier for communities to hold large civic parades, the main day of commemoration was moved from 11 November to the nearest Sunday, becoming what is now known as Remembrance Sunday. The two-minute silence and national ceremony at the Cenotaph became a central part of this commemorative tradition.

However, 11 November — Armistice Day — continued to be marked, particularly by veterans and military families, and in recent decades has seen a revival of significance. Many communities now observe both, especially when 11 November falls on a weekday, with work, schools, and shops pausing for the two-minute silence.

The Poppy and the Royal British Legion

The red poppy became the most enduring symbol of remembrance thanks to Canadian surgeon Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, whose wartime poem In Flanders Fields described poppies growing between soldiers' graves. Inspired by this image, American teacher Moina Michael began selling silk poppies to raise funds for veterans. The idea spread, and in 1921 the Royal British Legion launched the first Poppy Appeal in Britain.

The first poppies were homemade by disabled ex-servicemen, allowing them to earn an income. Demand was so high that the Legion founded the Poppy Factory in 1922, which continues to produce millions of poppies, wreaths, and remembrance symbols each year. Money raised through the appeal supports serving personnel, veterans, and their families — a tradition that remains as vital today as it was a century ago.

Armistice Day Today

Over the decades, Armistice Day has become more than a military anniversary. It is a moment of collective memory — an

opportunity to honour not only the fallen of the First and Second World Wars, but all those killed or injured in conflicts since. For many, it is also a time to reflect on the value of peace, the cost of war, and the enduring importance of service and sacrifice.

War memorials in towns and villages across the country continue to be the focal point for remembrance. Even the smallest communities gather, often with wreaths laid by veterans, schoolchildren, civic leaders, and local organisations. As survivors of the world wars have passed, younger generations have taken on the responsibility of keeping the memory alive, ensuring those who gave their lives are never forgotten.



Peter Martin

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Folkestone Sports Centre targets 2026 Pool reopening – But funding gap remains

The long-shuttered Folkestone Sports Centre is aiming to partially reopen next year, with hopes centred on bringing the swimming pool back into use by summer 2026. However, the new operators warn that the plan still depends on securing further funding.

The centre closed suddenly in July 2024, leading to 144 job losses and widespread disappointment across the town. Earlier this year, The Sports Trust – supported by Sir Roger De Haan – took ownership of the site, raising hopes of a revival. Since May, the trust has carried out surveys and preliminary works, and has begun upgrading pumps and pool infrastructure with support from Sport England and the Swimming Pool Fund.

A spokesperson confirmed that reopening the pool remains the priority, but stressed the project can only proceed if the remaining financial shortfall is filled. Other facilities, including the ski slope and sports courts, are still under review, with options being explored for future use.

“We thank the Roger De Haan Charitable Trust and Folkestone & Hythe District Council for their support,” the trust said. “This is a collective effort, and the encouragement from the community has been deeply appreciated.”

The Sports Centre first opened in 1972 and was previously run by Folkestone Sports Centre Trust, which folded due to unsustainable costs. The new operators also run F51 Skatepark, Three Hills Sports Park, and Folkestone Sea Sports Centre, and say they will keep residents updated as plans progress.

Calls grow for direct bus route to NHS Clinics at Shearway Business Park

Campaigners are urging the introduction of a direct and regular bus route to Folkestone’s Shearway Business Park, arguing that patients are being forced to walk long distances or rely on costly taxis in order to reach vital NHS clinics.

A petition has been launched by ophthalmology service manager Jennie Hariri, who says transport access to the site has been a “long-term problem” affecting patient welfare and attendance. The industrial estate is home to a number of healthcare services, including ophthalmology, dermatology, physiotherapy, occupational health, ultrasound scanning and diabetic eye screening.

Despite this, no buses currently stop within the business park itself. The nearest stops—at Ilex Road, Kent Road and Milestone Close—are between 12 and 18 minutes’ walk away, a distance campaigners say is unreasonable for elderly, visually impaired and mobility-restricted patients.

For residents travelling from neighbouring towns such as Hythe, journeys by public transport can take up to an hour.

Kent County Council (KCC), which partially funds bus provision across the district, confirmed they are aware of the petition and will respond in line with policy.

However, responsibility for bus routes lies with Stagecoach, the district’s main bus operator. As a private company, it is not obliged to run routes that are not commercially viable.

One source commented:

“We can’t force a private operator to introduce a service that loses money. That is the unfortunate reality, even when community need is clear.”

Campaigners argue that the current arrangement leaves vulnerable patients stranded. Many ophthalmology patients require pupil dilation after treatment, which temporarily affects their vision and means they cannot legally drive for up to six hours. As a result, many rely on friends, relatives or taxi services to attend appointments.

One resident from Dungeness told The Looker: “There’s no meaningful bus service for rural routes. I recently had to pay £90 for a one-way taxi to William Harvey Hospital. It’s simply not sustainable.”

Supporters of the petition say the problem highlights the broader lack of rural connectivity across Romney Marsh

and the district.

Ms Hariri said: “A regular bus service would make a meaningful difference. It would improve access to care, reduce financial strain and support greener travel. We’ve received consistent feedback from patients about the challenges of travelling to our clinic.”

She added that the clinics on Shearway Business Park are part of the NHS’s long-term strategy to move more healthcare into community settings.

“Our model reflects the future of healthcare, aligned with the NHS 10-Year Plan. We just need public transport access.”

Some local campaigners are now suggesting that smaller, more responsive operators could be brought in to provide local hopper services—short, circular bus routes linking

isolated communities to key medical and shopping destinations.

“Given the gaps in Stagecoach’s network, it may be time to look at smaller operators who can run local hopper buses. Patients are suffering because the current system doesn’t meet their needs,” one resident argued.

Stagecoach confirmed it is aware of the concerns, saying:

“We are in contact with Kent County Council to review what options are available, and we’ll continue to work with them to explore ways to improve accessibility.”

The petition continues to gather signatures from patients and families who say they are increasingly frustrated by what they describe as a preventable barrier to healthcare access.



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Father joins son for first lifeboat callout as RNLI Littlestone crew race to help 'struggling swimmer' off Hythe

A proud father shared the moment every RNLI parent secretly hopes for – launching alongside his son on a real emergency shout – as Littlestone's volunteer crew scrambled to reports of a "struggling swimmer" off the Hythe coastline.

Samuel Leigh, one of Littlestone Lifeboat Station's newest crew members, had only recently passed his assessments and become operational, when the Coastguard requested an immediate launch following a 999 call from a concerned member of the public at about 1.30pm on Sunday, October 26.

The volunteers had just returned from a morning training exercise and were already in their drysuits when the pagers sounded. Thanks to the station's readiness and the crew's quick response, Littlestone's D-class inshore lifeboat was afloat and on the water in just 90 seconds. The launch was led by Samuel's father and coxswain, Peter Leigh, who brought the boat to full speed towards the reported location off Battery Point, Hythe.

On arrival, the crew identified a spear fisherman in the water who had been mistaken for a swimmer in difficulty. After carrying out a precautionary welfare check and ensuring he was safe, the crew stood down and returned to station.

Although the incident was classed as a false alarm with good intent, it marked an unforgettable milestone for the Leigh family. Samuel, who is currently studying at the London School of Economics, becomes the third generation of his family to serve with the RNLI. His father, Peter, is a long-standing crew member with more than three decades of service, and his grandfather, Pat, served at Littlestone during the 1980s.



Peter later reflected on the moment, recalling the pride he felt serving on shouts alongside his own father in his younger years. Now, history has repeated itself.

John Kenny, lifeboat operations manager at RNLI Littlestone, said:

"I'm delighted for Sam that his first shout was afloat with his dad. The time and effort that all our volunteer crew members give to Littlestone is extremely humbling. It's a tough job that is only possible with the team effort that everyone contributes to."

Peter has long been recognised for his "selfless commitment" to saving lives at sea, regularly giving up family time, social engagements and nights of sleep to answer the pager. With Samuel now fully trained and operational, that legacy continues.

Samuel added: "I'm really excited to continue this family tradition of volunteering for the RNLI, and I am so pleased to be following in my dad's and grandad's footsteps. Hopefully this is the first of many successful callouts and I'm proud to be part of such a dedicated team."

The incident serves as a reminder of why members of the public are urged to dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard if they believe someone may be in trouble at sea. Even false alarms are welcomed if they are made in good faith – and on this occasion, it created a moment of family history for a crew whose dedication spans generations.



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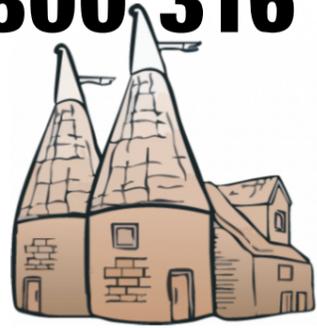
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We asked if you would like to write some articles for The Looker, so here is a little article on inspiration and how to go about it

Three Sheets To The Wind

How to master the art of short-story writing.

Many of us harbour ambitions to one day write a novel, but such a task requires inspiration, time and dedication. Most published authors will testify to committing their entire lives to the craft, shunning social events and adhering to a brutal timetable. It's no wonder then that many of us rarely get past the first page, which is why it's worth focusing first on the underrated art of a condensed version of awesome authorship – namely short-story writing.

Before you put pen to paper, it's important to understand what distinguishes a short story from other forms of writing. Unlike novels, which can sprawl over hundreds of pages, short stories are concise, typically ranging from 1,000 to 7,500 words.

A short story generally focuses on a single event, theme or moment, with tight plotting and minimal subplots. This brevity demands precision; every word must count and that's what makes this style of wordcraft unique and compelling to read.

The seed of a short story can come from anywhere - an overheard conversation, a fleeting image, a memory, or a simple "what if?" scenario. Often, the spark for a compelling take arises from the ordinary made extraordinary. Great writers are observant to the world around them, are willing to mine their own experiences for material, and always pay attention to detail.

Once you have an idea, consider its scope and feasibility for a short story. Is it narrow enough to be explored in just a few pages? Does it offer conflict, tension, or a turning point? Try to define the core of your story in a single sentence. This will provide you with clarity and focus as you expand your idea into a full narrative.

Short stories usually revolve around a character, and even with the constraints of length, it is possible to create memorable, three-dimensional protagonists. Consider who your main character is, what they want, the obstacles in their way and how they might change by the end of the story.

Consider, as well, a basic narrative arc beginning with exposition (introduce the setting, character(s), and the situation), rising action (present obstacles or complications that build tension), climax (the turning point or most intense moment of the story), falling action (the aftermath of the climax, where the consequences are explored) and finally, the resolution where the story concludes.

As you attempt your first draft, don't stress about perfection. Write freely and fast, and don't be afraid to put aside a project that isn't working... you can always return to your masterpiece later.



New investment to breathe fresh life into Hythe's Pennypot Industrial Estate



"It's been tired for years – this is exactly what the area needs," says local business

A long-overlooked part of Pennypot Industrial Estate is set for a major facelift, with ambitious plans submitted to transform a dated, asbestos-ridden structure into three modern business units.

WBA Hythe Ltd – a family-run firm that has owned the site off Dymchurch Road for decades – has lodged proposals with Folkestone and Hythe District Council to replace a dilapidated two-storey building with high-spec commercial spaces complete with upgraded utilities, secure yards and smart new frontages.

The existing building, once home to a plumbing supplies shop, is described in planning papers as an "unusable and dilapidated eyesore" featuring extensive asbestos sheeting. The steel frame will be kept and refurbished, but the rest will be stripped out to make way for modern, energy-



efficient "cold shell" units that future tenants can customise to suit their needs.

If approved, the revamped site would provide around 40 parking spaces, including disabled bays close to every unit entrance, and improved access for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Local businesses say the long-awaited investment has been sparked by the arrival of Aldi, which opened next door in 2019 and drastically increased footfall.

"Since Aldi arrived, the whole estate has been much busier," said one business owner. "Before that, parts of Pennypot had sadly been in decline for years. This scheme will definitely raise the game and attract more firms."

Architects KE Architecture say the redesigned layout will create a "clear and logical" site, with a smarter appearance and better traffic flow. Estate agents Smith Woolley also report "strong demand" for smaller industrial units, making the redevelopment a viable long-term investment.

A spokesperson for WBA Hythe Ltd added:

"This estate has served local businesses for decades, but it's overdue some attention. With Aldi raising the profile of the area, the time is right to invest. We're proud to bring these new units forward and hope they'll support jobs, growth and future enterprise in Hythe."

David Ian Furniture Ltd, which currently occupies part of the site, will remain alongside the new units once complete.

A decision on the application will be made by FHDC planning officers in due course.

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Splashing News: Leas Lift uncovers its hidden water works



Drone footage has given Folkestone its first look in decades at two enormous subterranean water tanks, rediscovered during the ambitious multi-million-pound restoration of the iconic Leas Lift.

The striking aerial images show engineers reopening the original tanks at the lower station—vast brick-built chambers once crucial to the Victorian lift's pioneering water-powered system. Hidden since the late 1800s, they are now being brought back to life as part of plans to return the much-loved attraction to full working order.

Built in 1885, the Grade II-listed funicular carried generations of locals and tourists from the beachfront up to The Leas promenade. At its peak, it transported millions of passengers and became one of Folkestone's most cherished landmarks. But after a braking fault forced its closure in 2017, the lift has stood silent—until now.

Thanks to a £6.6 million restoration project, including £4.8 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the lift is being carefully repaired, preserved, and modernised for future generations. And the rediscovered tanks are at the heart of it.

Victorian Eco-Genius

Leas Lift's interim CEO, Jo Streeter, called the find "a reminder of the ingenuity" of the Victorian engineers who originally designed the system.

"The restoration of the original tanks at both the top and bottom of the lift is a reminder of just how ahead of their time



this was," she said.

"These engineers pioneered water recycling and energy efficiency long before we used those words. By restoring—rather than replacing—what they built, we're keeping the spirit of the original design alive."

In the early days, water used to power the downward journey was simply dumped onto the beach below. That changed in 1890, when the lift expanded and the first lower tanks were installed to collect and reuse water—creating a self-sustaining system long before sustainability became fashionable.

Engineering on a Grand Scale

Earlier this year, engineers also exposed the upper tanks beneath The Leas promenade. Together, these huge reservoirs once stored up to 261,000 litres—essentially a small swimming pool hidden under the cliff—to keep the lift moving using nothing more than gravity and water pressure.

The upper tanks are now being carefully lined with glass-reinforced plastic to make them watertight while maintaining their original form. Down at the base, repair crews are working in situ to preserve as much historical fabric as possible.

A Return to Glory

When restoration is complete, the funicular will once again run entirely on water and gravity, just as the Victorians intended. The wooden cars will return, and the lift will reopen with a new visitor centre, café, exhibitions, and a newly rebuilt lower station—blending modern facilities with timeless engineering.

If all goes to plan, passengers could be riding the lift again in 2026. And with more than 36 million people having safely travelled on it since 1885, Folkestone is ready to add many millions more.

For locals, historians, and engineering enthusiasts alike, the rediscovery of the tanks is more than a technical achievement—it's a revival of a piece of living history.

And after years of silence on the tracks, it finally feels like the Leas Lift is building up steam—and making waves—once again.



Looker Guest Chef

James Martin

James Martin's Ultimate Jacket Potato

Introduction

Baked potatoes are having a bit of a moment, and James Martin's take on the classic winter warmer is probably the only spud recipe you'll ever need.

Method

1. Preheat your oven to a hot 200°C/180°C Fan/gas mark 6 to ensure your jacket potatoes get that essential crispy skin. Rub the potatoes with olive oil, then pierce them with a fork before placing them on a baking tray sprinkled with sea salt.

Cook the potatoes on the top shelf of the oven until they're tender and the skin is crisp, which should take about an hour. Once done, remove the potatoes from the oven and let them cool enough to handle.

2. While waiting, heat a frying pan to medium-hot, add butter, shallot, and garlic, and cook for two to three minutes. Then, toss in the

leeks and cook for another couple of minutes before pouring in the white wine and reducing the liquid by half.

3. Pour in the cream and let it simmer for three to four minutes or until it thickens. Season it with salt and black pepper to your preference. Then, quarter the potatoes and arrange them in an ovenproof dish. Drizzle the leek sauce over the potatoes and scatter the taleggio pieces on top.

4. Heat a frying pan until it's hot, then add the bacon and fry until it turns golden brown and crispy. Roughly chop the cooked bacon and sprinkle it over the cheese.

Ingredients

Serves 4

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 25g butter
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely sliced
- 2 leeks, sliced lengthways, then across into slices
- 75ml white wine
- 300ml double cream
- 150g taleggio cheese, roughly chopped
- Eight slices of streaky bacon
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Finally, put the dish in the oven and bake for 10 minutes or until it's golden brown and bubbling.



A Novel November

Get your eye in with one of these charming reads this month.

The Look
by Michelle Obama
(Nov 4th)

Beautifully illustrated with more than 200 photographs, including never-before-seen images, *The Look* is a stunning journey through Michelle Obama's style evolution, in her own words for the first time.



stops in one day. First, a Baltimore coffee shop; second, a store to buy a coat; and third, wherever this bend in the road takes him.



She shares how she uses the beauty and intrigue of fashion to draw attention to her message.

Exit Strategy
by Lee Child and Andrew Child
(Nov 4th)

Portrayed in film by Tom Cruise, the Jack Reacher series now reaches 30 books. In this, the latest, our righteous adventurer for troubled times will make three



Live Aid – the greatest rock concert the world had ever seen – Bob Geldof took a trip across Africa to decide how to spend the money he had raised for the Ethiopian famine. He asked Paul Valley to go with him, thus providing a unique and full eye-witness account of that time, and the four decades since.

Live Aid – The Definitive Inside Story
by Paul Valley
(Nov 6th)

In 1985, with over £100million in his back pocket from



Bread of Angels: A Memoir
by Patti Smith (Nov 4th)

Bread of Angels covers everything from the iconic Patti Smith's childhood in working-class Philadelphia and South Jersey to her rise as a punk rock star and her subsequent retreat from public life.

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Ypres on Armistice Day – 11th November, £86.00

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Hever Castle Christmas Lunch – Various Dates £68.00

Bruges at Christmas Time – Various Dates from £80.00

Rochester Dickensian Christmas Festival – 7th December, £29.50

ABBA Christmas Party Night with Two-Course Meal – 22nd November, £69.00

Bubbles & Bubl  with Afternoon Tea – 20th December, £69.00



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Dates for your Diary

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

Thursday 13th November

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

Friday 14th November

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

Saturday 15th November

Old School Trust Open Morning, New Romney, 10 a.m. (1st & 3rd Sat)
Littlestone RNLI Disco Night, Lydd Golf Club, 7 p.m.

Sunday 16th November

Christmas Craft Fair, Dungeness RNLI, 10 a.m.

Monday 17th November

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.
Dymchurch Belles WI, Village Hall, 2 p.m. (3rd Mon)

Tuesday 18th November

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Greatstone Meeting Point, St. Peter's Hall, 10 a.m. (1st & 3rd Tue)
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.
Romney Marsh Poetry Society, Old School, New Romney, 2.30 p.m. (3rd Tue)
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Wednesday 19th November

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
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 20th November

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 21st November

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



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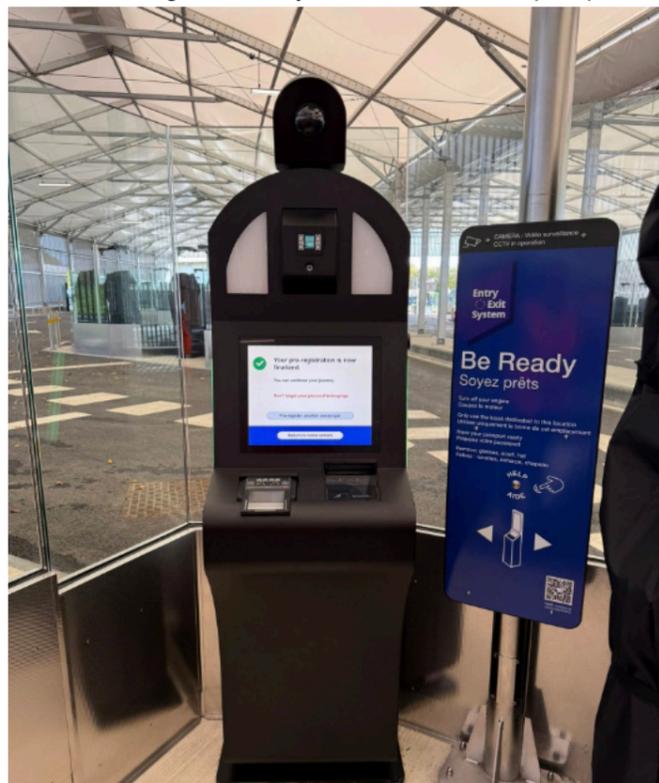
Fingers on the Glass: The new front line of border security

As another holiday season approaches, thousands of British travellers are discovering that the ritual of crossing European borders has changed. The familiar tap of a passport stamp and a brief nod from a border official are being replaced by a far more intimate exchange: facial scans, fingertip presses, and digital enrolment into a central biometric database run not by Westminster, but by Brussels.

This transformation is the result of the EU's new Entry/Exit System (EES), phased in from October 2025. Since Brexit, Britons are categorised as "third-country nationals" when entering the Schengen Zone, placing them in the same process as visitors from the United States or Japan. On a traveller's first post-rollout trip, border officials now capture a facial image and four fingerprints. After this one-off enrolment, subsequent visits will see the system automatically check those biometrics against stored records, gradually eliminating the traditional passport stamp altogether.

For children under twelve, fingerprints are not taken, although a photograph is still required. Parents may well breathe easier knowing their eight-year-old will not be wrestling a touchscreen while juggling a suitcase and a melting ice cream.

The justification is simple enough: enhanced security, clearer tracking of overstays, and less room for passport



fraud. But as Britain grapples once again with the question of domestic identity cards, many are wondering whether the introduction of foreign biometric checks marks the beginning of a broader cultural shift towards digital identity.

Once taken, biometric data is stored by the EU agency eu-LISA for three years after a traveller's recorded departure. Should no exit be logged, or should an overstay occur, the record can be held for up to five years. Access to this data is regulated and logged, with border, visa and certain law-enforcement bodies able to consult it. Supporters argue this is proportionate, secure and necessary, but others point uneasily to high-profile data breaches and the very modern problem of cybercrime.

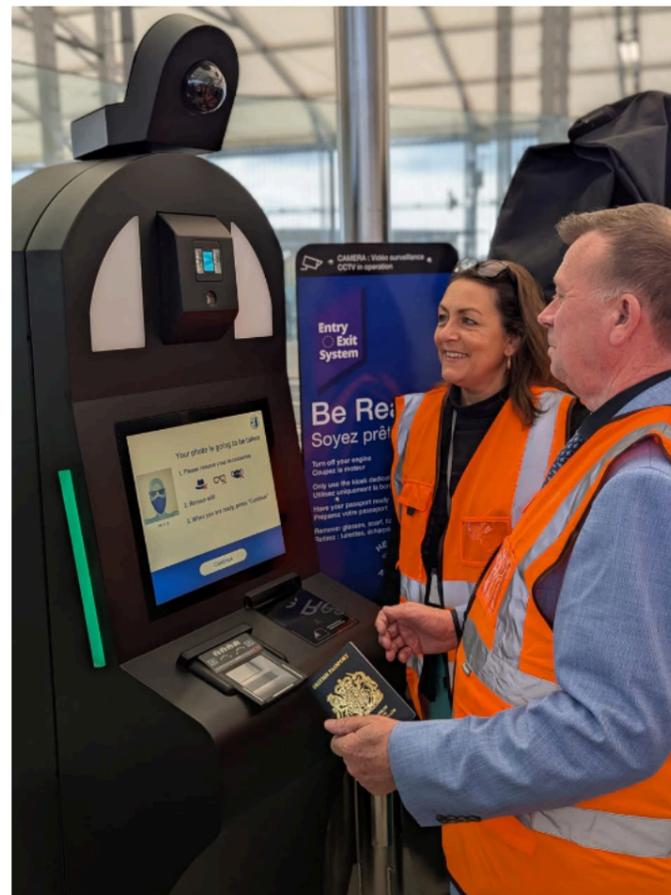
There is, however, a delicious irony to all of this. In 2011, the UK Government proudly scrapped its own National Identity Register and dramatically destroyed the associated database. The argument was passionately waged on grounds of liberty and privacy. British citizens rejected the idea that the state should hold such personal information. Yet today, millions of those same citizens are willingly handing their fingerprints to a foreign database in exchange for a few days in Madrid or a weekend in Milan. Freedom at home; fingerprints abroad. It is not hypocrisy so much as inconsistency — and it speaks volumes about the compromises people are willing to make for convenience.

At the same time, the debate around reintroducing UK identity cards has re-ignited in Westminster. Advocates claim that a modern biometric ID card could combat illegal immigration, reduce identity fraud and even speed up border crossings by linking citizens to a single, verifiable digital record. Critics fear mission creep, bureaucratic overreach, and the chilling prospect of a central database that—once built—may never truly be dismantled. They warn that a single corrupted record could leave a person stranded, grounded, or worse, misidentified. One question haunts the discussion: what happens when, inevitably, something goes wrong?

It may sound melodramatic, but history offers clues. Airport e-gates crash. Airline systems lock passengers out. Database errors have already seen innocent travellers detained or refused boarding. When your identity depends on a neat row of ones and zeroes, a glitch takes on far greater significance. Unlike a lost passport, you cannot simply replace your face or fingerprints at the Post Office counter.

Some futurists speculate that biometrics might one day replace passports entirely. Yet passports perform a role that biometrics, for now, cannot: they link identity to citizenship. A camera can verify that you are you; only a passport proves you have the right to return home. Despite the march of technology, the old booklet is safe for the foreseeable future.

All of this becomes even more relevant when one considers the scale involved. Over 50 million people in England and Wales alone hold a passport. Add the rest of the UK and the figure approaches 58 million. This is not a niche inconvenience for a small class of frequent flyers. It



affects the nation's annual summer holiday, the half-term getaway, the romantic weekend on the Continent, the football fans on European away days. In other words, queues matter.

Supporters of the system argue that modern mobility relies upon data exchange. We trade fragments of our identity for safer skies and more efficient borders. But such bargains must be transparent, and the safeguards well understood. Promises about data deletion, access limits and queue times must not evaporate the moment a machine malfunctions in the rain at Dover.

So will all this make us safer? Perhaps marginally. Will it make travel smoother? Eventually, possibly. But the immediate reality is that the new system will add friction before it alleviates it, especially during enrolment. And if Britain continues to balk at the concept of domestic identity cards while accepting foreign digital scrutiny, the contradictions will only deepen.

Freedom at home and fingerprints abroad can coexist — but not if we pretend one cancels out the other. A nation that destroyed its own ID database in defence of liberty must at least be honest now about the price of seamless travel. It is a trade we are already making. The only question left is whether we are making it with our eyes open, and whether we are prepared for the day the scanner says "no record found".

Until then, smile for the camera. Press firmly on the glass. The border has changed — and so have we.

Picture shows KCC Leader Linden KenKaren.

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Asylum seeker site at Napier Barracks set to be emptied and handed to housing developer



The controversial Napier Barracks site in Folkestone, long used as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers, is set to be emptied by the end of the year, according to a newly-published update from the Home Office.

The government now plans to “complete site decant” of the barracks by the end of December, before returning the land to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in January 2026. From there, it will be passed on to housing developer Taylor Wimpey, which has already purchased the land and intends to redevelop it for much-needed residential use.

This is the latest in a series of shifting deadlines. Ministers previously stated that use of the site would end in March this year, before extending the cut-off to September. In August, it was then revealed that the barracks would remain in use until 2026. The sudden update has therefore come as something of a surprise to many.

Napier Barracks was first utilised in 2020 under the Conservative government, partly in response to spiralling hotel accommodation costs for asylum seekers—reported at around £8.3 million per day at their peak. The repurposing of the former military facility quickly became a lightning rod for national debate, attracting both staunch criticism and vocal support.

Over the years, multiple demonstrations have taken place outside the gates. Only last month, an anti-immigration protest drew around 30 activists near North Road, where chants of “England” and “we want Starmer out” rang out amid Union Jack flags. One individual was seen carrying a

banner associated with the British Movement, a far-right group. Far-right singer-influencer “MissusKent” performed live during the demonstration.

The event was met by a larger counter-protest of roughly 100 people, underscoring the tensions the site has provoked within the local community.

In 2022, a High Court judgement declared the accommodation “inadequate” and found the Home Office guilty of unlawful practices. Six asylum seekers successfully challenged the conditions on the basis that they fell significantly below minimum legal standards.

Taylor Wimpey is no stranger to the area. The developer has spent the last decade building hundreds of new homes across the wider Shorncliffe Barracks site, and will now likely turn its attention to incorporating Napier into its ongoing masterplan.

Mixed local feelings
Among Folkestone residents, the looming closure continues to divide opinion.

“It’s about time,” said one local resident who asked not to be named. “The whole situation has dragged on for years. We need affordable homes, not rows and rows of temporary accommodation.”

Others, however, fear the consequences of rapid redevelopment.

“I worry that we’re losing sight of the humanitarian side,” said another resident. “These people fled war and persecution. Dumping them in unsuitable barracks was bad enough—now we’re sweeping the issue under the carpet.”

Some believe the controversy was inevitable. “This place has always been a powder keg,” commented a nearby shop worker. “Protests, counter-protests, police everywhere... It’s divided the town.”

There are also voices cautiously welcoming the change. “At least if it’s being turned into housing, maybe the area will benefit,” said one neighbour. “The infrastructure’s already stretched, but it’s better than empty buildings rotting away.”

Others remain sceptical of the developer’s motives. “Taylor Wimpey will build expensive houses none of us can afford,” another resident said. “Folkestone doesn’t need more luxury homes. It needs something realistic for locals.”

A legacy of controversy
From legal battles to heated protests, Napier Barracks has been a focal point of national debate over immigration, housing, and government policy.

While some locals will be relieved to see the site decommissioned, others fear that the nation’s wider asylum challenges remain unchanged. As one passer-by put it bluntly:

“They’ll move the problem on, but nothing really gets solved.”

What happens next will now be shaped by planning permissions, community consultation, and developer proposals—likely ensuring that public opinion surrounding Napier Barracks will rumble on long after its gates close for good.

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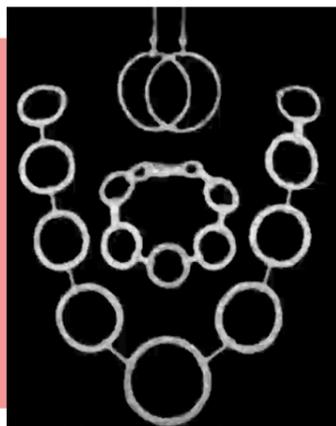
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Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

News from the 1990s

Shops and businesses in New Romney town centre made a big effort on Friday 14th December, 1990 with the slogan, 'Let's make it a Christmas to remember'. Father Christmas went along the High Street handing out sweets to children and the Salvation Army played carols. Other music was provided at various points along the street. The traders were asked to put a Christmas tree outside their premises and a tree outside the NatWest Bank was lit and hot jacket potatoes were served. There were children's amusements further along the High Street and most shops gave out sausage rolls and drinks and remained open until 9 p.m. With a Dickensian theme and lots of entertainment, it was an enjoyable night out for everyone.

In the 1990s before the local Rotary Club had a sleigh, they used to go around the Marsh in two lorries delivering presents to children on Christmas morning for a donation of £1 per parcel. By about 11

o'clock some of Santa's helpers were in a very happy mood, whilst others had to keep sober because they had to get home to wish their own children 'Merry Christmas'. This worked well for several years until eventually the feeling grew that the gesture was being abused, so after a while the Christmas morning deliveries were stopped. For a number of years, the Lydd Ambulance personnel had also taken a sleigh around the houses in the town at Christmas. It consisted of six reindeer mounted on pallets on a pickup truck and on a separate pallet was the main cabin area mounted on a trailer. The Rotary Club obtained the use of this sleigh in 1998 and decided to rebuild it, and the new sleigh made its debut a couple of years later.

The 1st Lydd Scouts had a special meeting in the early 1990s for parents and guests, which was a slide show presented by leader Roger Whiting of the troop's recent camp at Etrechy in France. The Mayor, Fred Wood-Brignall was also in attendance and presented Chief Scout certificates to Paul Albrow and Neil Divall. Lydd Cubs were also present to see two of their pack, Paul Clark and Craig Banks receive their Golden Arrow awards from assistant District Commissioner Mrs. Doreen Jones. The Scouts met



at their Dennes Lane Headquarters every Friday with the Cubs meeting every Monday. There was also a recently formed Beaver Colony for 6 to 8 year olds that meet every Wednesday.

Michael Howard, the local Member of Parliament, officially opened the new Lydd Ambulance Station in Kitewell Lane. It cost £270,000 and was completed by Messrs Jenners of Folkestone in ten months. The new purpose building will provide modern facilities and will be warmly welcomed by the 13 ambulance men and women working there.

There was plenty of excitement at Dymchurch Primary School where the children had TV cameras buzzing around them for a week recording for the Channel 4 programme 'History Workshop'. The programme shows the changes in education during the 1950 to 1990 period.

Boys football locally was thriving and one group of lads going great guns was the New Romney Under 13 Football Club. The team managed by local stalwart Gary Fagg played seven games and won them all. Playing their matches on Sundays, their run of success saw them perched at the top of the league and with the cup games to come there was every chance of a season to remember. Sponsorship was a big boost for the club and Mr. Fagg said that they were extremely grateful for all the help that 'Super Saver Discount' in New Romney has given and I'm sure the boys will be a credit to them. The photo

includes Darren Fagg, Ricky Easter, Chris Godridge, Simon Spiers, Lee Tinge, Craig Simpson, Dean Muldoon, Simon Bowden, Glen Bradford, Mark Thompson, James Dearing, Juston Dearing & Lehmon Gorham.

Two explosives were found on the Marsh on the same day. The drama began when the first device was found near Southlands School where people were enjoying a car boot sale. It was unearthed by a farmer ploughing a field beside Dymchurch Road, New Romney. A stretch of the busy A259 was brought to a halt while police waited for the bomb disposal unit. A visitor from Surrey found the second shell on Dungeness beach near the bird sanctuary. Navy officers exploded the shell which was thought to have been left over from the former naval artillery range on the beach.

Life Peer Sir Peter Imbert honoured the county of his birth by taking his title as Lord Imbert of New Romney in the County of Kent. Best known as the Metropolitan Police Commissioner from 1987 to 1993, Lord Imbert was a true Man of Kent. He was born in New Romney and went to the local Primary School and worked in the Town Clerk's office when he left school. He served in the RAF for two years before joining the Met as a constable in 1953. He was knighted in 1988 and received his new title in the year's New Year's honours list. He was a patron of the Old School Trust and a member of Littlestone Golf Club.

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Dear Looker

Hythe in Autumn

I like Autumn but it is cold and the days are short. The softer, subdued colours seduce me, the gold, the reds and browns, the yellows contrast with the strident summer hues. Today, daylight arrived in a haze of pinks and blues but by mid-day rain clouds had formed in the south-west with a storm brewing. Overnight a fox had taken my garden pumps from the porch and deposited one in the middle of the lawn with a hole bitten right through it and rendering the shoe unusable. My wife is taking advantage of the morning sun and re-potting plants. She bends awkwardly as she has a bad back but is determined to do what she can while she can.

On Sunday the church bells ring out loud and clear across the Town summoning their flock. Do people still go to church? For spiritual guidance; condolence; to celebrate life and hope of further life; to affirm their faith? I stopped thinking that the church had all the answers many years ago.

On the hills to the west of the Town do sheep still move around slowly on The Roughs like passing clouds? Does the shingle still breathe in time with the water clock? I guess some things will never change.

I am in the Autumn of my life but, like everybody my age, I still feel 21 in my mind although my body exposes the lie.

I still wear the watch my mother gave me on my 21st birthday. That forms my link with the past and the past with the present.

Guy Hayward,
Hythe.

Dear Looker,

I had the absolute misfortune of picking up your trashy newspaper last week when I was visiting my poor mother in Hythe. It was just sitting there in the shop, acting like it's some kind of respectable publication, when really it should be in the bin with the chip wrappers. I actually cannot believe you have the cheek to ask real people to pay money for this rubbish! What planet are you living on?

The whole paper is nothing but a right-wing bugle. Every page just shouting negativity and doom and gloom. Always attacking, always moaning, always pretending you know better than everybody else. It's honestly embarrassing. Do you think people enjoy reading that? Because I didn't. And I only read it because there was nothing else there except a crossword book and I wasn't spending £2.50 on that.

When are you going to wake up and smell coffee? This Labour government is decent. They are actually trying to

help people, not just talking big. And our local MP Tony Vaughan is one of the hardest-working men in Parliament, but you wouldn't know it by reading your paper. All you ever do is pick at him and twist his words and act like you know better. Well you don't.

He is working tirelessly with great diligence to bring investment and help this forgotten part of the country. And what do you do? Sit behind a keyboard and write moaning rubbish. If you spent half as much time being positive as you do complaining, we might all get somewhere.

And another thing – all this farmland you keep banging on about. Why do you care so much? It's just mile after mile of boring grass, empty fields, nothing growing, nothing happening. It's not like we're living in the 1940s. Nobody wants cows and potatoes everywhere now. Solar panels make sense, but no, you'd rather cry about the "view". Pathetic.

And you can pretend all you want that people are against solar, but actually normal people are not. Nobody wants nuclear. You know it, I know it, everybody knows it. So stop acting like you're speaking for the whole district, because you're not.

Honestly, I don't know how this so-called "publication" has been going for five years. Five years! Who is even buying it? It is doing more harm than good, stirring up arguments, spreading negativity and putting people against each other. You should be ashamed.

Yours,

Petter Tennant,
An avid Labour supporter that you despise so much.

(Thank you Mr Tennant, we did have to edit some of your letter as we do not think that using the F word is justified and as a point of reference, no one forced you to pick the paper up, and it is FREE. ed)

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Then & Now

PEOPLE FROM THE PAST



High Street, New Romney, c.1950s.

One of the oldest shops in New Romney was Clark's Stores on the corner of the High Street and Church Approach. Christopher Clark founded the shop around 1850 and for many years it was the main grocers shop in the town. Stan Goodsell took over as Manager in 1912, and the business was taken over by Headley's of Ashford in 1919 but the name was kept as Clark's Stores. Stan Goodsell worked for the Company until 1954 when Mr. Croucher took over as Manager. Headley's decided to close the shop in the late 1970s and it finally closed in 1980. The Shoebox then took over the premises until 2012 and since then, it has been a charity shop.



ARCHIE BOULDEN

Archie Boulden was born at St. Mary-in-the-Marsh in 1897, and the family lived in a big farmhouse. He went to the local school just along the road but after about two years, the family moved to New Romney. Whilst still at school, he used to caddie at Littlestone Golf Club and earned about 6d. (2½p.) a round. There were a lot of famous people playing there in those days like Mr. Balfour, the Prime Minister, Sir Phillip Sassoon from Port Lympne and Ambrose, the Bandleader. They always called the players Sir in those days. On leaving school, Archie obtained a job as a Boy Messenger at New Romney Post Office and sometimes they gave him a postman's job if they were short of staff. On one occasion, he had to go to Newchurch and back. He was given a spring balance and a three-foot measure. That was to weigh and measure the parcels that he would pick up on his round. He also had a whistle to blow when he got to the centre of the village to let people know he was there. When he got there, someone asked him why he was walking. Next day he borrowed a bike and never walked out there again. He also did the Dungeness round once and rode to Greatstone and then put on backstays to walk



on the beach to Dungeness. There were no roads down there then. New Romney Post Office in those days was on the corner of the High Street and Tritton Lane. He also had to deliver telegrams to Old Romney, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh and Jesson (St. Mary's Bay). He went into the army in 1915 and after training, He sailed from Southampton to Le Havre and took part in the Battle of Arras. Returning from the war, he became a full-time postman. In 1927, New Romney Post Office was issued with one motorcycle which had to be shared between two postmen. That went on for a few years and then there were four postmen and two motorcycles. In 1937, vans were issued and from then until 1962 he drove vans occasionally. In the early days, the mail was collected every evening at 8 p.m. from New Romney in a mail van pulled by a horse. At one time, Carey Bros. of New Romney had the contract, and it then picked up at Dymchurch, Hythe and Sandgate for delivery at Folkestone and the horse used to be stabled there overnight. Next morning at 4 a.m., the incoming mail would be picked up with delivery back through to Lydd. It arrived at New Romney about 6 o'clock and this was the process up until about the end of the First World War. By then the horse mail cart had finished and the mail was coming in by train to New Romney from Ashford. There were three deliveries in the town as there were around most of the Marsh. Archie retired in 1962 and was an avid follower of New Romney football team and could be seen at their ground most Saturdays during the season. He was the oldest resident of the town when he died at the grand old age of 105 in 2002.

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Gardening

By Michael Gooch



Budgeting Tips

By June Gooch



COMMENT: WHEN COMPASSION IS BLIND, COMMON SENSE IS LOST

At a recent parliamentary committee meeting examining the spiralling issue of so-called "illegal" asylum seekers, Reform UK MP Sarah Pochin delivered a statement that should have been uncontroversial: those who enter the country illegally should, quite simply, be removed. No drama. No moral grandstanding. Just the basic principle that a sovereign nation should control its borders.

But her comments triggered an immediate, almost theatrical reaction from Labour MP for Folkestone & Hythe, Tony Vaughan. Instead of calmly engaging with the very real concerns of residents along Kent's coastline – communities who witness the small-boats crisis at its most visible – Vaughan launched into what can only be described as an ideological tirade, denouncing the stance as "wrong".

Wrong for whom? Wrong for the criminal gangs getting rich from human misery? Wrong for the beleaguered British taxpayer footing an ever-ballooning bill? Wrong for residents who fear the social impact on already stretched services? Or perhaps, wrong for the lawyers and NGO networks who rely on the asylum industry for profit?

Because that is what this is: an industry. One that enriches a small number of specialists, consultants, contractors and caseworkers, while siphoning off funds that could – and should – support British citizens in need. Yet those who raise concerns are told they lack compassion, that they are heartless or xenophobic. The political tactic is as tired as it is dishonest: emotional blackmail masquerading as moral superiority.

Let's begin with a basic point of language. Illegal means illegal. It is not "inappropriate", "undocumented" or "irregular". When an individual knowingly pays a criminal organisation to smuggle them across borders, bypassing lawful channels, they are breaking the law. When they destroy their passports – a tactic repeatedly confirmed by police and intelligence briefings across Europe – they are committing another offence. And when they knowingly enter British territorial waters without prior permission, they commit yet another.

We are not talking about distressed refugees fleeing imminent slaughter. The vast majority passing through the Channel have already traversed safe countries such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain – nations with functioning asylum systems. Under international principles, asylum should be claimed in the first safe country reached. Yet somehow, the dinghies only ever point one way: across the Strait of Dover.

And why? Because Britain's system – aided by years of weak leadership and legal exploitation – is one of the easiest in Europe to game.

If you genuinely wished to seek asylum, the lawful route exists. Apply through a British embassy abroad, undertake

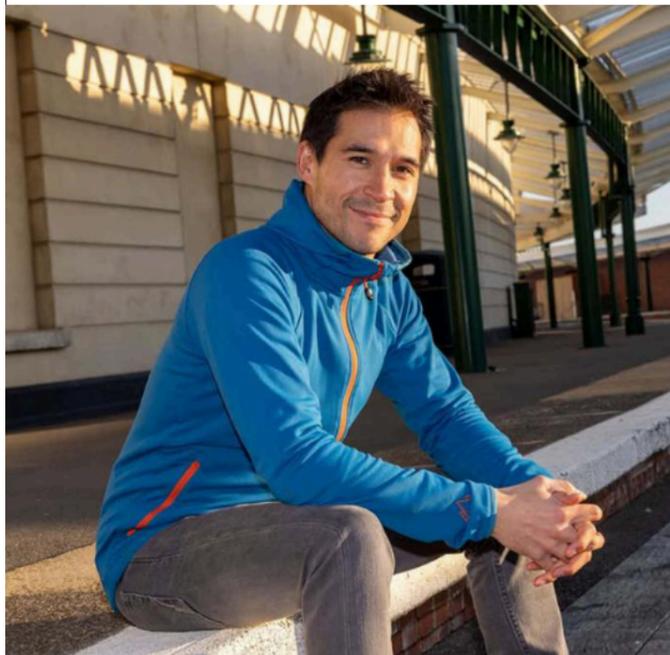
identity verification, pass through security screening, and if successful you will arrive through an airport, safely, perhaps even proudly. You will not risk your life on a freezing Channel, nor enrich a trafficker. But for some, this route is undesirable, because the checks would expose the truth. We are not merely dealing with economic migrants – though that alone is a problem for a nation already struggling with housing, NHS capacity and school places. European intelligence assessments have repeatedly warned that among the flows are violent offenders, gang operatives, extremist ideologues, serial abusers, and financial fugitives.

Are these the individuals we wish to admit unquestioned?

The British public deserve more than platitudes. They deserve honesty. And the harsh reality is that compassion without caution becomes negligence.

This is where Tony Vaughan's intervention becomes especially troubling. Folkestone & Hythe sits on the frontline of Channel crossings. Local residents see the boats. They see the coaches, the processing centres, the hotels. They see first-hand the burden placed on policing, councils and public services. It is entirely reasonable for them to demand their elected representative treat the matter seriously. Instead, Vaughan appears more animated about defending ideological purity than defending the interests of local people.

It is worth remembering his professional background: a highly paid human-rights lawyer. There is nothing wrong with that. But the public is not blind to the conflict of interest – a system that generates vast legal fees for those who specialise in appeals, injunctions and judicial reviews. If that same system is tightened, streamlined or enforced, those legal opportunities diminish.



The optics are not good.

Meanwhile, Mike "Dripping" Tapp, MP for Dover – another coastal constituency bearing the brunt – appears equally determined to frame any enforcement measure as cruelty. But what is truly cruel: returning individuals to safe countries of transit, or allowing a business model to flourish that sees desperate people drowned in cold water while traffickers pocket fortunes?

There is a curious contradiction in the rhetoric of the self-styled compassionate left. They condemn illegal crossings, but oppose every measure designed to stop them. They claim to support asylum seekers, yet defend the very routes that endanger them. They lament extremist infiltration, yet demonise any attempt to verify identity.

And when, God forbid, a terror attack occurs – as it has repeatedly across Western Europe – the same voices perform their ritual of shock, candles and platitudes. "Lessons will be learned." But they never are.

A functioning border is the first responsibility of any government. It is not extreme to expect it, nor hateful to demand it. It is straightforward common sense.

Local people understand this instinctively. It is only the denizens of Westminster, insulated by taxpayer-funded security, who have the luxury of pretending otherwise. For residents of our coastal towns, this is not abstract. It is real, visible, immediate.

We do not blame individuals who seek a better life. But we must be firm against those who exploit loopholes, endanger lives and feed criminal empires. And we must be wise enough to distinguish between genuine refugees and opportunistic migrants coached to game a system that was never designed for mass abuse.

The solution is not endless hotel bills. It is not indefinite appeals. It is not demonising voters who dare to raise concerns. It is robust processing, enforced returns, bilateral agreements with safe countries, and investment in properly managed routes.

Because the longer we allow chaos to reign, the more we erode public trust – not only in immigration, but in democracy itself.

Tony Vaughan and his colleagues would do well to remember this: you were elected to serve the people of Folkestone & Hythe, not to grandstand before Westminster's echo chamber. The residents of Kent deserve representation grounded in reality, not legal activism disguised as compassion.

Britain is, and always has been, a tolerant nation. But tolerance is a two-way street. It cannot function when exploited. It cannot survive without rules. And it cannot thrive when ideology blinds those entrusted to protect it.

The message from the public is clear: compassion, yes – but control first.

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With a wealth of experience, from Monday 17th November Hythe-based Penny will lead JAM's next free 4-week course in ceramics at Hub on the Beach.

With no experience required, you will have the opportunity to make and glaze pinch pots, Romney Marsh sheep and an angel or figure, or work on your own ideas; as seen in this article. All could be characterful Christmas gifts handmade by you. Over the weeks, experiment with simple biscuit glaze and colours. Each item can be made in a delightful rustic style or be subtly sophisticated depending on your experience, patience and preferences.

What might seem to be very simple pieces might

just be more complex than you think without challenge!

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Wildlife

By Kerry King

Autumn in the woods: A moment of stillness and science



It may come as a surprise that Britain ranks 55th out of 61 countries for its connection to nature. For those of us lucky enough to live along Kent's remarkable coast — from Dungeness and Lydd to Dymchurch, Hythe, and Folkestone — that feels hard to believe. Ours is a landscape that constantly invites us to pause, breathe, and reconnect. Among its treasures, the ancient woodlands offer a particular kind of peace — a place where time slows and the senses truly awaken.

As a wildlife photographer, I rediscover that feeling every time I venture out with my camera. One still autumn morning in Saltwood Woodlands, near Hythe, everything came together: a soft mist rising, low sunlight filtering through the trees, and the forest alive with colour. Leaves of russet, amber, and gold shimmered in the breeze — a quiet symphony of change.

Behind that beauty lies science. As autumn deepens, trees begin *senescence* — the graceful ageing of leaves. Chlorophyll, the green pigment of summer, breaks down to reveal the yellows and reds that were there all along. The tree carefully reclaims nutrients, storing them for spring's renewal. Then comes *abscission* — the gentle letting go — as each leaf drifts down to enrich the soil and provide shelter for woodland wildlife.

The photographs accompanying this article were taken to capture that fleeting transformation — vivid, natural, and profoundly still. When the image first appeared on my camera screen, I knew I'd caught something special. In a world that so often rushes by, the woods remind us of something simple but essential: nature still speaks. We only need to slow down and listen.

Picture 1 - "A DSLR camera captures the vivid colours of Saltwood Woodlands in their autumn glory."

Picture 2 - "Autumn's masterpiece unveiled — the golden heart of Saltwood Woodlands, just as the lens saw it."





Salutations Lookerites and welcome to another batch of TV and cinema reviews. In this issue we've got the hotly anticipated sequel to a 2021 horror hit, a zombie film from Sky, an action flick from Prime, a British crime flick from Prime, a spy movie from Sky TV, a nuclear drama from Netflix and a reminder of why British cinema is as strong as ever.

First up is the sequel to the 2021 horror hit and one of my favourite horror films **Black Phone 2 - On general release.** The original focused on the mysterious Grabber (Ethan Hawke) who would capture, mentally torture and then kill children. When his latest victim Finney begins receiving calls on a broken phone from the Grabber's previous victims. Finney realises he has help and uses them to battle the Grabber while his sister Gwenny frantically searches for her brother.



Without giving too much away the Grabber is back from the grave four years after Finney defeated him. This time around it's Gwen who is on the receiving end of the Grabbers evil legacy as she keeps having recurring dreams about the Grabber and murders he committed at the Alpine Lake Camp in 1957. During one of the dreams Gwen is contacted by her late mother Hope who had had similar dreams at the time of the murders.

Gwen sets about finding the truth behind what happened at Alpine Lake Camp and asks Finney and Ernesto, the brother of the last Grabber victim Robin. When they arrive they are immediately trapped by a heavy blizzard as Gwen sets about discovering the truth. When Finney receives a phone call from the Grabber who declares he wants revenge, the group realise that the Grabber is coming for them beyond the grave. When the Grabber attacks Gwen the group realise that they must again battle with the Grabber and uncover the secrets behind Alpine Lake.

The original was a genuinely creepy and scary film and in the Grabber had a truly scary villain. Black Phone 2 doesn't possess the same jump factor mainly because it deals with the supernatural. I still enjoyed this but it didn't reach the heights of the original.

Die Alone - Sky/Now TV is a survivalist zombie movie. In a post apocalyptic world that has been devastated by a plant-based virus that has created plant like zombies. A young man Ethan is frantically searching for his missing girlfriend Emma. Ethan is hampered by amnesia which causes severe headaches and memory loss. After encountering armed strangers Ethan is rescued by Mae who takes him to her secluded farm.

While at the farm Ethan attempts to piece the missing pieces together in the hope that it will lead him to Emma. As the truth slowly unravels Ethan begins to question Mae's motives.

Die Alone is an average zombie film with very few zombies on show, the farm must be very secluded. As is usual with most

zombie movies/shows the biggest threat comes from other humans. There is however a very clever twist that I didn't see coming and it does somewhat redeem the film but in general it remains an average film.

Dirty Angels - Amazon Prime is the latest action movie from the streaming network. While the US are withdrawing from Afghanistan a group of terrorists storm a school in Pakistan taking a group of hostages including the daughters of Afghanistan's Minister of Education and the U.S. Ambassador. The terrorists are soon demanding \$10 million per hostage and the release of political prisoner Sheik Al-Shamali.

When a Delta Force rescue mission fails they put together a new all-female team led by Jake (Eva Green) and consisting of Shooter, Geek, Rocky, The Bomb, Medic and the only male Dr Mike. Posing as a medical team they are helped across the border by Afghanistan's Minister of Education who is also willing to pay the ransom.

You can expect the usual fire fights, casualties, hostile and friendly and double-crosses. The action scenes are good and the all-female team are very authentic especially Jake (Eva Green 300 - Rise of an Empire) who plays the part well.

This isn't the worst action movie I've seen and like I say Green is a superb lead. Dirty Angels is a decent little action film.

James Nelson-Joyce is making himself a decent reputation although he seems to be typecast as a Liverpoolian gangster (Little Boy Blue, Time, The City is Ours) his latest role is as Wes in **Reputation - Sky/Now TV.** Wes is a happily married man with a young child but he is also a drug dealer supplying his clients with 'Clown' a new type of ecstasy. Wes is happy to keep things low-key but when his unpredictable partner Tommy is released from jail the violence begins to escalate and Wes' life descends into chaos. As Tommy's violence spirals out of control Wes begins to question his lifestyle but will he be able to break free from Tommy and the drugs.



This is another solid performance from Nelson-Joyce and Kyle Rowe as Tommy provides the perfect foil. This is a gritty British gangster drama and worth a viewing.

Lovers of British spy movies might want to check out **Black Bag - Sky/Now TV** Directed by Stephen Soderbergh and starring Cate Blanchett, Michael Fassbender, Tom Burke and Pierce Brosnan.

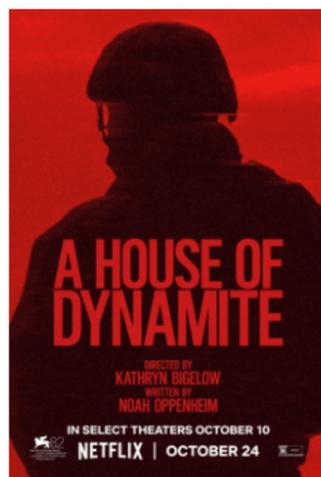
When George (Fassbender) is approached by his senior officer Marcham at the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) to seek out who leaked the top-secret programme 'Severus' he discover one of the five suspects he has to investigate is his own wife Kathryn (Blanchett) George invites all five suspects to a dinner and drugs them all to lower their inhibitions. Things turn violent when it is revealed that Clarissa discovers her husband Freddie has been cheating on her and she stabs him in the hand with a fork. When Marcham dies the same evening in his home George begins his mission to uncover the mole. So begins a game of cat and mouse.



Black Bag is a slow burner and relies on the dialogue to build up pace. It is slick but lacks the intensity of a Bond movie.

With the current nuclear threat causing times of trouble **Netflix's A House of Dynamite** is very topical.

The basic premise is a nuclear warhead is detected heading towards America, the initial response is one of shock and surprise, is it a nuclear warhead, who would have launched a sole warhead. The Americans immediately launch ground based interceptors, which both fail, while they are desperately trying to determine who has launched the warhead. The Russians deny the launch but threaten to counter any strikes from the US. With the warhead fast approaching a full evacuation takes place.



A House of Dynamite is a fast paced thriller that feeds on our fears. It delivers the action in the same manner of United 93 and September. It also jumps backwards and forwards in the same manner of assassination thriller Vantage Point as the story is delivered from different points of view. Idris Alba is believable as the POTUS in charge of a disaster and left with the decision whether to launch a counterstrike. The ending is depressing and delivered quickly after a slow but frantic build-up.

A compelling viewing.

Must of you won't know who John Davidson is but I can assure you that after watching **I Swear - on general release** you will be full of admiration for the man. I Swear is the story of Davidson from the onset of his development of Tourette's at the age of 12 through to him being awarded the MBE for his services towards Tourette's.



The onset of Tourette's while at school sees John expelled and dismissed by his peers it also puts huge pressure on his family leading to his Father walking

out. We jump forward thirteen years when John meets an old friend Murray who has returned to England from Australia due to his Mother Dotty being diagnosed with terminal cancer. Dotty invites John to dinner which John finds incredibly difficult but rather than be shocked Dotty invites John into their home. John tells his Mother he is moving out to 'give her a break' A brawl at a night club leads to John being arrested and Dotty tells him he may be charged. In the meantime, John gets a job supporting Tommy at the local community centre and he slowly begins to change his life around but after unintentionally calling a girl a 'slut' the girl seeks retribution, and John is beaten unconscious in a revenge attack.

Dotty finds John his own flat but he is exploited by the local drug dealers and falls foul of the police again. When John finds Tommy dead at his house John moves into Tommy's house. Dotty, who is now free of cancer after a misdiagnosis, then encourages John, who is not charged for his part in the nightclub brawl, to talk about his experiences of Tourette's and so he begins explaining his condition to others and starts groups for the families affected by Tourette's.

I Swear is the film of the year, so far, and must be seen. Robert Aramayo's portrayal of John Davidson is flawless and both film and actor must be considerations from the awards season. A special mention also to director Kirk Jones and Maxine Peake as Dotty Peter Mullan as Tommy and Scott Ellis Watson as the young John.

There are some very special moments in the film such as when John meets the family of a fellow teen Tourette's sufferer and as John and the teen engage in a Tourette's based conversation full of tics and expletives you cannot fail to be lost in the encounter.

This is a feelgood film that will make you laugh and cry. It will also leave you full of admiration for John Davidson MBE and reinforce that British cinema is the best in the world.

That's your lot for this issue until the next one, whatever you do make sure that you go and see I Swear.



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Residents divided as Cliff-top development in Sandgate faces scrutiny over stability fears

Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) says it is “carefully considering” controversial proposals to build three luxury homes on the notoriously unstable cliffs of Radnor Cliff, Sandgate. The plans have ignited a passionate local debate in a village well-known for its picturesque charm, vocal residents and a long history of pushing back against new development.

The application, submitted by architects Liddicoat & Goldhill, proposes demolishing an existing derelict property and replacing it with two large dwellings and a short-term holiday retreat. Designed with sweeping sea views, glass terraces and planted roofs, the scheme intends to blend modern architecture with Sandgate’s iconic “green band” of gardens that run between hillside villas and the beachfront homes below.

But residents are warning that the steep slope — already scarred by erosion — may not tolerate any further disturbance.

Fears of Landslip and Overdevelopment
FHDC has confirmed the site sits within a zone of “identified risk of land instability,” and officers say they are closely assessing technical reports submitted by the developer.

“We are mindful of the concerns raised by residents,” a council spokesperson said. “A detailed geotechnical and



ground-stability assessment has been submitted with the application.”

For many living nearby, memories of recent collapses are still fresh. The ongoing landslip that closed the Road of Remembrance, along with slides behind Sunny Sands and The Riviera, are regularly cited as grim reminders of the cliff’s fragility.

Long-term resident Anthony Nevill, who has lived locally for nearly six decades, described the risk of further movement as “severe”.

“My concern is not just the land,” he said, “but also the impact of heavy lorries and cranes travelling up and down a narrow hillside road. It only takes one bad winter and the whole slope could shift.”

Ian and Sandie Barker, who lodged formal objections, branded the development “over-ambitious” and argued the three-home footprint would dominate the slope and “overpower” the conservation area’s character.

Others were more blunt about access. “Trying to get a crane down there would be like driving a bus down a rabbit hole,” one neighbour commented. “It’s unsafe and impractical.”

Seventeen new objections have been filed since the proposals were first reported.

Developers Promise Robust Protection
Architect David Liddicoat insists that the challenges of



the site have shaped the project.

“Recent instances of land slippage are foremost in our minds,” he told reporters, confirming that engineers have already prepared a slope-stability strategy using deep piled foundations designed to anchor new structures securely.

The plans also include the removal of Japanese knotweed, an invasive plant capable of damaging foundations if left unchecked.

Planning documents describe the gardens as “neglected” and claim their re-design will improve biodiversity and stabilise loose earth with new planting.

Sandgate’s Planning Paradox
Those familiar with Sandgate are unsurprised by the lively debate. The village has long attracted a mix of established locals and new arrivals drawn by the coastal lifestyle, boutique feel and million-pound cliffside terraces once home to literary greats like H.G. Wells.

But its charm comes with a cultural quirk: the community’s reputation for opposing development — almost any development.

“Sandgate has always had a very special feel to it,” said one local café owner. “That’s why people move here. But it also means everyone wants to be the last person to buy into paradise and then shut the gate behind them.”

Another resident, who supports the scheme, suggested the village should be more open-minded.

“We can’t freeze Sandgate in time,” she said. “If we want younger families, investment and thriving businesses, we need to allow carefully designed, sustainable homes. Otherwise we’ll just fossilise.”

Supporters: Better to Build Safely Than Let It Rot
Those in favour point to the derelict existing house and argue the new designs offer a rare opportunity to tidy an untidy corner of the coastline.

“If the engineers are confident and the council is satisfied, then surely it’s better to build something of quality than let a site crumble into the sea,” remarked one longtime homeowner.

Others note that deep piling and modern engineering may actually enhance stability — effectively reinforcing the slope.

Decision Pending
With property values approaching £1 million despite the erosion risk, the stakes are high. Holiday accommodation overlooking the Channel would inevitably attract wealthy short-term visitors — and spark further questions about Sandgate’s changing identity.

FHDC is expected to reach a decision in the coming months, and with emotions split evenly across the cliff, few expect the debate to quieten any time soon.

Until then, Sandgate’s residents will continue doing what they have always done: fiercely defending both the charm — and the cliffs — of their remarkable coastal home.

My Community Voice

Cold calling!

Hello all

Just a quick message to make you aware that we have had a report of a chap going door to door in New Romney wanting to buy Gold jewellery. This has happened today (04/11/2025).

I would politely decline his services as my advice is always not to employ the services of cold callers as you don't fully know who you are dealing with. If you want to sell any of your possessions or need any work doing to your property it is always safer to initiate the work that you require yourself and ensuring that they are legitimate businesses and when it comes to selling items, there are plenty of ways that you can do this without making a transaction on your doorstep.

Thank you.

Steve.



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Young Cubs and Beavers discover the joy of apples in New Romney

“Life of an Apple” activity inspires curiosity and fun

Youngsters from the Romney Marsh District Cubs and Beavers enjoyed an engaging Autumn treat recently at the 1st New Romney Scout HQ, where the “Life of an Apple” immersive activity brought the wonders of orchard life to their doorstep. Children from 1st Dymchurch, 1st Lydd, and 1st New Romney came together for an evening filled with learning, laughter, and tasty treats. We started the fun with parachute games – then.....



Guided by Mandy, from the National Fruit Show, the Cubs and Beavers explored the journey of apples from seed to fruit. They eagerly sampled a selection of apples, pears, and dehydrated apple slices, while learning about the intricate growth cycle of apple trees, from winter dormancy to the vibrant blossoms of spring and the juicy fruits of summer. The importance of bees and ladybirds in orchards was highlighted, teaching the children how nature helps apples to thrive and trees to stay healthy.

The activity encouraged hands-on investigation, with the children examining the anatomy of an apple and asking insightful questions about its origins and characteristics. Mandy’s practical demonstration, including cutting open an apple, sparked curiosity and made learning fun. The Cubs and Beavers showed excellent listening skills and enthusiasm, immersing themselves in every aspect of the session.



Among the many fascinating facts



shared, the children discovered there are more than 7,500 varieties of apple worldwide, with over 2,500 grown in the UK alone. They were amazed to learn about the world’s heaviest apple, which tipped the scales at 1.849 kg and was grown in Japan in 2005. Apples, they learnt, are not only a staple of the British diet, but also versatile—bruised apples can be transformed into juice and cider.



The evening concluded with the Cubs and Beavers making their own apple juice. Thankfully, no fingers were lost in the juicing process, and everyone enjoyed the fresh, delicious results. Organisers expressed their thanks to the Ladies from the National Fruit Show for their cheerful and informative presentation, which made the event a memorable experience for all.

The “Life of an Apple” activity has certainly sown the seeds of curiosity and appreciation for nature among the young attendees, reminding everyone that learning can be both educational and great fun.

AND. . . . The icing on the cake was the 1st New Romney Beaver Colony celebrated their 43rd birthday – we are very proud to be the first ever Beaver Colony in Kent – still going strong after 43 years. Happy Birthday Beavers!!!



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General Knowledge Crossword #057

Across Clues:
 2. In front or leading (5)
 5. Legendary (6)
 8. Past tense of lead (3)
 9. Dangerous animal (5)
 11. Exchange goods (5)
 12. Provoking (7)
 13. Plant storage organ; light source (4)
 15. Frozen precipitation (4)
 17. First public appearance (5)
 18. Sick (3)
 20. Brought about (6)
 22. Intertwine yarn; join closely (4)
 24. Protective covering of a larva (6)
 26. Place for planes to take off and land (8)
 28. Military force (4)
 29. Receives payment (5)
 30. Subatomic particle (4)

Down Clues:
 1. Not any (4)
 3. Lift (4)
 4. Completely sealed (8)
 5. Aware (7)
 6. Grilled Mediterranean cheese (8)
 7. System of rules (4)
 9. Ring-shaped bread roll (5)
 10. Feeling of sorrow (7)
 14. Secured rope in climbing (7)
 16. Sense of self (8)
 19. Filled (7)
 20. Loud laugh of a witch (6)
 21. Detach a fastener (6)
 23. Top playing card (3)
 25. Flatbread from India (4)
 27. Narrow road (4)

Answers: Across: 2. Ahead, 5. Mythic, 8. Led, 9. Beast, 11. Trade, 12. Goading, 13. Bulb, 15. Hall, 17. Debut, 18. Ill, 20. Caused, 22. Knit, 24. Cocoon, 26. Airfield, 28. Army, 29. Earm, 30. Pion.
 Down: 1. None, 3. Heft, 4. Airtight, 5. Mindful, 6. Halloumi, 7. Code, 9. Bagel, 10. Sadness, 14. Belayed, 16. Identity, 19. Stuffed, 20. Ace, 23. Undip, 27. Lane.

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	Acorn	Crimson	Ivy
C	L	L	R	P	R	E	B	M	A	T	H	S	I	E	Amber	Crisp	Leaves
H	T	L	O	O	I	V	E	S	W	E	I	R	E	V	Birch	Dew	Maple
I	H	E	N	N	F	O	G	G	Y	R	C	R	L	Y	Bramble	Drizzle	Mist
L	G	I	Z	A	V	E	D	L	C	H	A	N	V	E	Breeze	Foggy	Moss
L	I	D	E	C	A	L	L	E	O	N	T	I	H	Z	Bronze	Foliage	Oak
E	L	P	A	M	E	R	E	L	G	O	W	I	V	E	Brown	Frost	Pine
E	I	E	S	T	E	O	N	B	E	A	M	O	A	E	Canopy	Gloom	Rust
R	W	E	A	K	F	U	I	L	L	E	I	O	R	R	Chill	Gold	Scarlet
F	T	T	N	V	R	E	P	E	S	A	G	L	N	B	Conker	Hedge	Twilight
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	L	E	T	E	L	R	A	C	S			

Write the hidden message here:

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

Sudoku Challenge

Spot the Difference!

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





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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 reflects on how journeys abroad have subtly shaped the way he lives and decorates his home.

Travel is the greatest tutor. You can pore over drawings, study floor plans or admire photographs in books, but nothing compares to standing in a space far from home, feeling what it does to you. The air, the light, the proportions - they stay with you. And, inevitably, they seep into the way you live.

For instance, Morocco taught me the magic of compression and release. In the medina of Fez, I wandered through shaded lanes that suddenly opened into

sunlit courtyards. That moment of transition where you move from the contained to the generous, made me think differently about my own home. Now, a modest, almost understated entrance opens into a light-filled living space. It's a subtle shift, but one that changes how you feel as you step inside.

In Venice, I developed a lasting fondness for terrazzo. I remember walking across the cool floors of a palazzo where chips of marble glowed softly in the afternoon sun. Back at home, I brought a fragment of that idea into my own interiors - my terrazzo-topped sideboard... every time the light hits it just right, it takes me straight back there.

Japan gave me a lesson in restraint. I once stayed in a Kyoto ryokan where the morning light filtered through shoji screens in a softest, beautifully diffused way. It was gentle, almost sculptural, and I've since recreated that effect with linen blinds in my bedroom. It's wonderful.

Then there's Mexico. In Oaxaca, I saw walls painted in colours so rich - ochres, pinks, deep blues. In my kitchen, I've



painted a single wall a warm ochre, a nod to that memory. It's balanced by cool grey stone and simple cabinetry, so it never tips into theme.

Living in the countryside, I've always believed a house should encourage a fully formed relationship with its environment, but in actual fact it should also be about all the influences from much further afield, where different cultures create something of a map of memories - all in the past, but being lived out around me, in the present and the future.



THE RANT!!!



“Welcome to Broken Britain: Please mind the gap between fantasy and reality”

Ok, I know, I know — I’m going to get a bucket of abuse for saying this. Cue the outrage, the pearl-clutching, the Facebook warriors tapping away in their unicorn pyjamas, calling me every name under the sun. But hey-ho, when have I ever not said it as I see it?

Let’s begin with a simple question: What in the name of fish-paste gravy has happened to this country?

I was born in the 60s, raised on post-war values, and taught that if you wanted something — anything — you worked for it. No “manifesting”, no TikTok tutorials about becoming a millionaire within 90 days, and definitely no “life hacks” involving scamming the benefits system. Just graft. Actual graft. Remember that?

My parents, bless them, were the definition of “mend and make do”. They saved, sacrificed, and eventually bought their house. No interest-only loans, no government-guaranteed magic money trees, just old-fashioned budgeting and the princely sum of about £4,000. And guess what? They still live in it.

Today, four grand won’t even get you a garden shed in Ashford — and that’s if you turn up with a discount voucher and a tear in your eye.

But despite the world being skint, we weren’t poverty-stricken. My parents worked, we had food, clean clothes, and holidays. Not Marbella. Not the Maldives. Not a yoga retreat called “Reconnect With Your Inner Tree”. No — Yorkshire. Or if we were feeling rebellious, Butlins at Bognor.

Once, a friend of mine went to Disney World. DISNEY WORLD!!!. I practically needed counselling. My grandad looked at me and said, “Well get a good job and maybe you can go there one day.”

No “manifest your dreams”. No “write to the council and demand a Mickey Mouse hardship fund”. Just: Work hard, earn it.

So I did. Strawberry picking. Potato picking — which should be classed as an Olympic sport. Grass cutting. Caddying at Littlestone Golf Course, where the golf bags weighed more than me and by the 10th hole I looked like a collapsed deckchair. But I earned enough to buy my Airfix kits — 75p each, glue and paint included if I’d been extra useful.

Fast-forward 50 years.....Now?

Apparently “work” is something previous generations did because they didn’t have Wi-Fi.

What happened? No genuinely, what happened?

Because something in this country has snapped cleaner than a KitKat in a freezer. We now live in a world where being a responsible taxpayer makes you the village idiot. The more you contribute, the more you get fleeced. Meanwhile, if you know how to fill out the right forms, cry on cue, and get a doctor to say little Tarquin the Third has “educational anxiety”, you get showered with cash like it’s game show confetti.

I didn’t even know I was severely dyslexic until my late 20s. Back at school, it wasn’t called dyslexia — it was called “stupid.” Now, apparently, that qualifies you for a government grant, a support worker, a therapy dog, a laptop, and possibly a personal chauffeur.

And that brings me neatly to the big show: SEND funding.

Brace yourself, because here comes the part where the internet lynch mob lights the torches.

I sit in KCC budget meetings — real ones — with real numbers. And I’ve seen things that would make a mathematician faint. I’m talking about kids who absolutely deserve good education — every parent wants that — but the system has turned into a free-for-all Disneyland of spending with no financial common sense.

Here’s a totally hypothetical (but absolutely true) example: Mum and Dad live in a lovely 4-bed detached. Dad runs an engineering firm, drives a £155,000 AMG Mercedes. Mum has a shiny electric VW camper van. Their son goes to a great school in Ashford. So far, so normal.

But instead of Mum driving the child to school — in the camper van she uses for weekend glamping and hot-tub Instagramming — a taxi picks him up. Not a local taxi. Not even a reasonably-priced one.

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Twice a day. £400 a day.....£2,000 a week.....£78,000 a year just in transport.

That’s the same as sending the kid to Eton — with pocket money.

And you know what the parents pay? Nothing. Not. One. Penny.

Because it’s not means tested. Why? Because the government, in its stunning wisdom, has labelled it a statutory right.

Meanwhile, those of us who work 50-60 hours, pay 40% tax, and still check our bank balance before daring to order a takeaway, get told to “tighten belts”.

Funny, because there are people out there with belts so loose they’ve turned them into skipping ropes.

Some parents have figured out how to self-diagnose their kids with ADHD online, fill out the right forms, and boom: £400 a month.Then PIP. Then disability. £740 a month. Right up to age 24.

I know someone — again, purely “theoretical” of course — who cannot work due to “anxiety”.

But somehow manages to go down the pub four or five nights a week. Marvellous medical miracle, that.

Too anxious to work, not anxious enough to drink San Miguel and play pool until closing time.

And here’s me, counting pennies before ordering a steak.

Someone recently called them the “Red Bull and roll-ups brigade”. Apparently they’ve modernised. It’s now Red Bull and vapes.

Let’s get to the punchline: KCC is spending £350 million a year on SEND.Plus £90 million on transport.

How is council tax going up every year? THIS.This is how.

Not potholes. Not libraries. Not bins. Not parks.

Chauffeur-driven children in £400-a-day taxis while mum sits at home polishing the camper van.

Is it cruel to say it? Maybe.

Is it true? Completely.

And here’s the real tragedy... We’ve created a society where hard work is punished, responsibility is optional, and taxpayers are treated like cattle. The more you give, the more they take — and the more they tell you you’re privileged for doing it.

Britain isn’t broken because of immigrants, Brexit, the bankers, the Tories, Labour, COVID, or whoever this week’s scapegoat is.

Britain is broken because:

entitlement has replaced effort

benefits have replaced responsibility

and common sense has been hunted to extinction

You can’t run a country where half the people carry on their backs a system designed for everyone to climb aboard and dangle their feet.

So yes, I’ll say it loud: The country is broken. The economy is broken.

And the system is being milked dry — legally — by people who know exactly how to play it.

Meanwhile, the rest of us?

We work. We pay. We shut up. We get told we’re selfish for questioning it.

Well, sorry, but no.

If you want a country that works, you need a country where WORK means something.

Where support is a safety net — not a lifestyle.

Where responsibility exists.

Where taxpayers aren’t walking cash machines.

Until then?

Welcome to Broken Britain.

Population: All of us.

NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT – AND YES, HE’S STILL RANTING!

Warning: May cause uncontrollable nodding, eye-rolling, and laughing out loud in public.

For years, Kent’s very own grump-in-chief, David Wimble, has been ranting about everything from potholes and politicians to seagulls who steal chips with military precision.

About two years ago, we started publishing his rants... and, let’s be honest, you lot LOVED it.

Apparently nothing makes people happier than watching someone else lose their temper in print.

Well, brace yourselves – because in the New Year we’re releasing:

📖 “The Best of The Rant” – The Book! 📖

- ✔ Over 100 of his published rants
- ✔ PLUS around 50 we didn’t dare publish (until now...)
- ✔ Often near the knuckle
- ✔ Always what most of you are secretly thinking

From local madness to national nonsense, no target is safe. It’s sharp, it’s funny, it’s occasionally outrageous – and it’s guaranteed to make you say: “He’s not wrong, though...”

More details to come soon – so keep an eye out.

Because Kent’s grumpiest man is about to hit the bookshelves...

...and he’s only just getting started. 🗨️🗨️

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Church Update

By June Gooch

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