

## Reform UK Speaks for the Marsh While the Greens Sleepwalk Into Environmental Disaster



By our Political Correspondent Peter Bird

If the people of Romney Marsh are angry about the tidal wave of solar and BESS mega-schemes threatening to engulf their homes, heritage and farmland, they should look squarely at those responsible. And—let's be absolutely clear—that responsibility lies entirely with the Green Party and their Liberal-Labour allies who waved these developments through with the enthusiasm of a group who neither understand nor value the Marsh, its history, or its people.

Last week, Reform UK's David Wimble, KCC Cabinet Member for Climate and Energy, laid it out plainly: "If you oppose solar projects on Romney Marsh, you only have

the Green Party to blame." It's a statement as bold as it is accurate—because the Greens, led locally by Councillor Jim Martin and backed loyally by Labour, formally told the Secretary of State that Folkestone & Hythe District Council supports renewable mega-projects on the Marsh.

This wasn't a small procedural note. It was a political green light for industrial-scale solarisation—rubber-stamped in Westminster by those who should have been defending residents, not selling their landscape down the river.

Yet, it wasn't a consensus. Far from it. The entire Conservative group, former independent councillor Paul Thomas, and Reform councillor

Continued on page 4

## Sea Water Scandal: Southern Water Slammed as Romney Marsh Beaches Sink to Poor Rating yet Again

Romney Marsh's struggling tourism economy has been dealt another devastating blow this week as Dymchurch and Littlestone beaches were once again branded 'poor' in the Environment Agency's latest bathing water classifications — a verdict that has left residents furious and businesses despairing.

For Littlestone, this marks the third year running at the lowest possible rating. Dymchurch now carries the shameful tag for the second consecutive year. And for many Marsh residents, patience with Southern Water has not just run out — it has evaporated.

This fresh blow comes barely weeks after millions of biobeads were released into the sea, an environmental catastrophe covered in detail in our previous edition. Locals are now asking how many disasters the community must endure before the company responsible is forced to change.

While the Environment Agency (EA) celebrated an improvement at Deal Castle — now categorised as 'good' — there is little to cheer about on Romney Marsh, where the water quality remains stubbornly unacceptable.

Continued on page 2

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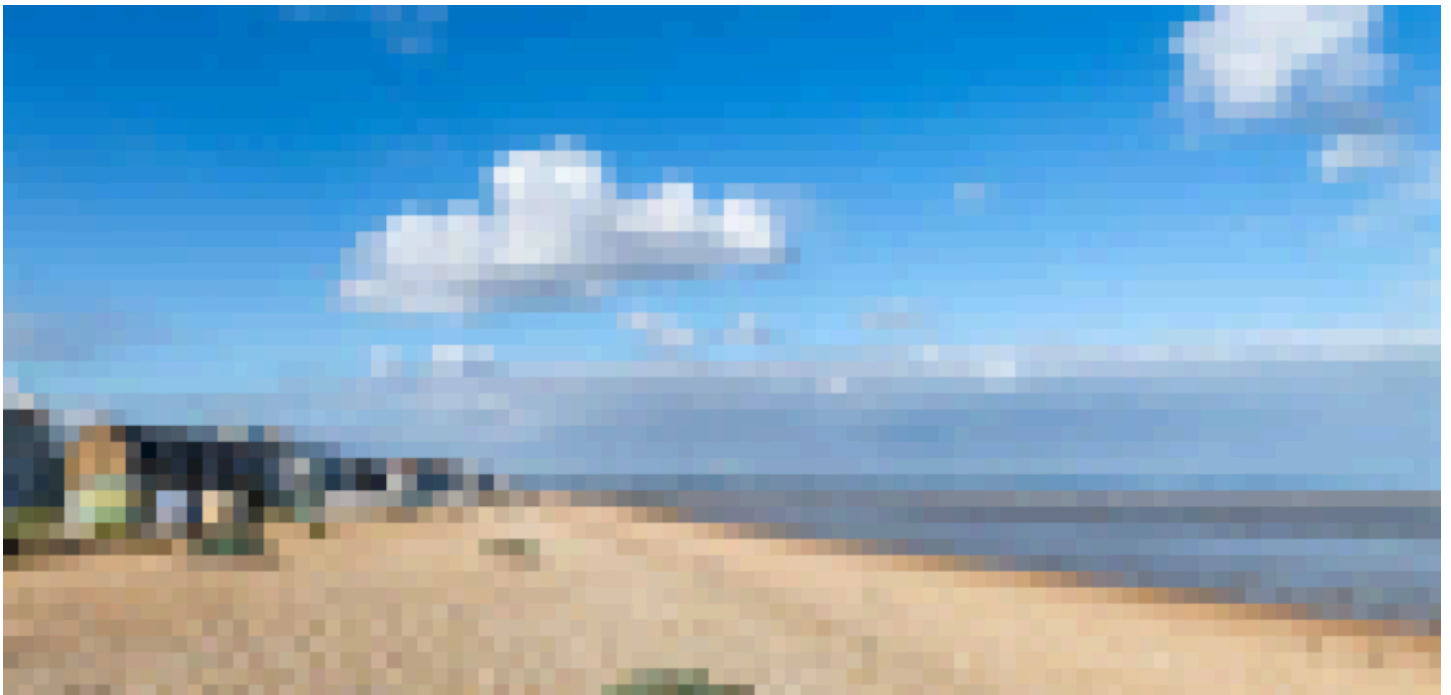
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**“Another Year, Another Failure”**

Out on the promenades this week, frustration was palpable.

Local Janice Milton in Dymchurch told The Looker: “We rely on tourists. We rely on swimmers. We rely on families coming here in summer. Southern Water’s failures are costing us money, costing us visitors, and trashing Romney Marsh’s reputation. It’s always excuses, never solutions.”

Beach hut renter Tom Willis was even blunter: “We’re sick of it. It’s one disaster after another — sewage, biobeads, constant failures — and nothing ever improves. Littlestone’s been rated ‘poor’ for three years now. If this

was happening in Brighton or Bournemouth, heads would roll.”

**Bathing Water Standards: Romney Marsh Left Behind**  
Between May and September, the EA takes up to 20 samples at each location, testing for faecal bacteria including E. coli and intestinal enterococci — markers of waste pollution in the water.

Across the country, 87% of sites are now rated ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

But Romney Marsh continues to lag behind, creating a two-

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tier coastline where families elsewhere enjoy safe waters while Marsh residents and visitors are left with permanent warning signs and damaged confidence.

Though the beaches technically remain open, visitors are advised not to enter the sea at Dymchurch or Littlestone — hardly a slogan for a region trying to rebuild its tourism appeal.

**“A Threat to Our Economy — and Our Reputation”**

Local shop owner George Partridge from Littlestone warned:

“If people see that dreaded red ‘poor’ rating, they will go elsewhere. This isn’t a one-off — this is now a pattern, and the pattern spells trouble.”

The sense of injustice is amplified by the EA’s upbeat commentary on Deal Castle’s improvement. Romney Marsh — battling the fallout from Southern Water’s repeated environmental failures — has been left behind again.

**Southern Water: Where Is the Accountability?**

Public anger has only intensified since the biobead pollution scandal, in which Southern Water admitted responsibility after thick deposits of plastic filtration pellets washed up along the coast.

Fisherman Ray Collins from St Mary’s Bay summed up the mood: “How many more times do we have to watch our sea being poisoned? Biobeads one month, sewage the next, now more dire water ratings. Southern Water couldn’t manage a paddling pool, let alone the entire coastline.”

Despite the company’s repeated pledges to “learn lessons,”

Romney Marsh residents say the results speak for themselves — and the results are not good.

**Political and Community Leadership Needed**

While Deal’s mayor praised community pressure for turning the tide there, Marsh communities are left asking who will champion them.

Councillors and business groups across the area say the time has come for government intervention, independent oversight, and serious investment — not PR statements and temporary sticking plasters.

One local campaigner, who asked not to be named, said: “Romney Marsh is being treated as the toilet of the south-east. If Southern Water cannot meet basic standards, it’s time ministers step in and force structural change.”

**A Coast Worth Fighting for**

Romney Marsh’s coastline is loved for its beauty, tranquillity, and family appeal. But the continuing failures now pose a threat to the very character and economy of the area.

With the new classifications set to stay in place until November 2026, businesses warn they cannot withstand two more years of negative headlines, lost visitors, and damaged trust.

Unless Southern Water is finally held to account, the fear is simple: Romney Marsh could lose not only its water quality, but its future as a thriving seaside destination.

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David Wimble all opposed the letter. But they were outvoted by a Green Party so obsessed with performance environmentalism that they appear unable—or unwilling—to understand what is at stake.

**Reform UK: Highlighting the Alternative the Greens Ignore**

There is, however, a dramatic new twist. With Folkestone & Hythe District Council due to disappear as local government reorganises, Reform-run Kent County Council has stepped into the void—taking a bold, credible alternative to Westminster.

Reform UK is making the case that Dungeness should be considered for a new nuclear station: whether that’s a fleet of Rolls-Royce Small Modular Reactors or a full-scale station similar to Hinkley Point C or Sizewell C. In a rare outbreak of realism, government ministers have finally begun to acknowledge the sheer implausibility of covering southern England in solar panels while relying on battery storage systems that are already proving unreliable at existing sites.

It is now understood—though apparently not by the Green Party leadership—that if Britain were to rely primarily on solar at this scale, a new nationwide super-grid would be required: miles of pylons, years of planning battles, and eye-watering costs. For proof, one need look only to Sizewell C, where the battle over transmission infrastructure has been so fierce that ministers are now proposing to drag power across the Thames Estuary, scar the Kent coastline, and carve through the protected landscapes around Pegwell Bay.

And all this under the watch of Ed Miliband, who—David Wimble argues—is “hell-bent on wrecking the very

environment he claims to want to save” and “a megalomaniac hypocrite doing his best to bankrupt the UK”.

You may not always get subtlety from Wimble, but you do get honesty.

**Romney Marsh: The Wrong Place for Mass Solarisation**

Reform argues, backed by local residents and campaigners, that Romney Marsh is one of the worst possible locations for solar industrialisation:

10% of the entire Marsh—8.5 square miles—is now being targeted, equivalent to three Gatwick Airports.

Much of this is Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, the best and most productive in the UK.

The Marsh’s internal drainage system—centuries old—faces catastrophic risk if developers drive steel frames and concrete plinths across its clay-pipe network.

Solar panels up to 5 metres high, and BESS units up to 12 metres, will permanently scar an area famed for its open landscape and far-reaching views.

Tourism—one of the Marsh’s economic lifelines—will be devastated.

The risk posed by Li-Ion BESS fires, which are effectively inextinguishable, could contaminate waterways including the Royal Military Canal.

Even FHDC’s Green-led leadership, under immense pressure, was forced to admit “strength of feeling and concern”. But their letter to the Energy Minister—weak, vague and politically timid—was no match for the scale of the threat.

As campaign group Hands Off Our Marsh (HOOM) warns, the Marsh is at risk of becoming a dumping ground for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), a process that bypasses local planning with a 99% approval rate. Developers know it, ministers know it—and, frankly, the Greens seem delighted about it.





**Reform UK: Doing the Job the Greens Won't**

While Green and Labour councillors tie themselves in ideological knots, Reform UK councillors—led in Kent by Linden KemKaren with David Wimble—are engaging directly with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, telling ministers that the Marsh is nuclear-friendly and that its people want investment, not industrial blight.

Wimble says: “Kent and Romney Marsh know exactly what a nuclear project could bring: thousands of construction jobs, hundreds of millions into our economy, and energy security for generations.”

It's a vision grounded in engineering, economics and common sense—three elements noticeably absent from Green Party policy.

The Greens continue to oppose nuclear power despite its proven reliability and minimal land footprint—while simultaneously backing solar schemes that require tearing up farmland, destroying ecology, threatening drainage systems, and forcing through pylons across Kent's coastline.

It would be laughable if it weren't so dangerous.

**Residents Deserve Better Than Green Party Incompetence**

For many residents, the situation has already become personally devastating:

House sales collapsing as soon as solar plans are announced.

Families trapped in unsellable homes.

Farmers pressured by developers dangling enormous lease fees.

Anxiety, mental health strain, and years of uncertainty.

This is the human cost of political incompetence. The Green Party may call themselves environmentalists, but their actions show a startling disregard for landscape,

community, and agricultural viability.

Reform UK, on the other hand, is doing what serious leadership demands: speaking to Westminster, demanding alternatives, asking the difficult questions, and refusing to allow Romney Marsh to become a sacrificial landscape for energy companies chasing subsidies.

**The Verdict**

Romney Marsh is facing an unprecedented threat—not from climate change, not from developers, but from the political negligence of those who were elected to protect it.

Reform UK has stepped into the vacuum left by the Greens, offering not just criticism, but a credible, strategic, nationally significant alternative.

In the years ahead, when Kent looks back on this period, one thing will be clear:

It wasn't the Greens who defended the Marsh.

It was Reform UK.

# Lydd & Brookland Poppy Appeal 2025



Around 30 collecting tins were distributed in shops, pubs, and our two primary schools in Lydd. After the 2025 Appeal ended the monies were counted (volunteers pictured) a grand total of £3,010.74 was raised.

Poppy appeal organiser for Lydd & Brookland Cllr Clive Goddard said “the community young & old always give so generously to this excellent cause they all deserve a massive thank you What a fantastic way to celebrate the 104th anniversary of the British Legion with our great total raised”

Cllr Goddard went on and said “A special mention must go to Lydd & Greatstone school pupils, staff and parents Lydd school raised a whopping £207.28 and Greatstone school a £180.69 The scouts did street collections in Lydd town and raised a brilliant £202.97 in just two weekends”

I must thank all the volunteers and Angela the clerk at Lydd TC for their assistance in counting the money along with the hospitality and Rita (my mum) for all her help.

# Editor's Word

Deputy Editor

Peter Martin



So, our editor has only gone and done it! Many family members, friends and well-wishers packed into St Nicholas Church in New Romney on 22nd November to witness the long-awaited wedding of our proprietor, David Wimble, to the lovely Sarah.

I was tempted to say it was such an emotional day that even the cake was in tiers – but I'll spare you the groan. What really mattered was seeing, after eight years together, that David had finally worn Sarah into submission. Persistence clearly pays off!

It was equally touching (and mildly terrifying) that he asked me to be his best man. Thankfully, the speech didn't bring the roof down, the rings arrived on time, and the only thing that nearly caused chaos was David crying at the sight of Sarah walking down the aisle... though he'll claim it was just the church heating.

With the newlyweds now living it up in New York before setting sail on a two-week Caribbean cruise, this edition has been assembled in his

absence. Meanwhile, he will no doubt return sporting a suntan deeper than most Marsh residents have managed in the past year, loudly complaining about the "hardship" he has had to endure.

Despite his gallivanting, we've somehow cobbled together this issue – with just one more to go before Christmas lands upon us like a runaway sleigh.

This also marks my final edition as stand-in editor (until he inevitably clears off again). I've enjoyed stepping out of retirement since July to steer the ship for a few months, and it's been wonderful to chat with so many of you at David and Sarah's wedding celebrations.

Normal service will soon resume – for better or worse!

Have yourselves a fantastic Christmas, and thank you for all the warm words and support over the past few months. And of course, congratulations to the new Mr and Mrs Wimble – may their honeymoon be sunny, their luggage arrive on time, and may David's moaning be kept to a minimum.

*Peter Martin*



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# Plans for Hawkinge Housing Estate in Kent Downs National Landscape Double in Size



A major new housing development proposed on the edge of Hawkinge has doubled in scale, with fresh plans now submitted for 110 homes within the Kent Downs National Landscape.

McCulloch Homes has lodged an application with Folkestone & Hythe District Council for a mixed development of houses, flats and commercial space on land beside Hawkinge Cemetery, at the junction of Aerodrome Road and Spitfire Way.

The proposal replaces an earlier bid – submitted by a different applicant – to build 52 homes and a small supermarket on the same plot. That scheme was withdrawn in April 2024 after only three months.

## A ‘Landscape-Led’ Scheme – but in a Protected Area

The site forms part of the Kent Downs National Landscape, formerly known as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and sits on the fringe of Hawkinge – a town that has seen extensive expansion in recent decades.

In documents accompanying the application, the developer insists the scheme has been shaped around its sensitive location.

“The scheme represents a landscape-led extension to Hawkinge, a designated growth centre, and responds to the sensitivities of its location within the Kent Downs AONB,” the Design and Access Statement says.

Seventy-seven houses and 33 flats are planned, alongside a single-storey commercial unit described as “centrally located” for future residents. Two apartment blocks would front Spitfire Way to create what planners call an “active edge” along the main road.

Vehicle access would be from Spitfire Way, with an additional pedestrian and cycle route proposed from Aerodrome Road.

## Traffic Concerns Already Mounting

Despite the scheme being in its early stages, local objections have already begun to surface – with traffic fears dominating.

Resident Paul Penny said the town simply does not have the roads to cope with yet more development:

“Objection based on the already serious traffic issues and delays within Hawkinge, specifically the lack of traffic infrastructure in place on roads leading to the M20/A20.

Until additional infrastructure to alleviate the constant queuing is put in place, more homes and even more commercial traffic will only compound the issue.”

Another objector, Chris Hadfield, called the plans “both ludicrous and absurd,” adding:

“I cannot believe it is even being considered as it is the last thing Hawkinge needs.”

## Developer Defends Proposals

McCulloch Homes disputes any suggestion the updated plans amount to “more than double” the former proposals in real terms, saying the difference in occupancy and car ownership would be “negligible”.

A spokesperson said the company is helping meet national demand for housing:

“We are providing a mix of affordable homes, including smaller family and starter homes, directly supporting the government’s ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes.

The Kent Downs National Landscape was a key consideration from the outset. Our site lies on the edge of the AONB and has been assessed as acceptable for development, with no significant adverse impact on statutorily protected nature conservation sites.”

The developer added that the project aims to “celebrate the Kent countryside” through a landscape-led approach.

## A Growing Town Under Pressure

Hawkinge has undergone substantial expansion over the past 20 years, with thousands of new homes built and more development planned. In 2024, ward councillor David Godfrey (Con) described the area as a “growing town” and said more homes were needed locally.

The latest application includes commercial space as well as homes, reflecting what developers say is the need to create mixed-use communities rather than solely residential estates.

McCulloch Homes has a track record of developments across Kent, including its completed Mulberry Place in Margate and ongoing schemes in Rainham and Snodland.

Decision Due in Early 2026

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is expected to make a decision on the 110-home estate before the end of January.

Residents can view the full application and submit comments via the Public Notice Portal.

# No One Should Be Lonely This Christmas

Christmas is often described as “the most wonderful time of the year” — full of family, friends, and festive cheer. But for many people, it can also be a time of deep loneliness. When the lights twinkle and the carols play, those who are alone can feel that absence more keenly than ever.

In our community, we know that loneliness doesn't just affect people at Christmas — it can last all year round. That's why local charity **Caring Altogether on Romney Marsh (CARM)** works tirelessly to make sure that older people across our area aren't forgotten. Each week, a fantastic team of volunteer befrienders visit those who might otherwise have little or no contact with the outside world. These visits bring conversation, laughter, and friendship — simple things that mean so much.

CARM's Befriending Coordinators, say that volunteers find their roles deeply fulfilling:

“In response to the question ‘What do you like about volunteering?’ there are some great examples of how volunteering for CARM is rewarding and a positive experience.

‘It gets me out of the house. I enjoy chatting with the lady I visit — it benefits us both.’

‘I enjoy the company as much as the client. We have long talks, a few laughs, and he's so appreciative of my visit.’

‘I find it rewarding visiting clients in their home. My visits cheer my two clients — I find it helpful too, as I live alone.’

‘Very rewarding role, and really good support and communication from CARM staff.’”

As we celebrate the season of goodwill, perhaps we could each take a moment to think about those around us who might be on their own. A card through the door, a friendly chat in the shop, or even an invitation to share a cup of tea can bring light to someone's day.

And if you're thinking about making a **New Year's resolution**, why not make it one that truly makes a difference? Volunteering with CARM is a wonderful way to start the year ahead — supporting someone in need while improving your own wellbeing. Many of CARM's volunteers say the role is not only rewarding but also helps their own mental health and sense of purpose.

So this Christmas, let's make sure no one in our community feels forgotten. And as we look towards the New Year, let's resolve to keep that spirit of kindness going — one conversation, one cup of tea, one friendly visit at a time.

**Could you be a befriending volunteer?**



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This poem is based on a true story. Some 60 years ago I was working for farmer Derek Ashby, who lived at the edge of the Marsh in Ebony. He told me how one of his labourers tragically died on his land. Apparently, he was driving a tractor between the farm and Reading Street when something caused his vehicle to topside over into a water-filled ditch. The worker was trapped in his cab and drowned. Derek Ashby found him some hours later.

# THE CONTENTED GHOST

The poor man's misjudgement  
Cost him his life dear –  
Trapped in his tractor cab,  
His screams no one could hear.

It was a painful day when they buried him  
Up upon Chapel Bank  
His children supported their poor mother  
Who to her knees sank.

As the days turned to weeks and then to months  
Strange sightings were talked of in 'The Ferry'  
He'd been seen working, seemingly content,  
Appearing to be quite happy, even merry.

He was seen ploughing a field at Ebony  
And harrowing fields at Stone,  
Even whistling as he laboured  
And farming close to his home.

One villager even waved to him  
And cheerily he waved back.  
Derek Ashby even saw him himself  
Saying 'strength he didn't lack.'

'I don't think he knows he's dead' said one,  
'But clearly he must be'.  
'Yes', concurred another local,  
'Seen him too and seems quite normal to me'.

With much gossiping, the tales came to peak  
When the vicar of Stone in the pulpit did say  
'I've seen him like you, in fact this very morn,  
Was gathering bales of hay'.

'I approached him and said my son  
You no longer belong to the world of the living.  
Put down your tools and look to the sky  
And leave us, for it is God's willing'.  
'Go and join your parents  
Who wait for you far up above.  
They are waiting for you to rejoin them  
And embrace you with everlasting love'.

'But what of my wife and children?' he said.  
'I cannot leave them here'.  
'They will join you when the time is right', I said.  
'Go now, and have no fear'.

'He looked me straight in the eye,' said the Vicar.  
'He smiled, then faded away within a golden  
haze.  
You won't be seeing this man anymore.  
Indeed, God works in mysterious ways.

Sometimes, when a person dies their soul lingers on in our world. It may be for guilt, fear, unfinished business or simply not enough spiritual energy to 'move on'. The excessive grief of loved one left behind, and their inability to let go, can cause a spirit to become earthbound. Sometimes spirits don't even know they are dead. Unless someone tells them there is nothing to fear and that it is safe to move forward, they will remain earthbound. They need to be told they will be received on the 'other side' by loved ones who will help them see the light and surround them in the purest energy of love.

By Mark Newson

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# Call for Official Register to Protect Assistance Dog Users



Campaigners are calling for stronger legal protection for people who rely on assistance dogs, following widespread reports of disabled handlers being refused entry to public places across the UK.

Assistance Dogs UK (ADUK) – the national coalition of training organisations – says current equality laws lack clarity, leaving businesses unsure of the rules and genuine assistance dog users facing discrimination.

“Current laws fall short of providing the clarity, protection and consistency needed to ensure fair treatment,” said Vicky Worthington, executive director of ADUK.

Despite the Equality Act 2010 making it illegal to refuse entry to a disabled person with an assistance dog, campaigners say too many people are still being turned away from restaurants, shops and even public transport.

Rise in Fake “Assistance Dog” Gear  
Garry Botterill, a former Sussex Police officer and founder of Service Dogs UK, is leading calls for a mandatory register of accredited assistance dogs – something he believes would give confidence to shopkeepers and restaurateurs.

“The definition of assistance dogs isn’t great in law,” he said. “There is no requirement for people to train their dogs to a high standard, or be under an umbrella organisation.”

Mr Botterill warned that some owners buy jackets and badges online to make their pets look like trained working dogs, adding:

“That makes it really difficult for service providers to recognise what is a well-trained assistance dog and what is someone utilising something from the internet.”

Veterans and Handlers Affected  
British Army veteran and paramedic Jordan Chapman, from Coulsdon in Surrey, has been partnered with PTSD assistance dog Teddy for three years. He agrees that a national register, alongside minimum training standards, is urgently needed.

Despite regularly visiting the same restaurant before being paired with Teddy, Mr Chapman said he was refused entry once he had a dog with him.

“Unfortunately, that’s just a normal thing,” he said. Dymchurch resident Toni Brown Griffin also described being followed around shops and, on some occasions, turned away entirely.

“It can be quite intimidating,” she said. She added that poorly behaved pet dogs masquerading as assistance animals were making matters worse, with some businesses reacting to “yapping and weeing” by banning all dogs – trained or not.

Research Paints a Grim Picture A recent study by ADUK found that: 43% of assistance dog handlers were refused entry to a premises within the last year

65% said they encountered problems caused by pets misrepresented as trained assistance dogs

Campaigners say this proves the need for tougher legislation.

On Tuesday, groups representing assistance dog users will head to Parliament to lobby MPs and ministers. They want clearer wording in law, proper recognition of accredited assistance dogs and guaranteed standards for training, behaviour and welfare.

Government Position A government spokesperson responded: “No one deserves to be held back or treated unfairly because of their disability. It is illegal to refuse entry to a disabled person with an assistance dog – with very few exceptions.”

The spokesperson added that anyone feeling they have suffered discrimination can seek advice from the Equality Advisory and Support Service.

Campaigners welcome the sentiment, but insist the law is letting people down – and they want action before more disabled handlers face humiliation for simply trying to live their daily lives.

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# Your Emergency Fund Won't Save You (But Protection Might)

You've done the sensible thing. The spreadsheet balances, the bills are paid, and there's a pot tucked away in case the boiler explodes or the car starts making that expensive noise again.

It's responsible. It's grown-up. It's the sort of thing your dad would call "good thinking".

An emergency fund is brilliant for life's small hiccups, but...it's not built for life's catastrophes; it's a sticking plaster on a bullet wound.

If your income vanished for a year - not a week or a month, but a year - that cushion would disappear faster than your willpower on day two of Dry January.

## When optimism meets the gas bill

Everyone's got a plan until the boiler packs in, the fridge gives up, and the dog starts limping.

Those "three to six months" of savings can quickly become "two months if I'm lucky and the MOT behaves." And while you're juggling that, statutory sick pay is £118.75 a week, which won't get you far once the mortgage, council tax and food shop all turn up at once.

It's not doom and gloom. It's realism. While an emergency fund can handle short-term shocks, it collapses fast when income stops for good.

## The most important insurance no one talks about

We happily insure our phones, pets and cars, but not the very thing that pays for all of them. Odd, isn't it?

That's where income protection quietly earns its keep. It's not flashy, and there's no shiny gadget to unbox. However, if illness or injury stops you working, it does something brilliantly simple: it pays you.

The mortgage gets paid, the lights stay on, and life carries on with minimal fuss. It's the financial equivalent of a dependable understudy, not glamorous, but there for you when it matters.

Yet the gap is staggering. Around 93% of UK adults have car insurance and 82% insure their mobiles, but fewer than one in five have income protection (Shepherds Friendly, 2024). We guard our gadgets better than our livelihoods.

## "I've got savings — won't that do?"

Savings are fantastic for one-off dramas, except it doesn't stretch far when income stops.

Protection exists to turn a financial cliff-edge into a staircase with manageable steps. Allowing you to take one month at a time until you're back on your feet.

You don't buy it for today. You buy it for the day you hope never comes.

## Getting the right cover (without the faff)

There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer. The right plan depends on what you earn, what you spend, and how long your employer would cover you if you were ill.

This is where a second opinion helps with someone who understands your personal picture and ensures what you have in place genuinely works for you. Not a flashy add-on, but a calm plan built around your actuality.

The aim isn't to oversell. It's to make sure the right bills still get paid on the right day, even when you can't.

## Critical illness vs income protection

They're often mentioned together, but they're not the same. Critical illness cover pays out a lump sum if you're diagnosed with a specified condition. Income protection gives you a regular income until you're able to work again.

For some, the best approach is having both: one for the big shocks and one for the ongoing stability.

## The bottom line

Your emergency fund is there for when life sneezes. Income protection is for when you get the full-blown flu.

Putting it off is easy. But the people who weather financial storms best are the ones who planned before the clouds even formed.

You wouldn't leave your front door wide open and hope no one notices. So don't leave your income unprotected and hope nothing happens.

Because when life throws you off balance, it isn't luck that steadies you, it's preparation. And that's worth far more than any rainy-day fund.



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## Thinking of buying an e-scooter or e-bike this Black Friday or for Christmas?

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They're classed as motor vehicles under the Road Traffic Act 1988, which means they need a licence and insurance. Because insurance isn't available, riding them on public land is against the law and could result in prosecution.

The only legal use: On private land with the landowner's permission. Rental schemes: Government-backed trials in certain areas are the only way to ride e-scooters legally on public roads.

What happens if you ignore the rules?

Your e-scooter could be seized and destroyed.

Fines up to £300 and penalty points—or even a driving ban

Safety warning: Cheap e-scooters and e-bikes with poor-quality batteries have caused house fires. Always buy from reputable retailers and check for CE or UKCA marks.

Police forces across the UK are stepping up enforcement this festive season to tackle illegal use and related crime. Don't let your gift turn into a costly mistake!



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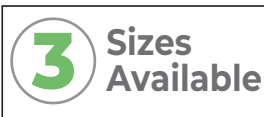
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# Dates for your Diary

Email your Dates for your Diary to: [john@thelooker.co.uk](mailto:john@thelooker.co.uk)

## Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December

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

## Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December

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

## Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December

Christmas Fair & Book Sale, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh Church, 10 a.m. – 12 noon  
Christmas Concert with Canterbury Band, New Romney Church, 7 p.m.

## Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December

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. (3<sup>rd</sup> Mon)

## Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Greatstone Meeting Point, St. Peter's Hall, 10 a.m. (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. (3<sup>rd</sup> Tue)  
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.  
Community Christmas Carols, St. Mary's Bay Church, 4 p.m.  
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

## Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December

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 18<sup>th</sup> December

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 19<sup>th</sup> December

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.  
Festival of 9 Lessons & Carols, with Haywardians & Handbell Ringers, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh Church, 7.30 p.m.

## Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December

Old School Trust Open Morning, New Romney, 10 a.m. (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat)  
Children's Christmas Party, Ivychurch Village Hall, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

## Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December

Christmas Carol Concert + Salvation Army Band, Littlestone Lifeboat Station, 4 p.m.  
Village Christmas Party, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh Church, 4 p.m.  
Community Carol Service, Lydd Church, 6 p.m.



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# THE GREAT BRITISH CHRISTMAS PREP: UNTANGLING LIGHTS, TURKEY TRAUMA & THAT ONE BAUBLE YOU SWEAR YOU DIDN'T PACK

By our Seasonal Correspondent David Wimble



(Who still hasn't located the Christmas wrapping paper from 2022)

## There are two types of people in Britain.

Those who begin preparing for Christmas sometime around the August Bank Holiday... and the rest of us, who suddenly realise—around mid-November—that Christmas is, once again, aggressively approaching like a runaway sleigh with no brakes and a slightly deranged reindeer at the helm.

Yes, it's that magical time of year when the whole nation collectively panics, pretends they've been organised all along, and begins the great annual ritual of sorting Christmas out. And if that phrase doesn't strike fear into your soul, you've either never done it, or you've outsourced the entire operation to a long-suffering relative.

Here is our 2025 survival guide for the most exhausting, expensive, and accidentally hilarious preparation season in the British calendar.

## The Lights: A Test of Character (and Language)

You know it's Christmas prep time when you climb

into the loft armed with a torch, a sense of dread, and the faint smell of last year's fake fir tree. Somewhere up there, between the Halloween box and that inflatable paddling pool you still haven't dried out properly, sits The Box of Lights.

Every British household owns at least one such box. Inside it is a tangle so dense it could be used to restrain a small bull. Every year you promise yourself you'll put the lights away properly next time. Every year you lie.

Tradition states that one bulb will be mysteriously dead, forcing you to test all 400 individually, swearing quietly so the neighbours can't hear. After 45 minutes of effort, the lights will suddenly flicker into life—usually just as you decide you've had enough and threaten to throw them out of the window.

## The Tree: Real, Fake, or the Suspiciously Thin One from the Garage

The next big question is the tree.

**Do you:** Visit a proper local tree farm, where you pretend to know what a "good" tree looks like?

Head to the supermarket, where all the trees appear to have been fed a diet of sadness and drizzle?

Drag the dusty plastic one out of the loft, along with 17 spare branches you've never been able to reattach?

Families across the country will gather in the living room to debate the all-important issue: "Is the tree straight?"

It never is.

Someone always storms off because the person holding the tree "isn't listening", and the entire event ends when someone decides to wedge it with a copy of the Argos Christmas catalogue from 2017.

## The Baubles: Ornaments of Mystery

Once the tree is finally vertical (ish), it's time for the baubles.

This is when you discover: A box of beautiful glass ornaments you forgot you owned.

Three baubles that no one wants but everyone insists on keeping "for sentimental reasons".

A wonky felt snowman made by a now-adult child who swears blind they were better at crafts than that.

A glitter explosion so dramatic it looks like Tinkerbell detonated.

Every family has rules about bauble placement, but none more strict than the person who insists the tree must be "balanced". This is the same person who

later moves all the decorations around once everyone else has gone to bed.

### **The Christmas Card List: A Social Minefield**

Preparing Christmas cards should be simple.

Instead, it's an annual diplomatic nightmare in which you must decide who still qualifies as a "card person".

People are added, removed, reinstated, and struck off again depending on: Whether they sent one last year

Whether they remembered your child's name

Whether they incorrectly spelled it

Whether you are still mad about that thing they said in 2019

At least two cards will arrive from people you completely forgot existed, forcing emergency reciprocation using the "last minute card stash"—usually a discounted pack from 2013 featuring a penguin wearing a questionable scarf.

### **The Great British Turkey Panic**

Now we come to the centrepiece of the season: the turkey.

Every year, supermarkets warn us to "get ahead and pre-order". Every year, we ignore them. Then, around the 20th of December, we all collectively realise the consequences and begin frantically hunting for a bird that isn't either:

The size of a sparrow, or a prehistoric monster requiring three ovens and a structural support team

Once the bird is secured, we pretend to know how long it needs to cook.

The truth is, nobody knows. Not even the turkey. We simply follow a chaotic set of times passed down from parents who "always cook it that way", combined with online recipes written by professional chefs who assume you own thermometers, timers, and possibly a second kitchen.

### **The Presents: Retail Olympics**

Christmas shopping in Britain can be divided into four stages:

#### **The Denial Stage**

"Plenty of time. I'll do it next week."

#### **The List Stage**

Where you write 27 names, cross out 12, add 19 more, and end up with the same chaos you started with.

#### **The Panic Stage**

When you buy something expensive because you gave up trying to find something meaningful.

#### **The Regret Stage**

Christmas morning, when you realise you have bought your father-in-law three pairs of socks and a

puzzle he completed in 2018.

Then there's the wrapping paper—a cruel product designed specifically to mock you.

It tears where you don't want it to. It stays perfectly intact when you desperately need a little rip. And no matter how much you buy, you will always run out about one and a half presents from the end.

### **The Family Schedule: Negotiation at Nato Level**

Perhaps the most complex Christmas preparation of all is working out who you are visiting, when, and for how long.

This involves:

Two parents

Two in-laws

A sibling who "isn't doing Christmas this year" (they always do)

An aunt who demands attendance

A neighbour who insists you "pop in for a quick drink" that is never quick

What begins as a rough plan turns into a whiteboard covered in arrows, timetables, and conflict zones.

### **The Finishing Touches**

Once everything is nearly sorted, the nation finally enters its favourite festive phase: pretending everything is fine.

Candles appear.

Mulled wine is heated.

Michael Bubl  awakens from his annual hibernation.

And someone, somewhere, shouts: "WHO HAS MOVED THE SELLOTAPE?!"

AND YET... WE LOVE IT

Despite the chaos, the glittery explosions, the turkey trauma and the national shortage of gift tags, there's something wonderfully British about Christmas preparation.

We moan.

We panic.

We lose the scissors 14 times.

We swear at fairy lights like they owe us money.

But every year, without fail, the lights go on, the tree looks brilliant (eventually), the food appears on the table, and we all sit back for that glorious moment when the madness finally pauses.

Until someone says, "Shall we do crackers?"

Then it all starts again.

Merry Christmas.

And good luck.

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# Paul Hollywood's Christmas Buns

Paul Hollywood's fruit rolls can be made ahead then heated up before adding a glossy glaze and citrus icing, making them the perfect morning treat for Christmas Day.

## Method

**1.** Put the flour and 1tsp salt into a large bowl. Make a well in the centre and add the yeast.

Meanwhile, warm the milk and butter in a pan until the butter melts and the mixture is lukewarm. Add the milk mixture and egg to the flour mixture and stir until the contents come together as a soft dough (add extra flour if you need to).

**2.** Tip the dough onto a well-floured surface. Knead for 5 mins, adding more flour if necessary, until the dough is smooth, elastic and no longer sticky.

**3.** Lightly oil a bowl with the vegetable oil. Place the dough in the bowl and turn until covered in oil. Cover the bowl with cling film and set aside in a warm place for 1 hr or until doubled in size. Lightly grease a baking sheet and set aside.

**4.** For the filling, knock the dough back to its original size and turn out onto a lightly floured surface. Roll it into a 1cm-thick rectangle. Brush all over with the melted

butter, then sprinkle over the sugar, cinnamon and fruit.

**5.** Roll up the dough into a tight cylinder, cut into 9 x 4cm slices and position on the prepared baking sheet, leaving a little space between. Cover with a tea towel and set aside to rise for 30 mins.

**6.** Heat oven to 190°C/170°C fan/gas mark 5. Bake the buns for 20-25 mins or until risen and golden brown. Meanwhile, melt the glaze sugar with 4 tbsp water until syrupy.

**7.** Remove from oven and glaze. Set aside to cool on a wire rack. Once cool, mix the zest and icing sugar with about 2 tbsp water to drizzle over the buns. Serve.



## Ingredients:

### Makes 9

- 500g strong white flour, plus extra for dusting
- 7g sachet fast-action dried yeast
- 300ml milk
- 40g unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
- 1 egg
- Vegetable oil, for greasing

### For the filling

- 25g unsalted butter, melted
- 75g soft brown sugar
- 2tsp ground cinnamon
- 100g dried cranberries
- 100g chopped dried apricot

### For the glaze

- 50g caster sugar

### For the lemon icing

- Zest of a lemon
- 200g icing sugar

# BUDGET 25

## Reeves Says This Budget Is Fair — But It's Working People Paying the Price

There are two ways to read Rachel Reeves' second Budget, delivered on 26 November 2025.

One is the way Labour want you to read it — as a responsible, grown-up, “stability first” exercise to fix the nation's finances.

The other is the way millions of working Britons will actually feel it — as a calculated raid on the very people who get out of bed every morning, keep our public services afloat, and fund the system through their taxes.

Let's be honest: this Budget is not about fairness. It's about priorities. And the Chancellor has made hers painfully clear. Working Families: The Silent Target

Reeves keeps insisting she has not raised taxes. Technically, she hasn't touched the headline income-tax rates. But she has done something far more lucrative for the Treasury — she has extended the income-tax threshold freeze until 2030–31.

This single decision will drag millions more into higher tax bands.

It is a stealth tax, plain and simple.

You don't need to be an economist to understand what that means. If your wages go up a little, you lose a lot. A pay rise? Swallowed. Overtime? Taxed harder. A promotion? You'll barely feel the benefit.

It's the perfect way for a government to say they're not raising taxes while quietly picking every pocket in the

country.

And who does this hit?

Not the wealthy — they already know how to shelter their income.

Not those who don't work — they are protected.

It hits the nurse on shifts, the builder taking extra jobs, the teacher climbing a pay scale. It hits the people holding this country together.

Benefit Increases Send a Clear (If Uncomfortable) Message

This Budget uprates benefits fully. It lifts the two-child cap. It expands welfare support across multiple departments.

Again, no one begrudges support for the truly vulnerable. The issue is balance — and this Budget tilts that balance sharply.

Working households are being taxed harder through fiscal drag, while many on benefits receive above-inflation increases. It sends a message, whether intended or not:

If you're working, prepare to pay.

If you're not, you're safe.

That is not a sustainable social contract.

And it certainly isn't the one Labour bragged about during the election.

Savings Punished, Not Encouraged ISAs cut.

Pension tax advantages squeezed.

Dividends taxed harder.

High-value property surcharges extended downwards.

This isn't “rewarding aspiration”, as the Chancellor claims — it's punishing anyone who dares to put aside a bit of money for the future. In a cost-of-living crisis, a government should be helping families save, not discouraging them.

But again, Reeves's priorities are transparent: she needs revenue, and she's taking it from the only group she can rely on not to riot — the working majority.

A Budget Designed in Westminster, Paid for in Every Town in Britain

In London conference rooms and TV studios, Reeves may call this “a Budget for growth”.

But out in the real world — in towns like ours — people know better.

Growth for who?



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Fairness for who?  
Relief for who?

Not for the working couple juggling jobs and childcare.  
Not for the small business owner trying to keep staff.  
Not for the households whose bills have risen faster than their wages for three years straight.

Working people are exhausted, financially stretched, and increasingly angry — and this Budget does not calm that anger. It fuels it.

Labour Are Taking Working Britain for Granted — Again

There is a growing sense that Labour believe working voters have nowhere else to go.

But that arrogance has cost them before — and it can cost them again.

This Budget shows a government willing to place the greatest burden on those who complain the least. A government that says the right things about “rewarding work”, while doing the exact opposite. A government that claims fairness, while writing policy that disadvantages anyone who earns their living rather than claims it.

Reeves says she wants to “renew Britain”.

But if every renewal begins by raiding the wallets of working families, this government will quickly discover that trust — like income — has limits.

And once it's gone, it's gone.



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# Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

## Just published

### **Lydd Remembered** (including Dungeness & Greatstone)

**A miscellany of memories, pictures, events and people**

Articles include Lydd Cycle Speedway, Wartime Lydd, Spies on the Marsh, Vic Dennis shares some memories of Lydd, the Greatstone Sound Mirrors and Growing up in the town with Trevor Letford. Also Lydd's Advanced Landing Ground, how the 'Concords' group started, the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the 'Thing' at Dungeness, Lydd Football Club and Dungeness Signal Station.

A report on the 2007 Airshow at Lydd Airport, What it was like when Lydd was a Borough, The Lydd Camp Railway, Lighting the gas lamps in the town 100 years ago, Living and fishing at Dengemarsh, How 'Silver City' started and the Lydd Military Railway. Norris Heritage, Denis Prior and Cyril Reeves share their memories of Dungeness. Also, the beginnings of the Hardy Hall, Lydd Town Railway Station, Lydd Scouts and Cubs, John Thomas remembers Dungeness and 'Ground Force' comes to Greatstone.

Early days at Ferryfield Airport, the aims of the 'Lydd Airport Action Group', the beginning of the Lydd Fire Brigade, Fundraising in the Second World War, Living in Dungeness 100 years ago and Lydd Club Day. Also, the day the Anchor came to the town, A Lydd Schoolmaster's diary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Growing up and living in Dungeness, Maddieson's Holiday Camp, Coronation Day in 1953 and Pipeline under the ocean (PLUTO). Ernie Harmer's story of his shop in Lydd, Growing up on the Marsh with Edward Freathy, the story of Goal-running, a train attacked at Lydd, the lighthouses at Dungeness and Lydd around 65 years ago. Also, the Air Ambulance at the Airport, Dungeness RNLI, a train robbery at Lydd-on-Sea, the Romney Marsh 1989 Arts Festival, Bill Balchin's childhood

memories of Lydd and the development of Greatstone.

Fishing at Dungeness in the 1980s, Living and working in Lydd, when Dr. Who came to Dungeness, A carrier in the area with Bill Allen, Dungeness 'A' Power Station, Denge Pumping Station, Cricket at Dungeness and growing up and living in Lade.

Ideal Christmas gift with over 140 pictures. The book is available from Sally Lyons, Coronation Square, Lydd, Mark Richardson's Fish Shop, Dungeness, Kent Model Exchange/Sweet Memories, High Street, Hythe or from John Wimble.



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Dear Looker,  
 What a bloody rude (and badly written) letter printed in your last issue. I'm referring to the ridiculous rantings of Peter Tennant, who described The Looker as "trashy" and "rubbish". He is clearly talking rubbish himself, because your publication is the complete opposite of that!

It covers all aspects of the Marsh and regularly features interesting articles on gardening, nature, news, quizzes, and John Wimble's Marsh Memories, which is always an excellent read — as are the photographs that accompany it.

It really is a first-class publication.

Tennant says he supports the Labour government, yet they have brought this country to its knees. Starmer has pledged to build millions of homes that will cover our land with concrete, and the writer's comments about solar panels are frankly embarrassing: "Boring grass", "empty fields with nothing growing"... A child could have written a more intelligent letter.

Nobody on the Marsh supports the panels — or, for that matter, Tony Vaughan and his government. Reform UK is the only sensible way forward. It will be a joyous day indeed when (not if) Nigel Farage reigns supreme at the next general election. Starmer, along with the thousands of asylum seekers he has allowed to enter our country, should be placed on some faraway island so that we can rebuild our beautiful country.

Perhaps Peter Tennant can join them.

Mark Newson  
 Lydd-on-Sea

Dear Looker  
 I, for one, look forward to reading each issue, and in particular The Rant, but am not normally inclined to put pencil to paper. However, the letter from Mr Tennant really annoyed me, not because of his views (everyone is entitled to have an opinion), but because he believes that his opinion is the only one that matters and anybody who does not share that opinion is an idiot!

Later, I read it again, and felt sorry for him and his ignorance.

Ok, so this publication does lean a bit to the right but I understand that editorial contributions are invited from all persuasions. There are lots of regular articles that have nothing to do with politics.

He did not pick upon the fact that the publication is free. Highlighted by the box on the top right hand corner "FREE PLEASE PICK UP A COPY". Secondly, his maths is also wanting: also on the front cover "ESTABLISHED in 2009" yet somehow he concluded that it had been going for 5 years?

I would not have known who our MP is, if it had not been for The Looker, and as for the statement that this Labour

government is decent? Decent it may be, but useless it certainly is! I am retired now, but there was a time when I would have been proud to be British and championed British business, but now, sadly, were I younger I would be considering emigration.

And as for solar farms! So mile after mile of solar panels are not boring but fields are?

Ah, but then I forgot. Mr Tennant doesn't live here, so it is alright for him to decide what we would prefer to look at! And nobody wants cows and potatoes now? I suggest he remembers his words when he is next trying to eat a solar panel!

There is a case for all forms of energy generation. Solar and wind are at the mercy of the elements and require extensive storage facilities to be efficient, with relatively unknown risk factors. Whilst nuclear is more constant and controllable, the risks are better defined because the technology has been around longer.

Keep up the good work  
 Bill Perrin

Dear Looker,  
 I must confess I was rather surprised that you chose to print my last letter. I half-expected it to be quietly filed under "too controversial", yet over the past fortnight several friends and acquaintances have approached me to say they completely agreed with every word. It seems my views are not as isolated as some would like to believe.

What I would really like The Looker to explain is this: if Tony Vaughan and the Folkestone & Hythe Labour group are, as you often suggest, "out of touch", then how did they secure such a sweeping majority at the last election? Voters made their feelings perfectly clear at the ballot box. And while the county election results may have been disappointing, they should not in any way diminish the sterling work Tony Vaughan continues to do on behalf of this district.

He has shown genuine leadership — the sort that requires courage — by standing up for what he believes

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in, even when that means challenging his own party. That is the mark of a principled politician, not a weak one.

I recently watched your owner, David Wimble, being interviewed on the Politics Show. To hear him claim that Tony is "totally out of touch with local sentiment" on immigration was frankly shameful and embarrassing. All of my friends — and a great many others I speak to — are pro-immigration, and Tony remains our voice in Parliament. If you strip away the loud, angry rhetoric of the Reform far right and their constant drumbeat of division, you may well find that a substantial proportion of our district is compassionate, welcoming, and supportive of those unfortunate asylum seekers who have come here seeking a safer, better life.

Perhaps it is time The Looker acknowledged that viewpoint too.

Yours sincerely,  
Peter Tennant

Dear Looker,

Thank-you to everyone who came to the recent Christmas Craft Fair in the Old School and the Scouts Hut, New Romney. A total of nearly £2,500 was raised and together with other events held through the year, £3,000 has been donated to both Prostrate Cancer and Breast Cancer charities.

Dear Looker,  
Once again the question arises: is he there for us or himself? I have said it before and I will say it again: the

majority did NOT vote for him. The only reason he got in was because the Conservative vote was split between Conservative and Reform. If only the Tory voters had kept the faith and not succumbed to a revenge vote, he would not be in Westminster. (I would just like to say that my vote was not for the actual man, but for the Conservative Party - I would have voted for a performing monkey rather than any Labour candidate. )

Stephen Tait (letters page) regards him as "formidable". I would be fascinated to know what formidable actions Mr Vaughan has done for us (his constituents). He should learn to listen to the voice of the people rather than turning a deaf ear.

As well as turning a blind eye to the illegal immigrants problem, where was he when the decision was made to destroy the major transport hub (yes, I mean the bus station) in the centre of a busy, important town. The £20million wasted on the chaos created could have made it a state of the art transport showpiece. Once again, ignoring the needs of the public.

To end on a more positive note: thank you for The Looker continuing to give us a (albeit ignored) voice. Your rants put into words my thoughts (usually).

Regards

Betty Collins  
Hythe.

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# Then & Now



**Dymchurch High Street, c.1930s.**

The bus station, Cinema and the renamed Savoy Restaurant before the 1940 raid.  
It was always a busy place during the summer months.  
It is still a bus stop today and houses the village toilets.



# Bird Flu Outbreak at Lydd Farm Sparks Fears for Dungeness Nature Reserve



A confirmed case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) at a poultry farm near Lydd has prompted immediate concern among conservationists at the neighbouring Dungeness Nature Reserve — one of the UK's most important habitats for rare and migratory bird species.

Defra confirmed the outbreak earlier this week and has ordered the culling of all birds on the affected premises as a precautionary measure. A 3km protection zone and a wider 10km surveillance zone have been established around the site, bringing large sections of the Dungeness reserve within the controlled area.

Craig Edwards, site manager at the reserve, warned that the timing of the outbreak could have a “profound” impact.

“This is very concerning and could not have come at a worse time,” he said. “Our wintering waders and wildfowl numbers are just starting to build. We were hit by the initial outbreak of bird flu a couple of years ago, which had a devastating impact on our breeding seabirds. Now there’s this new threat just as our wintering species arrive.”

Edwards urged visitors not to touch any dead or sick birds and to report sightings directly to the RSPB team on site. Increased monitoring is now taking place across the reserve, which is jointly managed by the RSPB and renowned for its internationally important shingle landscape and rich biodiversity.

## **Biosecurity Tightened**

Under Defra's protection and surveillance restrictions, bird-keepers within the controlled zones must implement strict biosecurity measures. These include housing all poultry, limiting visitor access, and recording all movements of birds and people on and off affected premises.

Although transmission of avian influenza to humans is

considered very rare, health authorities emphasise the importance of avoiding direct contact with wild birds or carcasses.

The outbreak near Lydd is the latest in a succession of cases detected across England in recent months. Restrictions remain in force following a previous incident near Uckfield in East Sussex, while in October all birds — including an emu — were culled at Happy Pants Ranch in Newington, Kent after another H5N1 detection.

## **A Fragile Ecosystem at Risk**



Dungeness Nature Reserve is recognised internationally for its diverse birdlife, particularly during winter months when large numbers of waders, ducks and geese arrive from northern Europe. The reserve is also home to an array of rare plants, insects and spiders that depend on the unique shingle habitat.

Conservationists fear that any new outbreak among wild birds could have a lasting effect on breeding populations already weakened by previous waves of the virus.

The RSPB said it would continue to liaise closely with Defra and monitor the situation as winter migration peaks.



It is difficult to find time and a window of decent weather to get on with some gardening at this time of year! The jobs are much the same as before. The everlasting pruning, tidying and weeding, if the soil isn't too wet.

The frosts have finished the dahlias so they can be tidied up. In this part of the world, they can survive the winter in the ground, so they don't need lifting, unless you want to move them, or split up a congested bunch of tubers. If you do lift them, shake off all the surplus soil, cut off the dead leaves, and leave them in a dry cool place in sand, or dry potting compost with lots of grit or vermiculite. Don't water them. Remove any tubers that are obviously rotten or have gone soft. Label them, of course, or you won't know what type or colour they are! While rotting dahlia tops need removing, expert gardeners often suggest leaving other dry debris from dying plants, to form a sort of mulch in cold weather. You don't need your garden to look over tidy. Plenty of dry plant matter is also good as winter protection for wildlife.

Roses should be pruned now. With all the bad weather, if they are too big, they rock in the wind, which will loosen the roots, and can cause damage. Ordinary shrubs can be pruned now, but don't chop away at early flowering shrubs, like forsythia. If you prune now, you will remove all the flowering boughs. The flowers come before the new leaves in the spring.

If you haven't done it this year, a clear day might be an occasion to tidy your potting shed. In my dreams, I'd like to empty half of it onto the grass, and then be ruthless with all the junk that I know will never be used again before I put it back tidily. Mind you, on such nice days you find yourself desperately trying to catch up with the actual garden! It is also an occasion to clean and oil your tools properly. Often in the summer you are so busy, they only get a 'lick and a polish' clean.

Winter evenings are also a nice time to plan your garden for next year. What seeds you are going to buy, and any big changes you want to make, especially if you inherited a mature garden. Don't be too keen to get rid of mature plants and shrubs and trees. If a plant has been there for years, it means it is very comfortable in its space. If you are a new gardener, look at neighbour's gardens, and make a note of what is doing well, and is comfortable in the local soil.

Every gardener that ever drew breath, has probably wasted hundreds of pounds on whim purchases of plants, that never really prospered in your soil, or you didn't get around to planting them until they wilted, or didn't have time to look after them properly, and they were suffocated with weeds! We have also tried modern variations on the mature plants in our garden. They have done well maybe for a year or two and then fizzled out, while the original stands there plodding away, producing fruit and flowers, and thriving on neglect!

It is hard sometimes to give up on favourites, and accept they aren't going to do well in your garden. Being near the coast with light alkaline soil, the colourful acid loving plants, rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas need to be in large pots with ericaceous compost. Then of course they need lots of water, and repotting regularly. These plants flower in the early summer, but you have to keep them well watered during the summer, to make flower buds for the following year.

## AND NOW FOR THE VEG (AND MORE PRUNING)

It's a quiet time in the veg garden, well certainly for us. This year, we cut down on the amount of vegetables we've previously grown, mainly due to the ravages of increasing years on our bodies! We simply can't bend, kneel and stretch like we used to, so we removed two or three raised beds and grassed the space over. Now we grow just a few easy to maintain crops like beans (broad and runners), onions and shallots, lettuce, leeks and beetroot.

So now is the time to prepare for the next season by digging over the veg patch, removing any remaining weeds and if possible cover the soil with a good mulch of compost. This will enrich the soil and suppress weeds, and give next year's crops a good start.

In the meantime, as winter gathers pace this is a good opportunity to do some pruning. We've kept our fruit garden going and had some good crops. Last winter I got over zealous in pruning the gooseberries, so our crop was a bit down but nevertheless of good quality.

So, if we start with gooseberries. Prune out any dead or diseased stems and any crossing stems to keep the centre open to air and light with a few evenly spaced main branches. Shorten new growth by half to a strong bud. Remember that gooseberries, like plums, produce fruit from spurs on the old branches as well as the preceding year's shoots, particularly on the lower part of these shoots. Remove any suckers from the base and ensure that low-lying branches are clear of the ground. Sometimes lower branches may have touched the soil and started to develop roots. If this is the case, carefully prune the branch, loosen the soil around the new root system and pot it up. You'll have a new gooseberry bush free of charge! When showing signs of healthy growth, plant out in the spring giving plenty of room to expand.

I'm told that in some areas, bird damage to gooseberry buds can be a nuisance, especially when their food is in short supply, so leave pruning till later in the winter if you've had this experience!

Next time, we'll look at currant bushes.

So as always, happy gardening!

### Addicted to Excitement, Novelty and Glitter?

If you see any paper, leaflet or advert, there are a confusing and overwhelming number of Christmas events advertised. Including Winter wonderlands, Santa specials, 14 pantomimes within reach, Santa's grottos, light shows, Christmas markets, garden centres with life size moving tableaux, Leeds castle is Neverland, and Hever castle is the land of Oz! All designed to separate us from our money. Do we need all this excitement and glitter for a happy Christmas? Probably not. Novelty and excitement are like a drug, the more you have, the more you need. Life seems to be like that nowadays, people are coerced into feeling they have to have something new and novel all the time, and it breeds unhappiness and discontent. Everything seems to be noisy and brash and OTT.

The really happy people are content with the satisfaction and fulfilment of enjoying every ordinary moment. That is easy, because there are many such moments! They don't need to be doing or owning something new or exciting every minute of the day.

We have connections with South Africa, and have been a number of times. Being tied to school holidays, we often went in the Christmas holidays, the middle of their summer, being in the Southern Hemisphere. I was sharing with some friends, our first ever Sunday in SA. We were in a modern Methodist church with abstract stained glass. The temperature was about 27dC outside, I was wearing a summer dress and our boys were in shorts and T-shirts. The sun was shining through the stained glass and creating stunning patterns on everyone in the congregation. It was the middle of December and we were singing Christmas carols. It felt very strange. The pastor preached on "Jesus the Light of the World." It was a challenge to take on board what he was saying.

I realised that our traditional Christmas is very much a creation of the Northern hemisphere, where it was dark by 4pm, light was scarce, survival was not a certainty, and we need cheering up in the middle of winter. The early Christians just took over the pagan midwinter festival (Yule). Scholars have worked out exactly when Jesus was born on the Hebrew calendar, whose seasons bear no relation to ours. Jesus most definitely wasn't born "In the bleak midwinter!"

European Christians took Christianity to the southern hemisphere, where celebrating Christmas had a whole new feel, and the obsession with twinkling and flashing lights hasn't the same effect. In SA it is not dark in the summer until bedtime, and people are more likely to celebrate Christmas with a Braai (BBQ) in the garden or on the beach. I believe it is the same in Australia and NZ.

So don't feel you have to get involved in the merry go round of special events, especially if you are struggling to make ends meet. Don't feel you are trapped into having to buy all the Christmas stuff, because everyone else is doing it, it is piled high in the shops, with the allure of lights and atmosphere and FOMO (fear of missing out.) Please, please keep track of your budget. Research has shown an

amazing number of people have no idea if their spending exceeds their income. If you don't know, it is very likely that you are spending far more than is coming in! Use contactless very sparingly. Many agencies that deal with debt, advise using cash, and leaving your cards at home, cut them up, or frozen in a mug of water in the freezer to make them inaccessible!

Many years ago, we had a friend whose father was an old-fashioned money lender in Manchester. He loaned money to people, and went to collect the instalments every Friday, 52 weeks a year. He said you can't miss, if you miss one, the people won't have twice the following Friday. He said an interesting thing. People never realise the cheapest person to borrow money from is themselves. So, it is always better to save, and borrow from yourself! Try and save something, however little, whenever you have money.

**Remember Debt is the biggest cause of misery, unhappiness, attempted suicide and relationship breakdown.** It is not, as modern life would have us believe, acceptable, innocent and respectable. Most people borrow money to buy big items like a house or a car, but to get into debt for everyday stuff is a downward slope. The media keeps telling us of the millions who are struggling and the x million children who are being brought up in dire poverty. It is hard to reconcile that with the loaded trolleys you stand behind in supermarkets at this time of year, full of non-essentials, treats, goodies and ultra processed convenience food.

There are accounts of all the rip offs at crowded Christmas markets, where a hot dog or a small glass of mulled wine will cost you a tenner. Why does everyone go? They are full of atmosphere, and good cheer, but just enjoy the atmosphere, and have your refreshments at a bricks and mortar café, which will be decorated for the event and charge their normal prices!

Plan your food shopping carefully, but remember the shops are not closing for a month. Please don't buy too much. Experts have calculated the amount of waste at Christmas, is off the scale. If you are only having a handful of people, you probably don't need 3 different joints of meat. If people are eating A, they probably won't have room for B. Nowadays lots of younger people are going vegetarian and vegan, so they won't want meat. It is wise not to take risks with perishables, but don't be neurotic about expiry dates. Items will not become suddenly toxic on the stroke of midnight on the day they expire. Don't buy too many treats or drinks, or people will just be tempted to over indulge. Many people need go on diets after Christmas. The best way to deal with weight gain to not to put it on in the first place!

Just before Christmas, many supermarkets are selling vegetables at ridiculous prices. Excellent value if you are willing to wait, but even if you don't need them immediately, you can buy them, cut them up small, blanch them (put in boiling water for a minute) cool and place in small bags in the freezer. **Have a happy and restful Christmas** without getting into too much debt!

A Few Weeks in Local Politics: Ambition, Ideology and the Strange Art of Getting Absolutely Nothing Done

Well, it's been an interesting few weeks in the world of local politics — "interesting" in the same way that watching a three-hour parish council meeting about dog-waste bins is interesting. In the last edition I had the chance to sit down with David Wimble and discuss his first six months as a Reform cabinet member at KCC. So, for this instalment, I thought we'd take a broader look at the political circus closer to home. Spoiler alert: bring popcorn.

Let's start with Jim Martin, leader of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, who has now committed to finally getting Otterpool built. Yes — that Otterpool. The one that has spent longer in the planning process than most Roman settlements took to construct.

Jim has, for years, had his finger hovering millimetres above the "Start" button like a nervous contestant on a game show. His predecessors in the Conservative administration were ready to go, alongside the ever-patient Homes England. But then the Greens took the reins, and suddenly the whole project had to be reimagined through a pristine eco-lens.

And so came the dictum: every single home must be "net zero." Wonderful idea. Heart-warming. Inspirational even. Just one small snag — no one seems quite sure how that's achievable on a development of this scale, short of installing enough solar panels to power the International Space Station. But the bigger problem? These ultra-green homes, built to "the very highest standards", would cost nearly double that of ordinary homes... which doesn't exactly scream "affordable housing for the next generation."

At this point Homes England executed the fastest strategic retreat since Napoleon left Moscow. One insider put it to me bluntly: "The council seems clueless about the reality of delivering affordable homes." Strong words. Not inaccurate.

The Otterpool delivery company then enjoyed a revolving door of CEOs, each staying just long enough to realise they had joined the municipal equivalent of The Krypton Factor, before making a dignified exit.

But wait! A breakthrough, we're told. One of the major stumbling blocks was the lack of a new waste-transfer site by Junction 11 of the M20. This needed millions in Kent County Council investment — and against all odds, the green light has now been given. Work approved! A joyous moment. Cue champagne corks popping somewhere in Civic Centre offices.

Except... no. Because approval for the transfer site doesn't actually mean any construction will begin soon. First, they have to get permission for a reed-bed filtration system, which will take around three years to build. And even though they have a construction firm ready to start, they still appear to be several million pounds short of the money needed. A minor detail, presumably.

So now is the moment, Jim. If you — and your party — can get the infrastructure in place, secure the land for the waste site, and have all the paperwork signed off, then maybe, just maybe, Otterpool might actually start in the spring. And then you would have delivered your grand dream.

The alternative? Well, some whisper that we may be witnessing a tense game of political poker between district and county. If the funding isn't actually there, then the only card left for "Green Jim" would be a resignation letter — because we'd be moving from wishful thinking into the realm of being "economical with the truth."

But let's move on, because the plot thickens elsewhere.

KCC Highways has agreed to put £2 million towards reopening the Road of Remembrance, on top of the £500,000 they already provided for surveys and planning. Although it's not technically a highways project — the road itself is still in decent shape — the district will now need to match the £2 million or raid their reserves. After all, isn't that what reserves are for? Rainy days... or in this case, expensive heritage walkways?

Meanwhile, lurking on the horizon like a storm cloud with a clipboard is the Local Government Review. A grand Labour-led idea designed, we are told, to make local government more "efficient." Economists may agree that merging councils looks great on paper, but reality tends to be less cooperative.

Under the proposal, Kent could be carved into three or four separate unitary authorities — effectively scrapping both KCC and the district councils entirely. Great news for those who love reorganising things. Less good for residents, staff, or anyone who prefers their local government to occasionally function.

Think about it: thousands of jobs up for grabs, entire departments duplicated, and essential services like fire and rescue, fostering, and waste management suddenly split across multiple mini-counties. The economies of scale vanish overnight, replaced with a confusing patchwork system where what you receive depends on which side of an arbitrary administrative border you happen to live. A county of haves and have-nots — all in the name of "modernisation."

But surprise, surprise — Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens seem very keen on this model. The cynics among us may notice this is the only scenario in which they might cling onto pockets of power. After all, if voters won't give you control of the county, just carve the county up until you can win something.

And the likely result? Well, your council tax and mine will probably double in the next three years. Because reorganising local government is a bit like reorganising your attic: it always reveals unexpected horrors, it always costs more than you thought, and you always end up wishing you'd never started.

So, there we have it — a few weeks in local politics. Grand visions, empty bank accounts, green dreams, infrastructure with no funding, brave announcements followed by long silences, and more committees than anyone could possibly need.

But fear not. Spring is just around the corner. And with it, the possibility — remote though it may be — that something might actually get built.

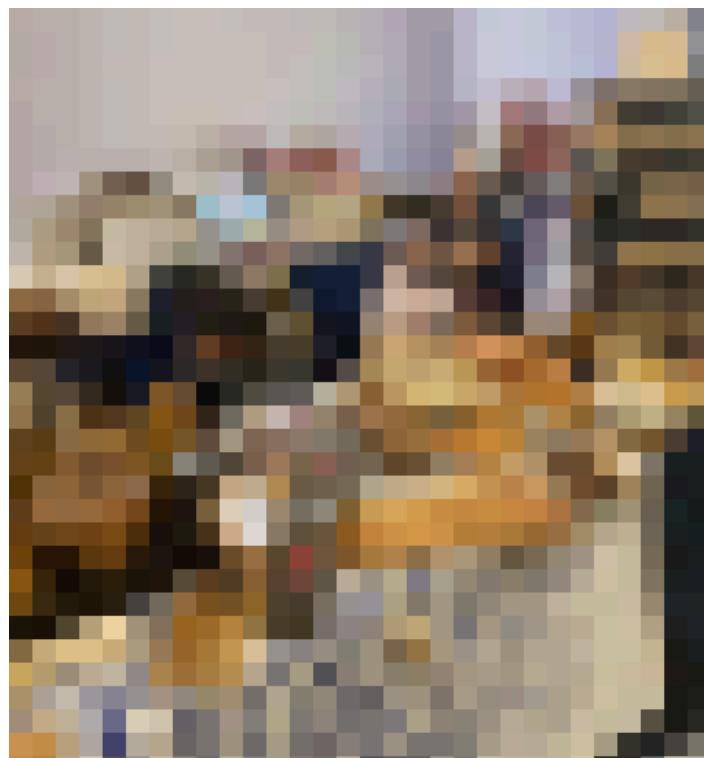
We live, as always, in hope.

# Artisan Fayre to Bring Festive Cheer to New Romney Scout Headquarters

The New Romney Scout Headquarters will be transformed into a hub of festive creativity this December as it hosts a special **Artisan Fayre from 4.00pm to 8.00pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup>, 10.00am to 4.00pm on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> and 10.00am to 2.00pm on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2025**. The three-day event promises a warm, seasonal atmosphere and an impressive selection of handcrafted goods—perfect for Christmas shopping or treating yourself to something unique. The Friday coincides with the Light Up New Romney celebrations in the town – which Fayre organisers Teach Me have supported financially as well as in spirit.

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## Murmuration Magic at Dungeness

When friends at Dungeness told me the starlings had begun their nightly murmuration, I packed my cameras and headed straight for the Dungeness National Nature Reserve. Even after years of photographing wildlife, nothing quite compares to seeing this spectacle unfold in person. As dusk approached, the first small group of starlings appeared, flying low and tight across the surface of the ground. Their movements seemed almost choreographed, all centred around the old tower that stands so prominently on the site.

Before long, more groups arrived from all directions across the reserve. Each flock joined the others seamlessly, as though drawn into a single shared rhythm. What began as a few dozen birds quickly grew into hundreds, and then thousands. Within minutes the sky was alive with nearly ten thousand starlings, painting shifting shapes across the fading light. Their patterns were mesmerising—ripples, waves, and sudden turns that made the entire flock twist like smoke in the wind.

The aerobatic display took place directly above the hides, giving birdwatchers a perfect vantage point. Reactions ranged from quiet awe to excited whispers, and more than one person admitted they had never seen anything so extraordinary. The starlings seemed to play to their audience, sweeping low over the water, rising suddenly, then folding back into themselves with breathtaking precision.

And then, just as quickly as it had begun, the performance started to break apart. On each loop around the tower, small pockets of birds peeled away, dropping into the



surrounding bushes to roost. The murmuration lasted no more than fifteen minutes, but every moment felt magical.

As the final starling disappeared into the scrub, people heading back to the car park were still buzzing with excitement. Science may not fully explain why starlings perform these aerial ballets, but perhaps the mystery only adds to their charm.

Whatever the reason, the murmuration at Dungeness is a seasonal wonder—one to enjoy while it lasts.

*Pictures by: Kerry King*

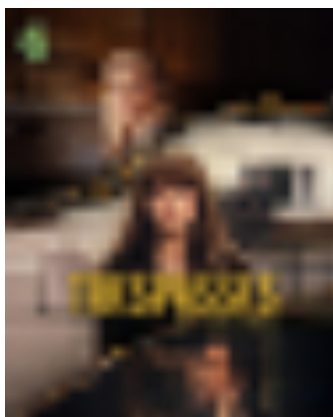




Welcome Lookerites movie and tv fans to another batch of reviews. In this issue we will be looking at a Channel 4 drama sets during the troubles. The latest film from the visionary South Korean director Bong Joon Ho. A psychological thriller with Bill Skarsgaard and Anthony Hopkins. And an action buddy comedy from Prime.

If the US had Vietnam then I guess that the 'Troubles' was our equivalent. Growing up in the 70's I experienced the terror of the IRA's attacks on mainland Britain. I was working in London when an IRA bomb was detonated and I recall the number of checkpoints that I went through in London and Ashford when we played football at the army barracks. I've always had an interest in the 'Troubles' and how two communities living side by side went to war with each other over their faith.

**Trespasses - Channel 4** is the latest British drama to highlight the 'Troubles' as experienced by Catholic primary school teacher Cushla (Lola Pettigrew) who is shocked at the schools anti-Protestant stance. Cushla is quick to defend a young Protestant boy who attends the school and she soon makes friends with the family after the father is savagely beaten by Catholics. Cushla attempts to support the family while her own community turns against her. At home Cushla has her alcoholic mother Gina (Gillian Anderson) to deal with but then she meets Michael (Tom Cullen) a married Protestant barrister who defends members of the IRA.



Cushla and Michael begin an affair which puts pressure on them and their friends as Michael's morals are questioned. With the divide and the army becoming more prominent on the streets Cushla begins to question her decisions and after meeting Michael's wife makes the decision to ditch Michael. But when tragedy strikes Cushla's world falls apart and she is soon under investigation from the Police and drawing the attention of political group as the war on the streets explode.

Rather than a story of the conflict this is a love story that breaches prejudice it is a slow burner as director Dawn Shadforth takes time to build the story that exists in the background. There are some strong performances from the leads, Gillian Anderson is again superb as the drunken mother lost in an alternative world. Martin McCann (Stevie from Blue Lights plays the bar owner of the pub that Cushla works in to raise extra cash)

When South Korean film director Bong Joon Ho won the Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay, for his film Parasite he became the first non-English language film to win Best Picture.

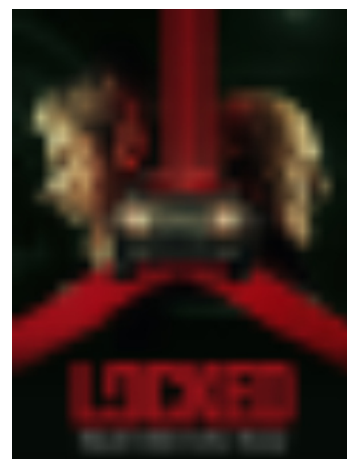
Parasite was a deserved winner and Bong Joon Ho rightfully took a place at top table in Hollywood.

His latest film **Mickey 17 - Sky/Now TV** sees Mickey Barnes (Robert Pattinson) trying to escape the clutches of a loan-shark to do so he takes a job as an 'expendable' on the planet Niflheim. Mickey, however, failed to read the paperwork and finds out too late that an expendable's role is to undertake dangerous missions, which if resulting in death means he is cloned with restored memories through a process called 'reprinting' Mickey's friend Timo (Walking Dead's Stephen Yeun) has taken a better option as a pilot.



During the 4 year trip to Niflheim Mickey begins a romantic relationship with Nasha (Naomi Ackie) Once on Niflheim Mickey begins his missions resulting in several reprints and the advent of Mickey 17. With expedition leader Kenneth Marshall (Mark Ruffalo) supported by his wife Ylfa (Toni Collette) planning on colonizing Niflheim Mickey 17 is sent out to collect a 'Creeper' (the inhabitants of Niflheim) but when he falls into an ice cavern Timo retrieves Mickey's flamethrower, leaving Mickey at the mercy of the Creepers. The Creepers however rescue Mickey who returns to base to find Mickey 18. Fearing Marshall's pledge that clones of clones will be all killed the Mickey's try to kill each other but fail. With both Mickey's working to bring down Marshall's empire and working with the Creepers things get very crazy.

I get the feeling that, like Parasite, Mickey 17 is a film about identity and underdogs finding their place in a society that has turned its back on them. Once again Joon Ho has produced an out there film and while there is always a lot going on it is a very interesting piece of work. Pattinson again shows that he is much more than a vampire heartthrob and he is a very decent actor. Ruffalo shows another level to his acting skills and Toni Collette is, well, Toni Collette and Ackie shows she can easily make the transformation from Whitney Houston to romantic interest.



Wherever Joon Ho goes next I will be there.

What happens when you mix

Evil Dead director Sam Raimi, Pennywise the Clown and Hannibal Lecter. **Locked - Prime TV** is a psychological thriller starring Bill Skarsgaard (Pennywise from IT) and Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lecter from Silence of the Lambs)

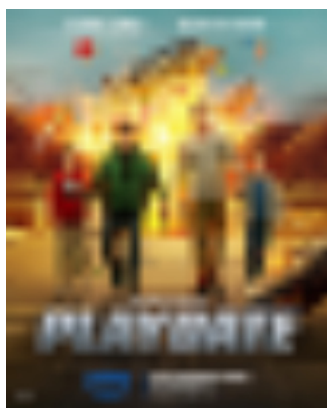
Jobless hustler Eddie (Skarsgaard) is looking to make some quick money to support his daughter Sarah. When he finds an unlocked SUV he jumps in to ransack it but finds himself locked in. He tries to break his way out but only manages to cut himself. Eddie then receives a call from William (Hopkins) the car's owner who tells him after successive break-ins he has decided to arm his SUV.

In desperation Eddie shoots at the glass but only manages to shoot himself in the leg from the deflected bullet. Eddie passes out but when he awakens he finds his leg has been treated by William who is a doctor. William tells Eddie he has terminal cancer and then begins his own form of torture with electric shocks, turning the temperature up and down and playing yodelling music via the car stereo. William tells Eddie he will release him if he can prove this is his first offense.

William offers up a bottle of water to the dehydrated Eddie who tells William his situation apologising for his actions for which William gives the starving Eddie a cookie. It is then that Eddie realises that he has won £500 on a lottery card that he bought and has the money he needed. William then takes Eddie on a joyride remotely operating the SUV. William then goes after Sarah, Eddie's daughter. Leaving a desperate Eddie to take drastic action.

Locked reminded me of two other movies Phone Booth, with a car replacing the phone booth and Saw (Saw in a car anyone) It's Phone Booth that Locked appears to have drawn upon though as like Colin Farrell, Skarsgaard is trapped and at the mercy of a mysterious and remote voice, in this case Hopkins.. Locked is a fast paced thriller that keeps you gripped throughout. A cat and mouse drama that plays with your emotions but definitely worth a view.

Kevin James has had his fair share of hits 'n' misses but I loved Here Comes the Boom and Alan Ritchson was made to play Reacher and was excellent in Guy Ritchie's Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare playing the psychotic Anders Lassen. The pair star together in **Playdate on Amazon Prime**.



When Brian (James) is fired from his job he swaps places with his wife Emily and becomes a stay at home Dad to stepson Lucas who would prefer to dance than play sports and is the subject of school bullies. While trying to teach Lucas to catch and throw a football he encounters Jeff engaging in a energetic game of catch with his son CJ. Jeff persuades Brian to go to lunch at Buckee Cheese and then for a playdate but when a group of mercenaries attack the group they are forced to flee.

Jeff reveals to Brian that he was a Delta Force Soldier that rescued CJ from a top secret facility and that the pair have been hiding out ever since. When the group interrogate an employee of the facility they learn that CJ is a clone of Jeff (CJ - Clone Jeff) created by scientist and billionaire Simon Maddox (Alan Tudyk) with the assistance of Colonel Kurtz

(Jeff's former commander who viewed Jeff as the perfect soldier and decided to create an army of Jeff's) When Maddox's henchman decide to attack Emily Brian sells Jeff out but remorseful decides to fight back leaving Brian, Jeff, Lucas and CJ to fight Maddox, Kurt and an army of CJ's.

Playdate is a good old fashioned buddy action comedy it doesn't require any thought process you just need to sit back and enjoy the ride. Ritchson is very funny playing the straight guy for laughs and he and James form a good partnership.

## 2026

So what can we expect from 2026 on the big screen.

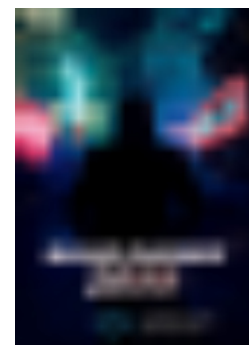
The big film is going to be Christopher Nolan's **The Odyssey** this is going to be 2026's Oppenheimer and you can expect Oscar nominations galore. If it's the classics you want then Riz Ahmed playing Shakespeares Hamlet could be interesting. Margot Robbie stars in Wuthering Heights as Kathy. Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway and Emily Blunt reunite for The Devil Wears Prada 2.



Hands up who can't wait to see Woody, Buzz and co come up against their electronic counterparts in **Toy Story 5** so grab your popcorn and settle back. The power of Greyskull is back Masters of the Universe. End Blyton's The Magic Faraway Trip should be interesting. Fans of Wile E. Coyote buckle up for Coyote vs Acme. There's also a new Disney live action in the shape of Moana (Will The Rock reprise his role)



Sci-Fi fans be prepared for the third instalment of the Dune franchise **Dune Three**. **Blade Runner 2099** should appeal to fans of the franchise and Star Wars fans prepare for The Mandalorian and Grogu. Then there's the Ryan Gosling saves the world in Project Hail-Mary.



Marvel/DC fans there's plenty of action to whet your appetites. Avengers: Doomsday will see a new group Avengers assemble. There's a new Spidey adventure **Spider-Man: Brand New Day**.



Horror fans get ready for a plethora of horror sequels the biggest of which will be 28 Years Later: The Bone Temple which will be followed by Scream 7, Ready or Not 2: Here I Come, The Mummy, Evil Dead Burn and two has as yet untitled sequels for Resident Evil and The Exorcist.

That's your lot for now sorry I didn't deliver The Running Man and Sis: Road to Revenge but a particularly nasty stomach bug has laid me low hopefully next issue.

# The Windmill On The Marsh

By Carol Pullen.

old windmill had stood for generations on the marshes. People for miles around knew the windmill. It stood spread-eagled against the skyline. Strong and sturdy. It had weathered the fiercest of storms, and was known to all on the marsh as Hobden's mill.

Beside the mill stood the bakery. At the back of this bakery was a tiny slip of a house. It was in this house that there had always lived a family named Hobden, this mill and bakery had been owned for generations by the Hobden family. I seemed that now all that was going to change, Bess Hobden stood in the yard behind the house staring at the windmill. It cast its shadow over her. She stood with her large feet planted firmly on the ground, her sturdy legs slightly apart, an old apron tied around her ample waist. Bess Hobden was like the windmill itself, strong and sturdy. She had raised six children in the little mill house, and although she was well over seventy, she still worked like a woman half her age.

Her husband Tom, with whom she had shared a close, companionable life, had always likened her to the windmill. "Bess" he would say "You and that old windmill are two of a kind. Nothing ever changes you. Life throws everything at you, and you still stand firm. Just like the old mill."

Bess looked up at the windmill; the cold evening wind whipped her thick grey hair back from her face. Her cheeks were pink with the cold, but she didn't seem to feel it. It was as if she was waiting for the windmill to speak. The last of the Winter sun picked out its white sails. It reminded her of a kindly old man with outstretched arms.

When she had come to the mill as a young bride, she had loved the mill at first sight.

Over the years, Bess had raised her family, and things had been tough. She would stand out in the backyard, as she was doing at this moment, and look up at the windmill, and silently tell it her troubles. Sometimes with the afternoon sun on her back, and sometimes with the winter snow on the ground. Different seasons, different troubles.

The windmill would stand silently looking down on her. It was as if it understood. It might have seemed silly to anyone else, but Bess always felt better for her talks. Over the years her children had grown up. Some had married and moved away. They still came to visit bringing their children with them. It was not her children that Bess was thinking of this wintery evening. It was her husband, Tom. Dear Tom. What a wonderful husband he was. Always, he had kept his sense of humor. Always such a hard worker and good provider. But not anymore. He too was over seventy and he had been ill this last year.



He couldn't work as he had done previously. None of their children were interested in taking over the business. Now dear Tom was old and not well enough to carry on, Bess and he had decided to sell up and move away.

They had received a good offer for the place to Bess it didn't seem right.

There had always been a Hobden at the mill. It was said that if the mill left the hands of the Hobdens, it would fall. There would be no windmill if there were no Hobdens.

Bess thought of this as she continued to look up at the sails of the windmill. There didn't seem to be any way out. Tom was too frail now to carry on. Bess had tried to talk her sons into coming in and taking the business over, but none of them had been keen.

They all had their own lives mapped out and their plans didn't include the bakery. It was ridiculous, but she felt that she was betraying the windmill to even think of leaving.

There was no other way. Bess tried to convey her thoughts to the windmill.

She let her mind go back over the years to some of the problems she had faced. Some were large, and at the time seemed insurmountable. But every time they had somehow overcome them, and it seemed that in some strange way the old windmill had helped her. Every time it had been after one of her silent talks with the windmill that

the solution had arrived. It couldn't have been a coincidence every time. It just couldn't be.

Bess just knew it was the mill watching over her, and her family. This time she couldn't see how her old friend could help. She shivered in the now complete darkness. The wind whipped viciously around her legs. She stared once more at the dark shape of the sails, trying to convey her sorrow and despair.

'Theres no other way' she whispered to herself. She turned to go into the mill house. 'No other way old friend. Please understand. I don't want to leave. We belong here, but we can't manage anymore. We must leave'.

The noise of the windmill's sails creaked as the wind rose and caught them. The old familiar creak of the sails seemed to Bess to be the windmill's answer. It understood.

Inside the house Bess shut the door against the dark night, and busied herself in the kitchen. Next, she prepared a supper tray, which she took into the cheerful little sitting room.

Tom. Her dear Tom sat by the fire, looking frail. The illness he had born this last year showed in his face. Bess sat down beside him. She took his thin hand in her large capable one. His face looked gaunt. He turned his face towards her and smiled. His smile made him look young again. It was his smile that Bess had first noticed, and she had come to love it, and him.

They sat in peaceful silence. They didn't need words between them. They were just happy to be together. Bess gazed around at the familiar objects. They had both been so happy here. She wondered if the move from the mill to a new house would be bad for Tom. He might give up. He had been very tired lately. She thought again about the offer they had received for the mill. It was a good, fair offer, probably the best they would ever get.

Bess looked into Tom's eyes. His face was so thin. He was ill. He would not get better all the time he was worried about the business.

She decided in that moment what to do. They would sell up and move to a little bungalow, where she could nurse Tom back to health. First thing in the morning she would set the wheels in motion. She gazed once more around the little sitting room. Her gaze took in the good old-fashioned furniture, most of which had been handed down through the generations. Her eyes then looked at the numerous family photographs.

Strange that in all the years she had sat in this room, she had never noticed that in every photograph, there was the windmill in the background. Even if in some, only parts of it were visible there it was looking protectively down over the Hobdens. Bess thought then of the story of the old windmill. About how it would fall, if ever the Hobden family left. She shivered as she heard the wind rising. It was whipping into a gale. Soon she heard the rain pitting against the windows. A raging gale was soon sweeping across the marshes, and battering the little mill house. Bess helped Tom slowly up the narrow stairs and into bed. Before she got into bed herself, she peered out of the narrow bedroom window into the blackness of the night. The wind was

screaming, and the rain was lashing the sides of the little house. The windmill could not be seen.

All Bess could hear was the loud creaking, above the screaming wind. It sounded to Bess like loud sobs. Straining her eyes, Bess still tried to make out the shape of the windmill, still tried to convey to it her decision to leave.

Finally, she climbed into the large old- fashioned bed. Long after Tom had fallen asleep, Bess lay listening to the storm, as it roared and screamed and shook the very foundations of her little home.

The noise of the storm rose, and increased, until it seemed that the very house was moving. The noise of the wind rose higher, until it reached a screaming crescendo. Then for Bess and Tom Hobden, as they started up from their bed in terror.

There was silence. Absolute silence.

The worst storm in fifty years raged that night, and in the morning, with strong winds still buffeting the countryside doing untold damage the bakery and the mill house could be seen. They lay in ruins. The great black windmill had been ripped up from the ground and flung down on top of the bakery and the house They were demolished.

The familiar landmark of the windmill on the marsh had gone. Bess and Tom are buried in the little churchyard on the marsh. On the site of the old mill is a splendid new supermarket.

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Welcome to Kent Racing—a team proving that motorsport can grow from the most unlikely and humble of places. At the wheel is Ben Powney, a Folkestone-based driver who's day job in landscaping looks worlds away from the thrill of battling for podiums and race wins in Formula Ford. But weekend after weekend, Ben climbs into a machine that carries not just speed, but decades of Kent engineering heritage.



That heritage comes from two remarkable local craftsmen: Peter Alexander prepares and runs the Jamun M92 Formula Ford, along with many other cars in the stable. His workshop may not be a glossy race bay, but don't let that fool you — Peter's attention to detail and engineering standards are as high as any professional race outfit. PA Motorsports long-standing success in Formula Ford and all other formulas showcases this. Don't forget the stories of Ken Tyrrell operating from a wooden shed to F1 Championship success.

And then there's Tony Mundy, the man who originally designed and built the car back in 1992 under the famous Kent-based team Jamun Racing. Now 84 years old, Tony still lives and breathes engineering, and remains a guiding figure behind the car's story and projection to the front of the grid. The kind who prove that the best ideas often start with a kettle, a cold workshop, and a stubborn belief that something can always be made a bit faster. And it's working: 2024 and 2025 have brought the team strong results, front-row starts, race wins, many podiums against larger, better funded outfits.

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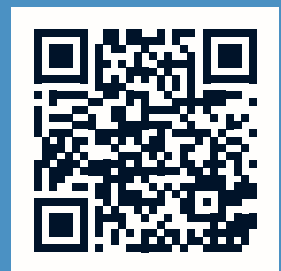
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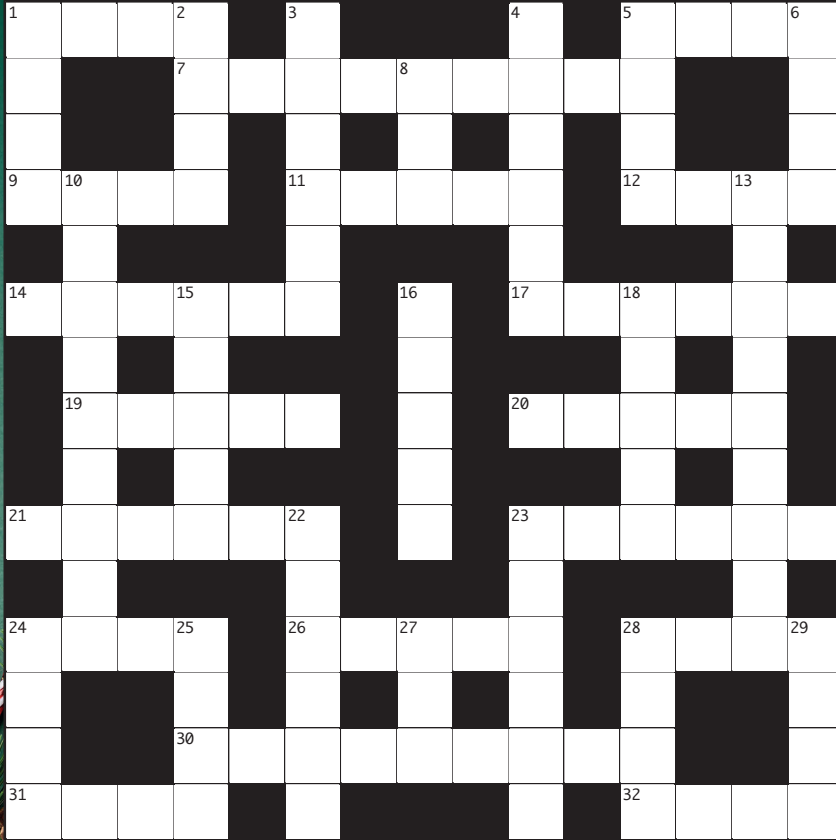
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# General Knowledge Crossword

#058



**Across Clues:**

- 1. Tapioca pearls in tea (4)
- 5. Composer of the Brandenburg Concertos (4)
- 7. Plant hung at Christmas (9)
- 9. Previously owned (4)
- 11. Mistreat or harm (5)
- 12. Floor of a ship (4)
- 14. Pave roughly with stones (6)
- 17. Show off proudly (6)
- 19. Play full of ridiculous situations (5)
- 20. Restless (5)
- 21. Large underground cave (6)
- 23. Substance in the ear canal (6)
- 24. Where you sleep (4)
- 26. Respond to something (5)
- 28. Back part of the foot (4)
- 30. Long hosiery (9)
- 31. Sections of a play (4)
- 32. Flat piece of stone (4)

**Down Clues:**

- 1. Male admirer (4)
- 2. Surrounded by (4)
- 3. Property (6)
- 4. Reflexive pronoun (6)
- 5. Small round object for threading (4)
- 6. Bird of prey (4)
- 8. Currency of Romania (3)
- 10. Frozen crystal from the sky (9)
- 13. Sweet striped treat (9)
- 15. Flat-bottomed boat (5)
- 16. Heavenly being (5)
- 18. Following in time (5)
- 22. Not wide (6)
- 23. Range (6)
- 24. Cold wind or place name (4)
- 25. Impertinent reply (4)
- 27. Request or inquire (3)
- 28. Snake sound (4)
- 29. Young sheep (4)

Answers: Across: 1. Boba, 5. Bach, 7. Mistletoe, 9. Used, 11. Abuse, 12. Deck, 14. Cobble, 17. Faunt, 19. Farce, 20. Antsy, 21. Cavern, 23. Earwax, 24. Beds, 26. React, 28. Heel, 30. Stockings, 31. Acts, 32. Slab.  
Down: 1. Beau, 2. Amid, 3. Estate, 4. Itself, 5. Bead, 6. Hawk, 8. Leu, 10. Snowflake, 13. Candy cane, 15. Barge, 16. Angel, 18. After, 22. Narrow, 23. Extent, 24. Bora, 25. Sass, 27. Ask, 28. Hiss, 29. Lamb.

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

# Sudoku Challenge

# Hidden Message Wordsearch

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

## Christmas Tree Decorations

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

- |           |            |           |
|-----------|------------|-----------|
| Angel     | Elf        | Ribbon    |
| Bauble    | Garland    | Santa     |
| Beads     | Heart      | Sleigh    |
| Bells     | Holly      | Snowflake |
| Bow       | Icicle     | Snowman   |
| Candycane | Lantern    | Star      |
| Crown     | Lights     | Stocking  |
| Crystal   | Nutcracker | Tinsel    |
| Dove      | Pinecone   | Toy       |
| Drum      | Reindeer   | Wreath    |

Write the hidden message here:

# Spot the Difference!

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



# LGR

## Is Coming...

### but Do You Know What It Is and How It Will Affect You?

A factual political report on the impending Local Government Reorganisation in Kent

Local Government Reorganisation – or LGR – is heading for Kent, and although most residents know little or nothing about it, the consequences will be significant. The way Kent is governed, the services you rely on, and the taxes you pay could all be reshaped within the next few years.

The System as it Stands  
Kent currently operates on a three-tier structure:

#### • Parish and Town Councils

The most localised tier, typically made up of volunteers who care about their communities. Their powers are limited to hyper-local matters – grass-cutting, small planning responses, tree preservation orders and community facilities. They meet once a month and set a modest parish precept.

#### • District Councils

Our local district – Folkestone & Hythe – is one of 12 across Kent. Districts set business rates, manage planning applications, oversee local housing, waste and recycling, leisure services, and collect council tax. They carry real spending power and directly shape local services.

#### • Kent County Council (KCC)

The upper tier, responsible for the major statutory services with a budget of around £2 billion. KCC oversees highways, potholes, schools, children's transport, vulnerable children, adoption and fostering, Kent Fire & Rescue, public health, registrars, and the most financially challenging area of all: Adult Social Care.

This system has existed for decades. But Labour's new national agenda includes a sweeping restructuring of local government – despite it not being explicitly included in their manifesto.

### What LGR Would Mean ?

At the heart of LGR is a simple but radical proposal:

Abolish District Councils and abolish Kent County Council.

In their place, create 3 or 4 new "unitary authorities", each responsible for every local government function within their boundaries.

Kent's councils must submit their preferred option to the Secretary of State by 28 November. The frontrunner appears to be Option 3A – a plan to merge:

**Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe,  
Dover, Canterbury, Thanet**

Into one "East Kent Unitary" serving roughly half a million residents, with Canterbury likely to become the administrative centre.

### This would mean:

District councils of 30–40 elected members replaced by perhaps 8–10 councillors covering vast divisions.

Local democratic representation reduced by two-thirds or more.

Services centralised over a geographically huge area.

#### The Financial Timebomb Beneath the Surface

When the Conservatives lost control of KCC earlier this year, some privately admitted relief. After years of rising statutory pressures – particularly Special Educational Needs and Adult Social Care – the council had accumulated a £730 million deficit.

### Under LGR, this problem doesn't disappear. It simply gets divided.

Each new unitary authority would inherit around £200 million of historic KCC debt on day one.

They would then need to renegotiate: care home contracts, school transport arrangements, fostering and adoption services, bus subsidies, waste contracts and every other service currently delivered countywide.

KCC benefits from economies of scale. Splitting its responsibilities into three or four separate authorities could dramatically increase costs.

### Adult Social Care – The Elephant in the Room

Adult Social Care is already swallowing council budgets nationwide.

## A typical scenario:

A wealthy resident moves into a private care home costing £2,000–£2,500 a week, they want the best because they have worked hard and can afford it.

When their savings run out, legislation requires the local authority to pick up the cost – even if cheaper provision exists elsewhere.

# ***This single service pushes councils to the brink.***

Under LGR, each new authority would be responsible for sourcing its own care provision. With smaller bargaining power and reduced economies of scale, costs may escalate further.

Fostering is another example. KCC foster carers might currently receive around £300 a week. Private sector foster placements can cost councils more than £2,000 a week. If the new unitary councils struggle to recruit carers, they will be forced into expensive private contracts – another statutory pressure.

## East vs West – A New Divide

Kent is not financially equal.

West Kent towns such as Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells enjoy far higher tax bases and property values than eastern coastal districts.

Under LGR, the traditional balance in which wealthier areas help stabilise poorer ones could vanish.

Instead, residents in East Kent – already with lower incomes – may face higher council tax and fewer services.

One senior financial officer recently described the model bluntly:

***“Three mini bankruptcies instead of one big one.”***

## Who Asked for This?

Perhaps the biggest political controversy is that nobody has asked the public.

**There has been no referendum.**

**No public consultation.**

## Minimal media coverage.

And no mention in Labour’s election campaign that local government would be torn up and rebuilt from scratch.

Yet the consequences for residents will be huge:

Council tax is widely predicted to rise steeply – some estimates suggest doubling within five years.

Services could become centralised and harder to access.

Local representation will shrink dramatically.

The new councils will begin life already deep in inherited debt.

## What Can Residents Do?

Realistically, very little.

Councils must submit their preferred structure to government by late November, and ministers will decide the final model early next year.

### ***The only immediate action is political:***

Tell your MP that LGR will fundamentally reshape Kent – and that residents should be consulted before decisions of this scale are taken.

If the public feel blindsided by the consequences, Labour may find that Kent’s willingness to “take a gamble” on this

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# THE RANT!!!



## Electric Cars – The Silent Menace

Electric cars. The marmite of the motoring world. You either love them, or you've sat next to one at the lights wondering why it's silently judging you while you're revving your proper engine like a normal human being.

Now, anyone who knows anything about me knows I am what scientists would classify as a "petrol-headed endangered species." At one point I owned seven cars. Seven. That's not a collection — that's a fleet. A small dealership. A one-man Top Gear episode. I had a few classics, a couple of vans, and two everyday cars for standard usage — because, naturally, what's the point of having one perfectly good motor when you can have several that all upset your neighbours in different ways?

But let me get this straight: I'm not here to debate the pros and cons of electric cars. No. Absolutely not. I'm not going to rant about them being uglier than a Morris Marina dipped in blancmange. I'm not going to bring up how the battery weighs more than my first house. And I definitely won't mention that even the "lightweight" ones now tip the scales like they've spent lockdown living exclusively on doughnuts and regret.

No, no. I'm being very mature about it.

I'm not going to talk about climate stuff either. Apparently, EVs are the champions of the planet — silently humming around saving baby penguins and dolphins while us petrol drivers personally punch holes in the ozone with our exhaust pipes. Except, of course, manufacturing those batteries is about as environmentally friendly as setting fire to a tyre factory and throwing a few lithium mines on top for a bit of seasoning. But hey, that's none of my business.

Here's the thing, though. Let's say you decide to embrace the future. You buy yourself a shiny, silent, planet-hugging electric wonder-wagon. You charge it overnight, leave the house feeling greener than Greta Thunberg's pencil case... and for a few days, everything's fine.

Then comes the moment no EV owner wants to face: You're on the Marsh.

Suddenly your dashboard starts shrieking like a dying techno-parrot.  
Battery low.  
Find charger.  
You are now driving a very expensive paperweight.

Where do you go? Who do you call? Ghostbusters? The AA? Ed Miliband's climate emergency hotline?

Because here's the hilarious part: finding a fast charger around here is like hunting the Loch Ness Monster — everyone swears they exist, but nobody's ever actually seen one.

The only proper fast chargers anywhere near us?

Stop 24 on the motorway

And ONE at the Hythe Road garage in Ashford

That's it. Two superchargers for an entire coastline of eco-motorists. So unless your idea of a fun day is queuing behind twelve Teslas and a Kia shaped like a fridge, you're in trouble.

Imagine it. You limp into Stop 24 on 2% battery. You pull in, sweating, praying, wondering if your car is about to die in the drive-thru of Greggs. But every charger is taken. And not by people who are nipping in for five minutes either.

Oh no.

Because charging an electric car isn't like popping to the pumps, filling up, paying, and buggering off.

No. It's an EVENT.

You plug in, and suddenly you've got:

People sitting in their cars knitting

Others having full family picnics

One bloke doing yoga next to a Nissan Leaf

Someone working remotely from their boot

And three kids charging their iPads off daddy's eco-friendly battery of righteousness

What are you supposed to do? Go shopping? See a film? Learn a new language? By the time you've finished charging, you're eligible for your state pension.

And don't get me started on the price. They said electric cars would be cheaper to run.

Cheaper?!

Have you SEEN the rates on public chargers? You'd save money having the car shipped home on a barge, repainted as a petrol model, and sold.

Honestly, if I had a pound for every EV owner who said, "Well actually, with the correct off-peak overnight tariff and a home charger and a solar roof and the alignment of Jupiter, it works out quite cheap..." — I could fill my Range Rover for a year.

But according to Mr Miliband — our national Minister for Magical Thinking — we'll all be driving them soon. Every single one of us. Doesn't matter if you live in central London, or a field in the middle of Romney Marsh where the nearest piece of infrastructure is a cow.

We'll need:

Thousands more fast chargers

A power grid that doesn't faint every time someone plugs in a kettle

AND a national electricity supply that doesn't rely on France feeling generous

Because the current system can't cope. If every house on my street plugged in an EV at the same time, the lights would dim, the Wi-Fi would explode, and the National Grid would ask us nicely to knock it off before everything catches fire.

And wait until the winter. When everyone plugs in their car AND their heating because the gas boiler will have been banned too. People will be fighting over extension leads like it's Black Friday at B&Q.

But here's the worst part.  
The betrayal.  
The shame.  
The sheer gut-wrenching horror.

The other day, I was driving down the motorway. Nice sunny day. Good traffic. Suddenly, I see a car in front and think:

"Oooh... that's nice. Smart looking motor that."

I draw closer. I lean forward. I squint. And then it happens. A red lightning bolt of doom on the back.

It was a Tesla. A BLOOMIN' TESLA.

I nearly drove into the central reservation. I felt dirty. Conflicted. Like I needed a shower and a V8 engine revved in my ear to feel normal again.

How can I like it? HOW?! The enemy is attractive now. They've made eco-friendly look cool. It's like discovering vegetables taste nice — it goes against everything we know.

So yes. Electric cars might be the future. They might eventually work. One day we might have chargers that don't require a second mortgage, a sacrifice to the electricity gods, and a three-hour wait behind someone called Tarquin charging his silent vegan-mobile.

But until then?

Give me petrol. Give me noise. Give me fumes. If my car doesn't sound like an angry dinosaur trapped in a biscuit tin, I'm not interested.

At least a petrol car has the decency to warn you when it's about to die — cough, splutter, a bit of drama. An electric car just goes:

"Battery depleted. Goodbye."

Then silently leaves you by the side of the A259 like an abandoned Amazon parcel.

So yes, Mr Miliband — when you've:

- ✓ Built the chargers
- ✓ Upgraded the grid
- ✓ Stopped the prices being daylight robbery
- ✓ And made sure a "quick charge" doesn't take longer than a family holiday —

We'll talk.

Until then, I'll stick to engines, and being able to drive more than 20 miles without needing to plug into a £7-a-minute lightning socket next to a Costa Coffee.

## 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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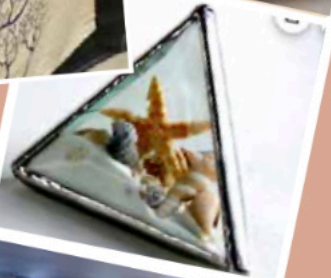
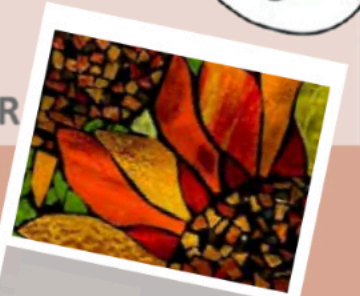
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Sunday 14th 10.00am - 2.00pm

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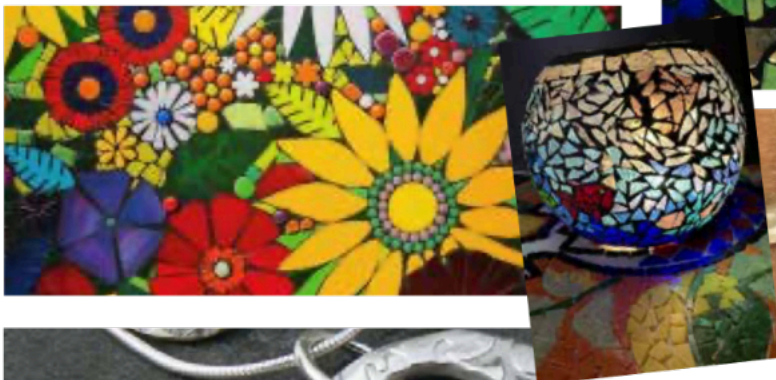
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# £750k Coastal Park Upgrade Kicked Into the Long Grass as Green-Lib Dem Leadership Dithers Yet Again



Plans to breathe new life into Folkestone's much-loved Lower Leas Coastal Park have been kicked several months down the road – and critics say it's yet another example of a Green/Liberal Democrat administration too afraid to act, too hesitant to spend reserves, and too slow to deliver for residents.

The £750,000 overhaul of the park's ageing adventure play area – one of Kent's largest and a magnet for families across the district – was originally due to begin this winter, with a shiny new facility expected to be ready for summer 2025.

But under the Green/Liberal leadership at Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC), those ambitions have evaporated into yet another delay.

## Cliff Works Delay – or Council Paralysis?

The council insists the reason for the slippage is the stalled programme of cliff stabilisation works following last year's landslide, triggered by heavy rainfall. The landslip required surveys, tree work and technical assessments, which have dragged on far longer than expected.

The stabilisation phase itself – previously meant to be well underway by now – is only expected to begin in January.

Independent councillor Connor McConville confirmed the new dates, saying tenders have gone out for design, build and engineering works. But for many, that raises the question: why has so little happened in the past year?

Critics argue that while the cliff issue is real, the lack of pace is all too familiar under the Green/Liberal Democrat

coalition – a council leadership notoriously reluctant to dip into its reserves or take bold, timely decisions.

And the public now faces a knock-on delay of the entire play park project until late spring, possibly early summer.

**A Play Park 'At the End of Its Life' – But Still No Action**  
Council documents openly state the current adventure play area is "beyond economical maintenance and repair". The equipment is approaching 25 years old and has seen literally millions of uses since opening in 2000.

More than 1,100 residents responded to FHDC's consultation earlier this year, calling for:

New, inclusive equipment suitable for all abilities  
A complete replacement of the main timber climbing frame

Better accessibility around the site

Improved seating, pathways and cycle parking

**The message could not have been clearer: get on with it.**

But instead of decisive leadership, parents and young people have been handed yet another long wait.

## The Real Issue? A Leadership Scared to Spend Its Own Money

Perhaps most telling of all is the council's approach to the nearby Road of Remembrance landslip.



Despite the road being structurally sound, FHDC marched straight to Kent County Council (KCC) asking them to foot the bill – cap in hand – for repair work to reopen a vital route closed for nearly two years.

KCC Highways Cabinet Member Peter Osbourne was blunt: the county council had already paid half a million pounds on structural reports. He even offered £2 million towards the works, if FHDC matched it.

Predictably, the Green/Liberal Democrat administration did not. Not because the money isn't there – reserves remain healthy – but because the leadership appears paralysed by its own fear of spending them.

It's a familiar pattern: big ambitions, pages of glossy consultations, public engagement exercises... but when it comes to actually fixing things, everything stalls.

## A District Slipping – Literally and Politically

Folkestone's cliff-related woes are significant. From protected wildlife to wartime artefacts, KCC's engineers have faced genuine complications. But while the county

council works through the obstacles, the district council seems content to hide behind them.

### **The reality is clear:**

The Lower Leas cliff repairs have taken far too long

The play park upgrade is now months behind schedule

A major road remains closed because FHDC won't commit financially

Residents and families are the ones who lose out

Whether it's cliff slips, housebuilding, Otterpool, town-centre projects, or now the Lower Leas, the pattern is the same under the Green/Liberal Democrat administration: endless process, little progress.

### **The Bottom Line**

Families were promised a revamped, modern play area by

next summer. Instead, they face bulldozers and diggers at best in late spring – and at worst, more delays if the cliff works overrun yet again.

The Greens and Lib Dems at FHDC claim to champion community spaces, young people and sustainable investment. But once again, their inability – or unwillingness – to act decisively has turned a routine refurbishment into another drawn-out saga.

Residents want delivery, not dithering.

Families want action, not excuses.

And Folkestone deserves a council that isn't afraid to use the resources it already has to get essential projects done.

At this rate, the only thing being stabilised is the council's reputation for delay.

## **Advent & Christmas Services in Hythe & Saltwood**

**10:30am Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December** – All Age Café Church at *Hythe United Reformed Church*

**3pm Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December** – Trees of Love Memorial Carol Service at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**4pm Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December** – Lessons & Carols at *Pedlinge Chapel*

**4pm Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December** – Carol Service for All Ages at *South Kent Community Church*

**7pm Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December** – Carols on the Green at *Saltwood Green*

**7pm Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December** – Carols for All at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**10:30am Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Sunday Morning Carols at *South Kent Community Church*

**11am Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Carol Service at *St Michael's Methodist-Anglican Church Centre*

**3pm Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Lessons & Carols at *Saltwood Church*

**5pm Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Christingle Service and Party at *Hythe Bay School*

**6pm Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Carols at the Castle at *Lympne Castle*

**6pm Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December** – Carol Service at *Our Lady of Good Counsel Church*

**10am-12pm Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December** – Children's Christmas Singing Workshop at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**3pm Christmas Eve** – Traditional Crib Service at *Saltwood Church*

**3pm Christmas Eve** – Contemporary Crib Service at *Lympne Church*

**4pm Christmas Eve** – 'The Christmas Story' Crib Service at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**6:30pm Christmas Eve** – Christmas Eve Communion at *Holy Cross Church*

**7pm Christmas Eve** – Blue Christmas Service at *Lympne Church*

**8pm Christmas Eve** - Nativity Vigil at *Our Lady of Good Counsel Church*

**11:30pm Christmas Eve** – Midnight Mass at *Saltwood Church*

**11:30pm Christmas Eve** – Midnight Mass at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**8am Christmas Day** – Christmas Day Communion at *Pedlinge Chapel*

**8am Christmas Day** – Christmas Day Mass at *St Monica's, Dymchurch*

**10am Christmas Day** - Christmas Day Communion at *Saltwood Church*

**9:30am Christmas Day** - Christmas Day Eucharist at *St Leonard's, Hythe*

**9:30am Christmas Day** - Christmas Day Mass at *Our Lady of Good Counsel Church*

**10:30am Christmas Day** - Christmas Day Service at *South Kent Community Church*

**10:30am Christmas Day** – United Christmas Day Service at *Hythe United Reformed Church*

# Church Update

By June Gooch



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

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

The demand, unfortunately is not slowing down, and the following items are in short supply. Cooking oil, female deodorant, ketchup, razors, veggie meals in a tin, and washing up liquid. Fresh food is now being distributed, but depends on availability.

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

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

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

**Special Christmas services and events.** Most churches are publishing their dates and times for these, so keep a look out for information, which will be particular to your church.

## Brookland, St Augustine.

In December there will be no formal evensong, but on Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup> there will be carols around the tree at 6pm. Outdoors if fine, indoors if raining. In January and February, there will not be a Sung evensong on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, just a short service without the choir in the small room. The choir have been invited to join an informal Christmas sing song at the Woolpack on December 19<sup>th</sup>. There will be a crib service in the church at 4pm on Christmas Eve, mostly for Children.

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

## Brenzett, St Eanswith.

On the Sunday after Christmas, December 28<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Holy Communion service in the church at 9am. There aren't many services in Brenzett Church, so if you would like to see the inside of this lovely church, do feel free to come along.

## Dymchurch, St Peter and Paul.

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

Sacristan training (helping with communion) is being offered, so anyone who is interested can let Chris Clark know and your name can be added to the list.

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

## Greatstone, St Peter.

The church hall, attached to the church, is very well used for midweek events. There are clubs and societies of all sorts, which include a Wednesday morning drop in, which welcomes pre-school children and their carers. There is wide variety of toys and chances for chats and refreshments. Some of the groups will be having a break for Christmas, after a Christmas event, so please see the notices for your group.

The next Craft Fair will be on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup> from 10am-2pm, with a seasonal flavour. Last chance to buy some unique presents before Christmas, and have some seasonal cheer! There are many stalls, featuring all sorts of crafts. All very welcome.

The parishes of Lydd and Greatstone belong to the same benefice and are looking for a treasurer to look after the church's' money. Although you don't need to be an accountant, knowledge of modern management of finance would be a benefit.

## Ivychurch, St George.

As most locals will have seen, there are building works going on at the church, repairing and restoring. As often happens, reno creep has reared its head, and further works have to be undertaken urgently. Once again, the RM Historic Churches Trust has come to the churches aid by funding most of the work. The turret clock has been dismantled, and is being sent to specialist repairers in Penrith. It is hoped it will be back in position by Easter.

There will be a Carol Service with Christingle and the City of Canterbury Brass Band on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 3.30pm. All welcome, but dress warmly. St Georges is a very big space!

On Thursday December 11<sup>th</sup> there will be carols singing around the village, starting at the Village Hall at 6pm, and finishing at the Bell for a warming drink. Please dress warmly and bring a torch.

On Christmas Eve there will be carols by candlelight at 9pm to welcome in Christmas. On December 20<sup>th</sup>, from 3-5pm, there will be the children's party, with entertainment in the Village Hall. The amenity association organises this, and thanks is given to all those who have worked hard to raise money for the party, and all those local businesses who have contributed to the fund.

## Lydd, All Saints.

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

Known as the Cathedral of the Marsh, the church is a very large building, which needs a lot of looking after. The maintenance team always welcome new helpers, even if it only an hour a month. Even if you don't go to church, but feel

for the history of the building, contact warden Pat Carter on 01797 320108 or Chris Aubrey on 01797 320890.

The Christmas Fair was much enjoyed by the many who attended, but sadly the small petting farm was unable to attend, because of restrictions on moving livestock.

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

#### **New Romney, St Nicholas.**

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

There will be a festive concert by the City of Canterbury Brass Band on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Admission is free, but a donation towards the New Romney Charities, including Last Chance Animal Rescue, and the Mayor's charity for the year "With Grace." This raises money to train teachers and other staff to be mental health "first aiders" to help young people when mental health problems first arise, so they don't reach crisis point.

#### **New Romney Methodist Church.**

There is a service at 10.30am on alternative Sundays, see notices for exact dates. There is also a Meeting Point on Thursday mornings, from 10am to midday. All welcome, for anyone who would like coffee and chat. A coffee morning takes place on Saturday mornings, from 10am. All welcome.

#### **Newchurch. St Peter and Paul.**

There will be a carol service on Christmas Eve, at 5pm, and this will be child friendly, and refreshments afterwards will cater for children and adults.

#### **Romney Marsh Community Church.**

There is a Sunday service every week at 10.30am, followed by refreshments and fellowship. Youth and Children's teaching available during the service. Come and visit this time of vibrant worship and say hello, you will be very welcome. For any help or advice ring the church office on 01797 366855 during the morning.

The Youth Space will soon be closing for Christmas, and the Toddler Group has now finished until January 8<sup>th</sup>. All preschool children and their parents and carers very welcome from 8.45am to 11am. There will be a candlelit traditional carol service on Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 4.30pm. Please note the earlier time to usual. The Short

Christmas day service will be at 10am, plenty of time to get home to sort out your dinner!

#### **Snargate, St Dunstons.**

There is usually a Holy Communion service every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday at 9am, followed by refreshments but the pattern has changed in December. On December 14<sup>th</sup> there will be a traditional service of 9 lessons and carols, at 6pm. All welcome to this traditional candlelight service, which is very moving and atmospheric, with everything taking place lit by candles only. Many people decant over to the Red Lion afterwards!

Later in the month, on the Sunday after Christmas, 28<sup>th</sup>, the communion service at 9am, will take place in Brenzett church.

#### **St Mary's Bay. All Saints.**

Monday mornings at 10am, "Café Church" informal worship with a difference. All welcome to this informal approach to "church." A housegroup meets on Mondays at 7pm and morning prayer is at 9.30am on Wednesdays, and the "Get together" on Wednesdays at 10.15 to 11.30am. These events have increased in numbers recently for which the church is grateful.

There will be a Bingo session on Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 2.30pm. On Tuesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, there will be a community Carol Service organised by Marshara, to which all are invited. This will be followed by seasonal refreshments.

#### **St Mary in the Marsh.**

The Haywardians Choir practices every Friday evening in the church at 7.30pm. They raise large amounts for Charity and have regular local concerts. The Haywardians will accompany the traditional service of 9 lessons and carols on December 19<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm. They will be accompanied by the Saltwood Handbell Ringers, and will be followed by wine and seasonal refreshments. They will also be holding a Christmas concert in Lyminge Methodist Church on December 20<sup>th</sup> at 3pm.

On Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, there will be a church Christmas coffee morning/bazaar with stalls, raffles tombolas and tasty seasonal refreshments. All very welcome. On the same day, at 4.30pm, there will be Carols around the Christmas Tree. Bring a torch, or an LED candle. Refreshments will follow.

Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, there will be the church Christmas party at 4pm, with Father Christmas, being a plate of food to share.

#### **Church Chuckle.**

From a humorous Christmas card. Three Eastern style wise men found themselves in a Newmarket type of stable, with racing horses. "\*\*\*\*\* sat nav." One says to the other, staring at his phone!!

#### **Wit and Wisdom.**

"Never has a generation so diligently documented themselves achieving so little."

## **Contact :THE LOOKER**

Unit 9 Romney Marsh Business Hub, Mountfield Road, New Romney. TN28 8LH

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NEWS or STORY? Contact David Wimble, 07423-562696

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