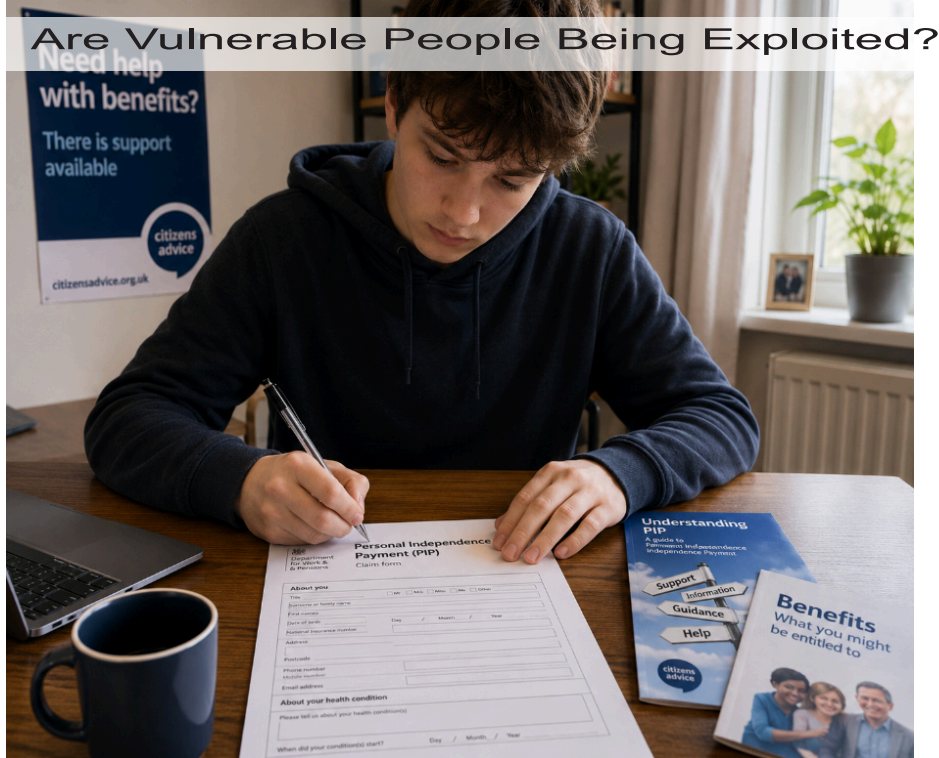


The New "Benefits Coaching" Industry



A controversial new business trend appears to be emerging across Britain, with individuals offering paid "benefits coaching" services designed to help people maximise their chances of successfully claiming sickness and disability benefits.

The practice has raised serious ethical questions, with critics claiming it risks encouraging people to exaggerate symptoms, exploit loopholes within the welfare system, and normalise long-term dependency on state support.

During an undercover investigation by The Looker, we discovered a locally advertised service operating in Dymchurch under the Facebook page "Benefits 4 U", offering one-to-one consultations for individuals seeking guidance on claiming benefits linked to anxiety, stress and other mental

health conditions.

The service advertised consultations costing £50 per hour, during which clients would allegedly receive coaching on how to complete applications and describe the impact their conditions have on daily life.

Following enquiries made by The Looker, the Facebook page has since been taken offline. However, it is understood that similar services are beginning to emerge in communities across the country.

The rise of these unofficial "benefits advisors" comes at a time when Britain is experiencing unprecedented growth in health-related welfare claims, particularly among younger people.

Continued on page 2

Dungeness RNLi Rescue Exhausted Solo Sailor

Volunteer lifeboat crews from Dungeness RNLi came to the aid of a lone sailor after a yacht suffered mechanical failure and began drifting towards one of the world's busiest shipping routes.

The alarm was raised in the early hours of Sunday, June 14, after a 20-foot yacht was spotted near Littlestone Bay in the English Channel. The vessel was reportedly drifting in circles and was at risk of being carried into the heavily trafficked shipping lanes used by commercial vessels entering and leaving the Dover Strait.

Dungeness RNLi launched its Shannon-class all-weather lifeboat, The Morrell, at 2.05am. The crew arrived alongside the stricken yacht 26 minutes later to assess the situation.

Once on scene, lifeboat volunteers established contact with the solo sailor, who was found to be suffering from significant fatigue. A member of the RNLi crew boarded the yacht to assist and carry out further checks.

It was discovered that the yacht's engine had failed and that its sails were no longer usable, leaving the vessel unable to make progress under its own power. The sailor had also been unable to call for help because the yacht's VHF radio was not functioning.

After assessing the situation, Dungeness RNLi determined that towing the vessel to safety was the most appropriate course of action.

Continued on page 3

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Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that more than half of the increase in disability benefit claims among working-age adults since the pandemic is linked to mental health and behavioural conditions. Around 1.3 million people now claim disability benefits primarily for mental health conditions, accounting for 44% of all claimants.

Meanwhile, recent reports suggest there are now more than one million 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), the highest level seen in over a decade.

Government figures forecast that welfare spending across the UK will reach £333.7 billion during 2025-26, accounting for almost a quarter of all public spending.

The issue has become increasingly politically charged, with growing concern over the number of younger adults entering the welfare system due to anxiety, depression and stress-related conditions.

Legitimate welfare rights organisations have long provided free support to vulnerable people struggling to navigate an often complex benefits system. Charities such as Citizens Advice perform a valuable service ensuring those genuinely entitled to support receive it.

However, critics argue that charging people for coaching designed specifically to maximise claims crosses an ethical line.

While there is no suggestion that simply helping someone complete benefit applications is unlawful, deliberately encouraging individuals to exaggerate symptoms or misrepresent their circumstances could potentially amount to benefit fraud.

The Department for Work and Pensions has repeatedly stated that benefit claims are assessed using medical evidence, independent assessments and supporting documentation.

Yet concerns remain that an entire industry may be developing around teaching applicants how to "play the system".

David Wimble, Kent County Councillor and editor of The Looker, has condemned the emergence of such services. He said: "This is just so wrong. These people are basically carrying out fraud in my mind and exploiting a system that was designed to protect the genuinely vulnerable." The welfare state was created as a safety net for those who truly need support – not as a business opportunity for individuals charging fees to coach people on how to secure benefits.

"If people are deliberately being encouraged to exaggerate symptoms or present themselves in a certain way purely to obtain financial support they may not otherwise qualify for, then that undermines public confidence in the entire system.

"Every pound wrongly claimed is a pound that cannot be spent on those with severe disabilities, long-term illnesses or people facing genuine hardship.

"This cannot go on because it is destroying the social fabric of the country. We are creating a culture where dependency is normalised rather than encouraging aspiration, resilience and helping people back into meaningful employment wherever possible.

"The vast majority of taxpayers work incredibly hard, often under significant financial pressure themselves. They expect the welfare system to be fair, compassionate and robust. If loopholes are being exploited, government must act decisively to close them."

Mental health campaigners have warned against stigmatising genuine sufferers of anxiety and depression, pointing out that many people claiming support face real barriers to

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employment.

NHS data has shown increasing rates of anxiety and other common mental health conditions among young adults, with experts citing social media pressures, economic uncertainty and the long-term effects of the pandemic.

However, welfare experts have also questioned whether the current system does enough to support recovery and return to work.

Former Labour minister Alan Milburn recently warned that Britain risks creating a "lost generation" of young people trapped on long-term sickness benefits without adequate employment support.

His review found that for every £25 spent supporting young people through benefits, only around £1 is spent helping them into work.

The emergence of paid benefits coaching services raises difficult questions. Are these advisers helping vulnerable individuals navigate an overly complicated system?

Or are they profiting from encouraging dependency and exploiting taxpayers?

For many, the answer lies somewhere in between.

What is clear is that Britain's welfare system faces increasing strain, with rising demand, escalating costs and growing public concern over fairness.

As local Facebook groups disappear from public view and similar services reportedly emerge elsewhere across the country, this may only be the beginning of a much wider national debate.

The Looker has contacted the Department for Work and Pensions for comment regarding the emergence of paid benefits coaching services and whether additional safeguards may be required.

If you have information relating to similar services operating locally, contact The Looker Team in confidence: INFO@THELOOKER.CO.UK

Volunteer coxswain Mark Richardson said: "We carefully assessed whether establishing a tow was the best course of action to rescue the casualty.

"In the absence of a more suitable vessel and given the yacht's condition and the risk of drifting into the shipping lane, it was determined that towing the yacht to Dover was the best course of action."

The RNLI crew successfully established a tow and escorted the yacht to Dover Marina, arriving at 5.40am.

Following the rescue operation, The Morrell returned to Dungeness Lifeboat Station, where the volunteer crew refuelled and prepared the lifeboat for its next service call. The station was declared ready for service again by 7.00am.

The latest rescue adds to Dungeness RNLI's proud tradition of saving lives at sea spanning almost 200 years. A lifeboat was first stationed at Dungeness in 1826, making it one of the oldest RNLI stations in the country. Throughout its history, the station has protected one of Britain's most challenging stretches of coastline, guarding the waters from Folkestone to Rye Bay.

The station has played a significant role in some of the nation's most important maritime events. In 1940, Dungeness lifeboat crews were among 19 RNLI lifeboats that took part in the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk during the Second World War, helping rescue thousands of soldiers trapped on the beaches of northern France.

Dungeness RNLI also has a remarkable history of bravery and sacrifice. The station has been awarded one gold medal, 12 silver medals and three bronze medals for gallantry. Tragically, several crew members have lost their lives in the line of duty while attempting to save others, underlining the dangers faced by generations of volunteer lifeboat crews.



In 2014, Dungeness became the first RNLI station in the United Kingdom to receive the state-of-the-art Shannon-class lifeboat. The current vessel, The Morrell, was named by HRH The Princess Royal and represents the latest advances in lifesaving technology, allowing crews to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies in some of the country's busiest waters.

Despite advances in equipment and technology, the ethos of Dungeness RNLI remains unchanged. Staffed entirely by volunteers and supported through public donations, the station continues its long-standing commitment to saving lives at sea, whatever the weather and whatever the time of day.

Sunday morning's rescue serves as a timely reminder of both the unpredictable nature of the sea and the vital role played by RNLI volunteers. Mariners are encouraged to ensure their vessels are properly maintained and that essential safety equipment, including communication devices, is fully operational before putting to sea.

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 Wednesday 24th June 11:00am 4:15pm 7:15pm
 Thursday 25th June 11:00am 2:30pm
 Friday 26th June 12:00pm 4:00pm 7:00pm
 Saturday 27th June 10:00am 1:00pm 3:45pm 7:00pm
 Sunday 28th June 11:00am 2:00pm
 Monday 29th June 11:00am 4:15pm
 Tuesday 30th June 11:00pm 2:30pm 7:15pm
 Wednesday 1st July 11:00am 4:15pm 7:15pm
 Thursday 2nd July 11:00pm 2:30pm 7:15pm



National Theatre Live : Les Liaisons Dangereuses 15

Thursday 25th June 7:00pm
 Thursday 9th July 2:30pm
 Saturday 11th July 2:30pm



Congratulations Sally

Congratulations to Sally Chester on being awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours List, in recognition of her outstanding services to the community.

To be recognised in The King's Birthday Honours is a tremendous achievement and a fitting tribute to Sally's unwavering dedication, compassion and tireless commitment to helping others. Through many years of voluntary work and community involvement, she has made a genuine and lasting difference to the lives of countless people. Her selfless efforts, often carried out quietly and without any expectation of recognition, embody the very best of public and community service.

The British Empire Medal is awarded to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to their local communities, and Sally is undoubtedly a truly deserving recipient. Her passion for supporting others, bringing people together and improving the lives of those around her has earned her the respect, admiration and gratitude of

everyone who has had the privilege of working alongside her.



Behind every successful community are people willing to give their time, energy and expertise for the benefit of others. Sally has consistently demonstrated those qualities through her kindness, generosity and determination to make a positive difference. Her dedication has helped strengthen community spirit and has touched the lives of many individuals and families over the years.

This honour reflects not only Sally's hard work and commitment but also the profound impact that one person can have through service, compassion and an

unwavering desire to help others. Recognition in The King's Birthday Honours List is richly deserved and highlights the importance of celebrating those who work so hard to make our communities better places to live.

Congratulations, Sally, on this wonderful and well-earned achievement. You should be immensely proud of this honour, and our entire community joins together in celebrating this special recognition of your exceptional service. Your dedication is an inspiration to us all, and this award is a fitting acknowledgement of the difference you have made to so many lives.



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About the role Camber Parish Council is looking for a dedicated and community-minded individual to help keep our assets looking at their best. We need a reliable Litter Picker to proactively manage the cleanliness of our open spaces – Jubilee Green and Johnsons Field and our three bus shelters, taking pride in keeping our local environment free of rubbish.

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- Bin Monitoring:** Checking our litter bins in Jubilee Green and Johnsons Field and emptying them into our big commercial bin. (NOT the dog bins!)
- Reporting:** Notifying the Parish Clerk of any environmental issues, such as fly-tipping, vandalism, or damaged play equipment and benches etc
- Requirements:**
 To be Reliable and able to work independently and safely on your own initiative
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Editor's Word

David Wimble



Well, by the time you read this, Lydd Club Day will have come and gone and, as I write this on the Tuesday beforehand, I would just like to say what a lovely sunny, windy, wet day it was – delete as appropriate!

Whatever the weather decided to throw at us, one thing remains certain: Lydd Club Day continues to be one of the highlights of our local calendar. It has always been about bringing our community together. Generations of families have lined the streets, cheered on the parades, supported local groups and organisations, and enjoyed the unique atmosphere that makes this event so special.

As I have often said in these pages, Club Day marks the beginning of our summer season of community events. Across Romney Marsh, there is something rather special about this time of year. Villages and towns come alive with fetes, festivals, music, sporting activities and celebrations that remind us just how fortunate we are to live in such a vibrant and close-knit part of Kent. These events do not happen by accident. They rely on countless volunteers who give up their time to organise, marshal, fundraise and ensure that traditions continue for future generations. They deserve our heartfelt thanks.

This edition of The Looker also features the penultimate

article in our fascinating series exploring the history of the Venetian Fete. For many local people, the Venetian Fete has traditionally been the climax of a wonderful week of musical entertainment and community activities, all building towards the spectacular main event itself.

If you have never experienced the Venetian Fete before, I can only encourage you to make this the year that you do. The first parade of the illuminated flotilla is a sight to behold, but it is the evening procession through the canal that truly captures the imagination. As darkness falls, the decorated floats glide gracefully through the water, illuminated by hundreds of lights, accompanied by music, dancing and singing from many local groups who work tirelessly to create such a memorable spectacle.

It is one of those magical occasions that perfectly captures the spirit of our community – creativity, tradition, volunteerism and a determination to preserve the events that make our area so distinctive. In an age when so many long-established traditions elsewhere have disappeared, we should be immensely proud that events such as Club Day and the Venetian Fete continue to thrive here on Romney Marsh.

As summer gets fully underway, I hope you will take the opportunity to support as many local events as possible. Whether you are attending a village fete, enjoying a concert, visiting a charity fundraiser or simply cheering on participants from the sidelines, your support helps keep these treasured community traditions alive.

David

New Book Offers Fascinating Glimpse into Romney Marsh Life Through the Years

Residents with a love of local history will soon have the opportunity to take a nostalgic journey through Romney Marsh's past with the publication of a new photographic collection, *People and Places from Romney Marsh in Years Gone By*.

Due to be published on 25th June, the book captures the rich heritage of one of Kent's most distinctive landscapes through an extensive collection of more than 400 photographs, many of which have rarely been seen publicly before.

Romney Marsh has undergone significant change over the past century. Advances in technology, changing industries, new housing developments and evolving ways of life have all left their mark on the communities that make up the Marsh. However, despite these changes, there remain many corners of this unique area where time appears to have stood still, preserving much of the character that generations of local people have cherished.

The book features photographs of local residents engaged in their occupations, hobbies and community activities, highlighting the interests and pastimes that brought people together throughout the years. Many of those pictured are sadly no longer with us, making the collection an important historical record of the individuals who helped shape the character and identity of Romney Marsh.

Readers may even discover familiar faces among the pages. For many local families, the book presents a chance to reconnect with their own personal histories, with the possibility of recognising relatives, neighbours or old friends captured in moments from a bygone era.

In addition to its extensive collection of people photographs, the book also includes images of the towns and villages that generations of Marsh residents called home. From bustling high streets and local businesses to community events and everyday scenes of village life, the collection provides a vivid snapshot of how Romney Marsh has evolved over the years while retaining its unique sense of place.

Local history publications such as this serve as an invaluable archive for future generations, helping to preserve memories and document the social history of the area. They provide a reminder of

the resilience, spirit and strong community bonds that have long defined life on Romney Marsh.

People and Places from Romney Marsh in Years Gone By is expected to appeal not only to lifelong Marsh residents but also to newcomers interested in learning more about the area's rich heritage and traditions.

With more than 400 photographs contained within its pages, the book promises to be a treasured keepsake for anyone with connections to Romney Marsh or an interest in local history.

Copies can be ordered now ahead of the publication date.

The book will be available from: Foords, St Mary's Bay, Premier, New Romney High Street, The Community Hub, Rolfe Lane, New Romney, Lyons, Coronation Square, Lydd, Richardson's Fish Shop, Dungeness

Alternatively, copies may be obtained by post or purchased directly from John Wimble. 01797 362295

People and Places from Romney Marsh



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Questions Raised Over Illegal Vape Sales as Authorities Crack Down Across Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh



As the last edition of The Looker was sent to print slightly earlier than usual due to our annual leave, this story was just breaking as we were quite literally heading for the airport. However, given the number of concerns raised by our readers over recent months regarding the proliferation of vape shops across Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh, we felt it was important to revisit the issue and ask an important question:

How do some of these businesses remain open after illegal products have been seized?

A multi-agency operation targeting the sale of illegal tobacco and vaping products has resulted in items being seized from several premises across the district.

Seven businesses in Folkestone, Hythe, New Romney and Lydd were visited following complaints relating to underage sales, the suspected sale of illegal tobacco and vaping products, stolen goods, and concerns surrounding potential modern slavery offences.

The operation was led by Kent Police's Folkestone Community Safety Unit, supported by licensing and community safety officers from Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC). Officers from Kent County Council Trading Standards and members of the Home Office South East Immigration Enforcement team also took part.

During the operation, vapes and tobacco products were seized from three of the premises inspected.

While authorities have rightly praised the partnership approach to tackling illegal trading, many residents continue to question why some businesses found selling illegal goods are often able to continue operating.

The issue has sparked wider debate about whether stronger licensing controls should be introduced specifically for retailers selling vaping products.

Many KCC Reform UK councillors across Kent believe there is now a compelling case for vape shops to operate under a dedicated licensing system, similar to other regulated industries.

Under such a system, businesses would be required to apply for a licence to sell vaping products. If they were found to be selling illegal goods, repeatedly breaching regulations, or were subject to enforcement action resulting in the seizure of illicit products by Trading Standards or the police, that licence could be suspended or revoked.

Supporters argue this would provide a meaningful deterrent against rogue operators whilst protecting the vast majority of responsible retailers who comply with the law.

Councillor David Wimble, Cabinet Member at Kent County Council, said: "The vast majority of retailers operate responsibly and within the law. However, where businesses are found to be selling illegal tobacco or vape products, particularly where there are concerns around underage sales or links to wider criminality, we believe stronger powers should be available."

"We would like to see Trading Standards working closely with Kent Police and the licensing departments of district and borough councils to tackle this scourge from our high streets. Consideration should be given to introducing a licensing system for vape retailers, where repeated breaches or the seizure of illegal goods could ultimately lead to that business losing its right to trade."

"Illegal tobacco and vaping products undermine legitimate



businesses, pose significant health risks because consumers have no guarantee about what is contained within these products, and often have links to wider criminal activity. We need robust measures that protect our communities, particularly young people."

Folkestone and Hythe District Council has also underlined its commitment to tackling illegal trading practices.

Councillor Polly Blakemore, FHDC Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, said: "Bringing agencies together is vital as we all work to report and reduce criminal activity in our communities. I am pleased that the teams were able to jointly respond to reported concerns with this operation. The message is loud and clear: we will not tolerate such activity in our district."

Kent Police stressed the importance of partnership working and noted that many businesses visited were fully compliant.

PC Lucy Hazelden, from the Neighbourhood Task Force, said: "Joint partnership operations are vital in enabling the Community Safety Unit to respond effectively to concerns raised by the public surrounding non-compliance and illegal trading. Encouragingly, among the premises found to be fully compliant, staff and business owners were highly supportive of proactive policing activity and recognised the importance of these visits in helping to keep the public safe."

Kent Trading Standards also highlighted the impact illegal sales have on consumers and law-abiding businesses.

Jim Whiddett, Operations Manager for Consumer and Public Safety at Kent Trading Standards, said: "Thanks to everyone who helped provide the intelligence for us to take this effective partnership action. Illegal tobacco and vape sales put people's health at risk, damage the environment



and undercut retailers trying to do the right thing."

For many residents, however, the latest operation raises a broader question about enforcement and deterrence.

Whilst seizures are welcomed, concerns remain over whether existing powers go far enough to prevent repeat offending. With vaping products increasingly accessible and growing fears surrounding underage use, calls for a dedicated licensing regime are likely to intensify.

The challenge for authorities will be striking the right balance: supporting responsible businesses whilst ensuring that those who repeatedly break the law face meaningful consequences.

One thing is certain. The communities of Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh expect action that not only tackles illegal trading when it occurs but prevents it from becoming an accepted feature of our high streets in the first place.

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History of the Hythe Venetian Fete

John Schoner MBE JP. President Hythe Venetian Fete Society

PART 7 1991 – 2006

1991 was my first Fete as Chairman and that year we had an excellent 38 entries. Other attractions that year included Nuclear Electric's hot air balloon in Oaklands Park, a children's fancy dress parade, clowns, a kite flying display by Highly Strung Kite Ltd. a demonstration by the Kent Police Underwater Search and Rescue Unit and the reigning Miss Kent on a float.

1993 was not quite as good as it was the year that our leases on the two boathouses came up for renewal and two Anti-Fete Councillors proposed that the District Council took over one on them for the storage of its rowing boats. This it did and on 16th August, two days before the 1993 Fete, we received a 4-week eviction notice. Our legal advice was that as the Council had a Legal department and Council Tax payers' money to fight any action we might take it could be very costly to take any action against this eviction, so we had to submit to the Council and give up one of the boathouses we had built and paid for.

With no where else to store the floats whilst we sorted alternative accommodation we had to put them back in the boathouse during the eviction period. On 20th September, eviction day, as we still had not found any storage for the floats, we received a letter (see attached) giving us 7 days' notice to vacate and if we were not out by that time the Council "may dispose of the floats and charge all costs to the Venetian Fete Society".



During those 7 days we searched frantically for somewhere to store the 120, 6-metre-long floats, and was given permission by the Catholic Church to store them temporarily in the disused school playground behind the church in Mill Road. At vast expense we moved them just in time to save the Council's disposal of them. We did not receive any compensation or any expenses from the Council for the loss of this boathouse. We now sort a permanent home for the floats and eventually were granted a 99-year lease, plus rent and rates, by the District Council on the old 'Mackeson' tunnel behind the Mackeson car park at the west end of the High Street. The lease was for an up-front payment of £20,000, which we managed to get reduced to £11,500 as the tunnel required £8,500 of work to stabilise the structure which we carried out and paid for. The floats, not now being on the canal bank, was how to move them half a mile each Fete from and to the tunnel and as lorries and craneage was expensive a cheaper method had to be found. A colleague and I designed and built a trailer that could be towed by the contractor's small lorry and could carry 7 floats and this trailer has proved very successful for the last 30 years but the cost of transporting them each Fete has

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SHEPWAY
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Your Ref: [redacted]
Our Ref: CGB21/[redacted]
Ext. No: 472
Date: 21 September 1993

Hythe Venetian Fete Society Ltd
National Westminster Bank Plc
75 High Street
Hythe
Kent CT21 5JG

Dear Mr [redacted]
HYTHE VENETIAN FETE SOCIETY LTD, TWISS ROAD DEPOT, HYTHE

Further to my letter dated 13 August 1993 regarding the vacation of the above property on Monday 20 September 1993, I was disappointed to note that vacation has not been given on the agreed date and that the building is full of floats owned by the Venetian Fete Society.

As discussed on the telephone with [redacted] on Monday 20 September, the Authority requires vacant possession without fail on Monday 27 September so that preparations can be made for the storage of boats owned by the Local Authority.

This further extension of dates cannot be exceeded under any circumstances and, should the property not be vacant on that date, I wish to inform you that the Council may dispose of the floats and charge all costs to the Venetian Fete Society.

As detailed in the second paragraph of my letter dated 13 August regarding insurance, obviously the insurance liability stays with the Venetian Fete Society until this date.

My officer and a representative from the client side will inspect the Twiss Road Depot on the above date to be sure that the building is vacant.

Yours sincerely

[redacted signature]
Facilities Manager

Copies to: [redacted]



increased. Despite the Council's eviction notice the 1993 Fete was very successful.

As we no longer had the Venetian Fete Week, due to the time and cost of organising it, the Hythe Festival Company was set



up in 1994 to provide a week's entertainment in the alternate years to the Venetian Fete.

Venetian Fetes continued through the 1990s with 1997 seeing the introduction of the pre-Fete canal bank concerts giving 4 evenings of free entertainment leading up to the Fete. This was also the last year the Society organised the Grand Fete Draw but its organisation was taken over by the Hythe Lions Club who ran it of our behalf until 2009 when due to administration costs and lack of sponsors for prizes it was discontinued.

On 19th November 1998 Hythe Town Council withdrew its offer of a £3,000 grant towards the 1999 Fete as 2 councillor proposed that the Council should not be giving money to a private company and hinted that in their opinion the Fete was not very well run. This proposal was carried by a 8 – 6 vote. This prompted the mass resignation of 9 members of the Venetian Fete Committee. The press and public were furious with one of the many press headlines reading "It's an INSULT. This is town's biggest event" quoted the Hythe Herald in its 26th November issue. The Council panicked and at an emergency meeting called on 7th December reinstated the grant but by only a vote of 9 – 7 with 7 councillors still opposed to supporting the Fete. It also passed a motion apologising to



the Venetian Fete committee for questioning its ability to run a Fete. The committee accepted the apology and the resignations were withdrawn.

The 1999 Fete saw the first controversy with the Chairman of the District Council. First she wanted to be on the float with the Mayor of Hythe, then wanted to be on the Cinque ports Mayors float, then to have her own float followed by could she buy one. When informed that these were not the protocols of the Fete she told the Fete committee that unless she received "Top Table" treatment she would not allow the visiting Cinque Port Mayors to wear their Chains of Office in her District. To save any embarrassment to our VIP guests we sat her on the Centre Stage with the Mayor of Hythe. As you can imagine the Hythe Herald and Kentish Express gave full coverage to this incident.

The 2001 Fete was successful and without incident but in 2003 the newly elected Hythe Town Council's first action was to withdraw the £5,000 grant promised by the previous

administration and decided not to support the Fete. The Fete committee accepted this although there was an outcry in the press against the Council. However, the committee was surprised when the Hythe Councillors complained bitterly that they did not receive free VIP Fete tickets for themselves and family. Also, for the 2003 Fete we invited a Battalion from the Small Arms School to the Fete as it was its 50th Anniversary of being granted Freemanship. The Battalion exercised its Freedom by marching through the Town at the time the queues were forming for the Fete before joining us for the evening's entertainment.

In 2004 following a failed request for a grant from the District Council it sent us a letter that we should allow £9,165 in our costing of the 2005 Fete as payment to the Council for its services which included £1,300 for use of the land; £1,800 for officers time; £960 for use of Mount Street car park; £1,260 rental; £1,200 tree works; £1,500 for Public highway closure etc. The Venetian Fete committee informed the Council that in view of these charges the 2005 would not be held. The press supported the Fete committee's decision and after a massive press campaign the Council was forced to back down and withdraw the charges. The 2005 went ahead as planned and was very successful Fete only marred by a group of about 40 vandals who invaded the site and wrecking havoc just hours after the spectators had left. Fortunately our on site security called the police and many arrests were made and the culprits dealt with.

References: Hythe Herald and Kentish Express.

Photos: Hot Air Balloon, Eviction Letter - essential Trailer, Small Arms School

The Hythe Venetian Fete takes place this year on Wednesday 19th August. Visit the Venetian Fete website hythevenetianfete.co.uk for tickets and details.






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Plans for 150 new homes on the site of Foxwood School



Folkestone and Hythe District Council's Planning and Licensing Committee will consider the application at its meeting on Tuesday evening, with planning officers recommending that permission be granted.

The proposal, submitted by Ureco Ltd, seeks to redevelop the former school site on Seabrook Road, which has remained vacant since 2016 and has become increasingly blighted by vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

In their report to councillors, planning officers concluded: "The proposal would make effective use of an allocated brownfield site within a sustainable location, delivering a mix of housing types."

The former Foxwood School site has stood empty since the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school merged with Highview School in Folkestone. The school later relocated to The Beacon on Park Farm Road.

Over recent years, the derelict buildings and overgrown grounds have attracted repeated incidents of vandalism and deliberate fire-setting. Last June, firefighters battled a major blaze at the site for 16 hours, with investigators believing the fire had been started deliberately.



As part of the planning process, 315 neighbouring properties were consulted, resulting in 11 letters of objection from local residents raising concerns over traffic, pressure on public services and the scale of the development.

Despite these concerns, Kent County Council's highways authority has raised no objection to the application. Highway officers concluded that the proposed residential use would generate fewer vehicle movements than when the site operated as a school.

Southern Water has also confirmed that sufficient capacity exists within the local sewerage network to accommodate wastewater from the development.

Planning permission for a similar 150-home scheme was originally granted in 2021 when the project was being promoted by Thanet-based Sunningdale Homes. However, that company entered administration in 2023 before the development could proceed.

Following its acquisition of the site, Ureco has brought forward revised proposals through a hybrid application. This seeks full planning permission for 60 homes, while requesting outline permission for a further 90 dwellings. Outline consent establishes the principle of development, with detailed designs for the remaining homes to be submitted at a later date.

The detailed element of the application includes 33 apartments – comprising 27 two-bedroom and six three-bedroom units – alongside 27 houses. These would consist of nine three-bedroom properties, 17 four-bedroom homes and one five-bedroom dwelling.

The outline element proposes a further 90 homes, including 69 apartments and 21 houses.

Councillors will make the final decision when the application comes before the planning committee on Tuesday evening.

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Have your say



28 May 2026 - 9 July 2026

We will soon be consulting on our updated plans for South Brooks Solar Farm, a proposed new solar farm with battery storage connecting into the National Grid at Dungeness Substation.

We consulted on our early plans for South Brooks last year. After reading all the feedback we received and carrying out more environmental work, we have updated the plans. We are now asking for your further feedback on these updated plans during our consultation, which begins on Thursday 28 May 2026.

Find out more

Our consultation materials will be available from the start of the consultation. You can find out more at southbrookssolarfarm.co.uk.

Visit a public exhibition

Lydd Community Hall, Manor Rd, Romney Marsh, TN29 9HU	Thursday 11 June (1pm - 5pm)
St Peter's Church, Baldwin Rd, Greatstone, TN28 8RG	Friday 12 June (4:30pm - 8:30pm)
Maude Community Centre, Station Road, New Romney, TN28 8LQ	Saturday 13 June (11am - 3pm)
Camber Memorial Hall, Lydd Rd, TN31 7RJ	Friday 3 July (4pm - 7pm)
Lydd Community Hall, Manor Rd, Romney Marsh, TN29 9HU	Saturday 4 July (11am-3pm)

Technical webinars with topic matter experts are being held via Zoom throughout the consultation period. The topics, dates and times of these webinars, and how you can register to attend them, can be found in the consultation booklet and the project website below.

View printed copies of the Preliminary Environmental Information ("PEI"), or pick up a copy of the consultation booklet and questionnaire from the following locations (please check opening hours):

- Romney Marsh Community Hub, Sunflower House, Rolfe Lane, New Romney, Kent, TN28 8JR
- Rye Library, 30A High Street, Rye, East Sussex, TN31 7JG

Get in touch

For further information or to request a copy of our consultation materials, please contact us:

0800 038 3486
(9am to 5:30pm, Monday to Friday)

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Folkestone & Hythe Needs Change... Could You Be Part of It?

Next May, residents across Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh will have an opportunity to change the direction of our district.

For the past three and a half years, Folkestone & Hythe District Council has been run by the Green/ Liberal coalition. It is now time for local people to ask themselves a simple question:

Are things better than they were four years ago?

Many residents would argue they are not.



Take Otterpool Park. The coalition's decision to pursue an ambitious "net zero" housing model has resulted in millions of pounds being spent whilst delivering a net zero number of homes for local families desperately trying to get onto the housing ladder. Meanwhile, two Chief Executives of the Otterpool LLP delivery company established to oversee the project have resigned during this period.

Then there was the promise of a new swimming pool at Martello Lakes. Residents were told there was an "oven-ready" plan. Many will remember those assurances. Yet where is that swimming pool today?

The answer is simple – it isn't happening.

At a time when high streets are struggling, local businesses have faced increasing financial pressures. Car parking charges have risen, making it harder for our town centres to compete with out-of-town and online retailers.

Instead of creating an environment where businesses can flourish, many feel they have been burdened with additional costs.

Residents should also remember the Road of Remembrance. Faced with a major infrastructure challenge, the District Council was reluctant to use reserves to



address the issue. Kent County Council stepped in, funding more than £500,000 worth of investigative work before ultimately supporting a £5 million programme to deliver the necessary repairs.

Last May, the people of Kent made a historic decision.

They chose to take a chance on Reform UK at Kent County Council.

If you only read certain sections of the media, you might believe that decision has been a disaster.

The reality is very different.

Reform UK inherited a council with debts of around £730 million. During our first year in administration, we have worked to reduce debt by approximately £140 million whilst maintaining council reserves.

Despite previous proposals to close 30 libraries across Kent, those closures have not happened. In fact, Folkestone has welcomed the opening of the first new library in Kent for 30 years.

Plans to close three Household Waste Recycling Centres were abandoned. Not only have these facilities been protected, but two new reuse centres have been established in New Romney and Allington, generating thousands of pounds each month for Kent-based charities whilst reducing waste.

We believe the same common-sense approach can work here in Folkestone & Hythe.

A Reform UK administration at District Council level would prioritise:



- Protecting our countryside by opposing large-scale solar developments on productive greenfield agricultural land, in line with Kent County Council's emerging energy policy.
- Supporting the case for new nuclear development at Dungeness, securing Kent's place at the forefront of Britain's energy future.
- Backing a multi-million-pound nuclear skills hub, creating apprenticeships and career opportunities for local people.



- Championing our vital tourism sector, recognising its importance to our local economy.

- Working closely with Kent County Council to support adult social care services and improve outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

- Introducing up to two hours of free parking in and around our high streets to encourage people back into local shops and businesses.

- Exploring opportunities to reduce the burden on local businesses, helping our high streets thrive



once again.

Politics only changes when good people are prepared to step forward.

If you have ever found yourself frustrated by the direction our district is taking, if you believe local government should focus on delivering practical solutions rather than political ideology, then perhaps now is the time to get involved.

Reform UK is seeking candidates from all walks of life to stand in next May's District Council elections.



You don't need to be a career politician.

You simply need common sense, a willingness to work hard for your community, and a desire to make a difference.

Come along to one of our local meetings and find out more. You will meet people from all backgrounds who share a common belief that local government should work for the residents who fund it.

The so-called silent majority is no

longer silent.

Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh deserves leadership focused on delivering results for local people.

Kent voters proved that change is possible at County Hall.

Now, next May, we have the opportunity to do the same at District Council level.



Could you be part of that change?

For more information about becoming a Reform UK candidate or attending a local meeting, please contact your local Reform UK branch.

Published as a sponsored editorial on behalf of Reform UK.

For more information email : info@reformuk.org

Or visit our facebook Group: Reform UK Folkestone, Hythe & Romney Marsh.



Romney Marsh Community Hub – Rolfe Lane, New Romney

Date	Event	Time	Cost
Mondays	Games and Crafty Club	1:30 – 3:30 pm	£3.75 each
	Dance Fit	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.50
	Seated exercise	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
Tuesdays	Walking Group	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	FREE
	Yoga	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
	Pilates	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7.50
Wednesdays	Seated Exercise (for those with Arthritis, Stroke or Parkinsons)	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.50
	Seated Exercise	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
Thursdays	Tai Chi	9:30 am – 11:00 am	£7.50
	Art Club	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	£3.75
	Seated Tai Chi	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
	Line Dancing	4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	£7.50
	Yoga	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	£7.50
	Totally Shredded	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7.50
Fridays	Legs, Bums & Tums	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.50
	Seated exercise	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
Friday 3 rd	Cancer Peer Support Group	2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	FREE
Friday 10 th	Ex Armed Forces Drop In	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	FREE
Wednesday 29 th	Diabetes Peer Support Group	1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	FREE
Friday 24 th	Ex Armed Forces Breakfast Club	9:00 am – 11:00 am	
Saturday 25 th	The Hub Summer Social Gathering	10:00 am – 4:00 pm	FREE

Hub on the Beach – 103 Coast Dr, Greatstone

Mondays	Dance Fit	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7.50
	Yoga	7:30 pm – 8:30 pm	£7.50
Tuesdays	Seated Exercise	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7.50
	Salsa	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7.50
Wednesdays	Legs, Bums & Tums	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.50
	Fitness Pilates	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50
	Seated Tai Chi	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7.50
	Zumba	6:30 pm – 7:30 pm	£7.50
Thursdays	Yoga	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.50
	Seated Exercise	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7.50
Saturdays	Washinkai Karate	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	£7.50 / £5.50 < 16
Wednesday 1 st	Stroke Peer Support Group	1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FREE
Wednesday 1 st	Coffee & Catch Up	1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FREE
Wednesday 8 th	Arthritis Peer Support Group	1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FREE
Sunday 12 th	Indoor Boot Fair	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	FREE
Wednesday 15 th	Bereavement Support Group	1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FREE
Saturday 18 th	Murder Mystery Night	Starts at 7:30pm	£10pp
Tuesday 28 th	Hearing Loss Support Group	1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FREE

SAVE THE DATE!

August 1st – BBQ at Hub On The Beach & **August 15th** – Quiz Night at Hub On The Beach.

August 21st – Meal at Romney Marsh Community Hub.

For more info, please contact us at 01797 363888 (Rolfe Lane) or 01797 458876 for Hub on the Beach.

Rumours, Fear and Facts

Community Urged to Unite After Lydd Incident



A week of speculation, concern and ultimately violence has left many residents in Lydd reflecting on the dangers of misinformation spreading through social media.

Kent County Council has moved swiftly to dismiss rumours that adult asylum seekers were living at Peacock House in Dennes Lane, after a series of online posts wrongly suggested the former care home was already housing adult migrants.

The property, which was purchased by Kent County Council last year, is currently being prepared as a reception centre for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under the age of 16. The facility is not yet operational and remains in the final stages of registration with Ofsted.

However, over the weekend, concern among some local residents escalated after a number of social media posts claimed adult men were staying at the site. One resident even filmed themselves approaching the premises demanding answers.

At the same time, rumours began circulating online alleging that three men had been acting suspiciously around young girls near Coronation Square.

Kent Police have now confirmed those allegations were entirely unfounded. Instead, officers say the three men were legitimate visitors to the area, having travelled to Kent to participate in an international shooting competition understood to be taking place at Lydd Ranges.

The men, all in their 30s, had reportedly stopped to ask for directions near Cannon Street and Coronation Square between 7pm and 7.30pm on Saturday evening.

What happened next has shocked many within the community.

Police say the visitors were subjected to an unprovoked assault, with one man suffering serious facial injuries requiring hospital treatment. Detectives are now treating the incident as a hate crime.

Superintendent Peter Steenhuis described the attack as "senseless violence" and confirmed that police investigations had established that social media allegations about the victims' behaviour were false.

The posts have since been removed.

Kent County Council has also issued a clear statement regarding Peacock House. A spokesperson said there are currently no adults living at the facility and no asylum seekers of any age have yet moved into the building.

"Currently, Peacock House has only KCC staff on site until Ofsted registration is completed and we can confirm there are no adults staying or living at the reception centre," the spokesman said.

The council explained that when the centre opens, it will accommodate unaccompanied children aged 4-16 for a maximum of ten working days before they are transferred to local authorities elsewhere in the country under the Government's National Transfer Scheme.

The facility will be staffed around the clock by Kent County Council employees and security personnel.

Importantly, KCC stresses that Peacock House is not an immigration centre, detention facility or hotel. It will operate as a children's home regulated by Ofsted, with all costs met by central government rather than local council taxpayers.

The controversy has highlighted the difficult balance communities face when genuine concerns meet incomplete information.

Many local residents have understandable questions about changes taking place in their town. Others remain concerned about the impact of national immigration policies on local services. Those concerns are legitimate topics for public debate.

However, police and council leaders alike have urged residents to rely on verified facts rather than online rumours.

Folkestone and Hythe MP Tony Vaughan condemned the attack, saying: "This senseless violence and apparent racism has no place in our communities."

For many in Lydd, the events of the past few days serve as a reminder that while social media can spread information quickly, it can also spread misinformation just as rapidly.

As the police investigation continues, community leaders are calling for calm, respect and patience while official facts are established.

Anyone with information about the assault is asked to contact Kent Police on 01843 222289 quoting reference 46/94698/26, or contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

In a close-knit community such as Lydd, disagreements and concerns are inevitable. But most residents would agree that whatever views people hold, violence, racism and vigilante-style accusations have no place on Romney Marsh. The overwhelming majority of local people remain welcoming, decent and law-abiding – values that have long defined the town and its community spirit.



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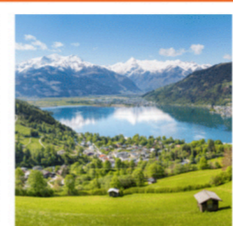
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Dates for your Diary

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

Wednesday 24th June

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
Digital Support, Romney Marsh Community Hub, 9.30 a.m.
Bridge Meeting Point, New Romney Scouts Hut, 10 a.m. (2nd & 4th Wed)
Diabetes Support Group, Romney Marsh Community Hub, 1.30 p.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 25th June

Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.
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. (2nd & 4th Thurs)
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Friday 26th June

Ex-Armed Forces Breakfast Club, Romney Marsh Community Hub, 9 a.m.
Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.

Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Brookland Meeting Point, Village Hall, 1.30 p.m. (4th Fri)
Social Ballroom Sequence Dancing, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Saturday 27th June

Indoor Market, Maude Community Centre, New Romney, 10 a.m.
Ivychurch Croquet Club Kentish Evening, St. Mary's Bay Church Hall, 7 p.m. (07814-292027)

Monday 29th June

Dymchurch Meeting Point, Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 11 a.m.

Mental Health Matters, Romney Marsh Community Hub, 1 p.m.
The Games Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.

Tuesday 30th June

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 10.30 a.m.
Dymchurch Art Society, Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Hearing Loss Support Group, Hub on the Beach, 1 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m.
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Wednesday 1st July

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
Stroke Support Group, Hub on the Beach, 1 p.m.
Coffee & Catch Up, Hub on the Beach, 1 p.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 2nd July

Middlemarsh WI, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 9.45 a.m. (1st Thur)
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 3rd July

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Cancer Support Group, Romney Marsh Community Hub, 2 p.m.
Social Ballroom Sequence Dancing, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Saturday 4th July

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

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2026 - The Scouting Adventure Continues

CAMPFIRE CIRCLE



out to Rick and Veronica for leading one great evening and to all the Leaders who helped.

And the term promises to get better as we celebrate World Ocean Day next week; The Beaver Challenge 40 project - starting with the Sandcastle Challenge; Adopt a farm animal and visiting the Rare Breeds as part of our 40th Birthday celebrations. The next challenge is to hold an election to decide which farm animal we would like to adopt - Will it be

Hucklebury the Highland Cow or Dora and Flora, the Indian Runner Ducks. . . ?

Campfires burning, Campfires burning, Draw nearer. . . .

1st New Romney Beavers and Mulberry Cubs had a fantastic time @ 1st Lydd at their first Campfire of the season. During the mixed weather day, we all held our breath - BUT the sun shone and the evening was just perfect. Beavers dined in the open air, cooking their very own 3 course meal on the ever popular Campfire - Twisters with all sorts of fillings:- cheese, choc spread and golden syrup followed by hot dogs, not a burnt offering in sight!!! Our Beavers are the most amazing hot dog preppers - the results YUM YUM with generous helpings of ketchup and then the S'mores - one of the highlights of the evening with the biggest ever giant marshmallows!!! All sandwiched in the most delicious chocolate biscuits!!

And - we followed with the ever popular Campfire songs as the round up to a great evening. We learnt so many - Animal Fayre; Alice the Camel; Heads n Shoulders; BINGO; Beaver Smile; Litter Ging Gang Gooli. . . And there were more Huge thank you to 1st Lydd for hosting the event and our amazing Leaders for pulling it all together. A special shout



PLUS the Amazing Chocolate AGM - Games and fun to support our chosen local charity - Last Chance Animal Rescue New Romney. We welcome everyone from the wider community to join us for one amazing evening, 6pm last day of June. That's only the start of the Scouting Adventure for June - and still leaves room for even more



fun in July so come along and join in - our Scouting year keeps getting better. . . .

In Volunteer Week we would like to say a HUGE THANK YOU to all our Leaders and Supporters for coming up with fun ideas, adventures and great opportunities at every single meeting. . . . You really are LEGENDS. An army of volunteers support us throughout the year including:-

- Our Group Trustees who help keep us running, look after the finances, assets and compliance requirements.
- The parents who pitch in to help
- The local Community who teach our youngsters or invite us to visit and share ideas, knowledge, experiences, talents, skills and their valuable time.

Scouts
1st New Romney

CHOCOLATE AGM
EVENT

• Do you like Chocolate? - It's Chocolate Time!!

• Group AGM followed by Fun Evening

• Games, Raffles, Tombola & Chocolate (Lots of it!! Absolutely decadent & delicious)

Tuesday 30th June - 6pm New Romney Scout HQ

All are welcome - Please come & join us.

Bring a guest & all your friends!!

This is a Showcase event to celebrate our young people, our Scouting year & raise funds for Last Chance Animal Rescue

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The Rotary Club was pleased to welcome Chair of Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) Cllr Paul Thomas to one of our recent meetings (seen in the picture with Club Secretary Ron Dale). Cllr Thomas was invited to give the Club an update on the situation with bathing water quality in the local area. The invitation was made as several of our members had attended a meeting at the Varne, hosted by FHDC, which included representatives from Southern Water, local residents, businesses affected by poor water quality, and sea users including sailors, water-sports enthusiasts, and wild swimmers.

Paul's presentation was very interesting and thought provoking. Paul commented that the issue with bathing water quality has been around a long time as highlighted by a newspaper cutting from 1987! Paul outlined the efforts taken by FHDC in conjunction with Southern Water to address the problems. The Environment Agency continues to investigate the sources of the pollution but have yet been unable to confirm the source – the investigation continues. The members expressed their thanks to Paul for providing a comprehensive explanation of the current situation and what is being done to make improvements.

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



Romney Marsh Flower Arrangers

It may seem that in the early monthly meeting in 2026 members had viewed some excellent Floral Demonstrations. However, at the June meeting it was a pleasure to be introduced to "Gill Smaggasgale." Gill is very creative with her designs and has demonstrated at National and Local events. She is known for her leadership skills in the *Kent Floral Art Association* and enjoys teaching. Her high standard of skills are passed onto those that enjoy her sessions.

We were not disappointed. The title of her demonstration was "Once Upon a Time"

Each floral design representing a children's story the colour schemes and the wide range of flower used for each arrangement was a pleasure to look at. There was a lot of praise from the audience.

July and August are busy times for the club as members meet together for outings.

Dates for the Diary

- 8th and 22nd July Outing to Dean House at New Church

- 12th August Workshop with Robin White
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Plaque Unveiling

The Sunflower Memory Cafes, who meet in St Mary's bay, Dymchurch, New Romney and Greatstone, have been working on a mosaic plaque to



commemorate 50 years of the Romney Marsh Community Hub.

Yolanda Houston and her talented team, from Teach Me, facilitated 2 workshops in February where everyone who attended was able to make their own mosaic coaster as well as contribute to the plaque. We are really grateful to Yolanda for designing the final mosaic for us and for supplying all of the materials and her expertise for free.

The final mosaic includes contributions from attendees of our memory cafes, this includes those living with a diagnosis of dementia, carers, family members and volunteers.

The official unveiling took place on the 14th May 2026 in

the courtyard garden of the Hub, followed by a cream tea for the Memory Café attendees. Liz Taylor, CEO of Romney Marsh Community Hub performed the unveiling. The plaque is now in pride of place in the garden along with other client artwork.

If you would like more information on the Memory Cafes, please contact Suzi Finch on 01797 363888 or email Suzi.Finch@rmch.org.uk



Ghost Plates: The Invisible Threat Helping Criminals Evade Justice

Criminals are increasingly using illegal number plates designed to evade detection by police cameras, allowing them to travel across the country undetected while committing serious offences.

So-called "ghost plates" or "stealth plates" have become a growing concern among law enforcement experts and road safety campaigners, who warn that the technology is being exploited by organised crime groups involved in a range of serious offences.

A spokesperson from the industry warned that a "substantial number" of criminals are now using the altered registration plates to avoid identification through Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems.

The spokesperson said the plates have been linked to offences including violence against women and girls, people smuggling, drug trafficking and other forms of organised criminal activity.

Ghost plates are designed to appear legal to the naked eye but use reflective coatings, transparent films or subtle alterations to characters that prevent ANPR cameras from accurately reading registration details.

The result is that offenders can travel throughout the UK without detection, avoid speeding penalties, evade congestion charges and parking fines, and potentially escape investigation following serious crimes.

A spokesperson for a company specialising in ANPR

technology said new camera systems had been developed that are better able to identify vehicles using these deceptive techniques.

"The technology is evolving to ensure that those who are becoming a scourge on our roads and within our communities can be identified and brought to justice," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that while organised criminals were exploiting the loophole, many motorists were also using ghost plates simply to avoid road charging schemes and parking fees.

Concerns over the scale of the problem were highlighted in a report published by a cross-party group of MPs and peers last December, which estimated that as many as one in every 15 vehicles on UK roads could be displaying modified or otherwise non-compliant number plates.

The report also raised concerns over the regulation of the industry, pointing to the existence of nearly 35,000 number plate suppliers across the UK. It found evidence that some suppliers had serious criminal convictions, including violent offences.

A parliamentary spokesperson involved in the campaign for tighter controls described the current system as a "Wild West" and called for urgent reform.

"It allows people to drive past speed cameras undetected," the spokesperson said. "More worryingly, it also enables those involved in drug dealing and other serious criminal activities to avoid identification by police camera systems."

Campaigners are now urging the Government to strengthen regulations surrounding the sale and manufacture of registration plates.

Recommendations put forward by parliamentarians include introducing a standardised design for registration plates, mandatory criminal record checks for suppliers, and incorporating number plate compliance checks into the annual MOT test.

The Government has already indicated that tougher measures may be on the way. In its road safety strategy published earlier this year, the Department for Transport

announced plans to introduce stronger penalties for those caught using illegal plates.

A government spokesperson said: "We have consulted on proposals for tougher penalties for driving with illegal plates, reviewing the standards for number plates and improving enforcement."

"These consultations have now closed, and we are carefully considering the substantial number of responses received before announcing the next steps."

What Are Ghost Plates?

Ghost plates, sometimes referred to as stealth plates, are illegally modified vehicle registration plates designed to avoid detection by speed cameras and ANPR systems.

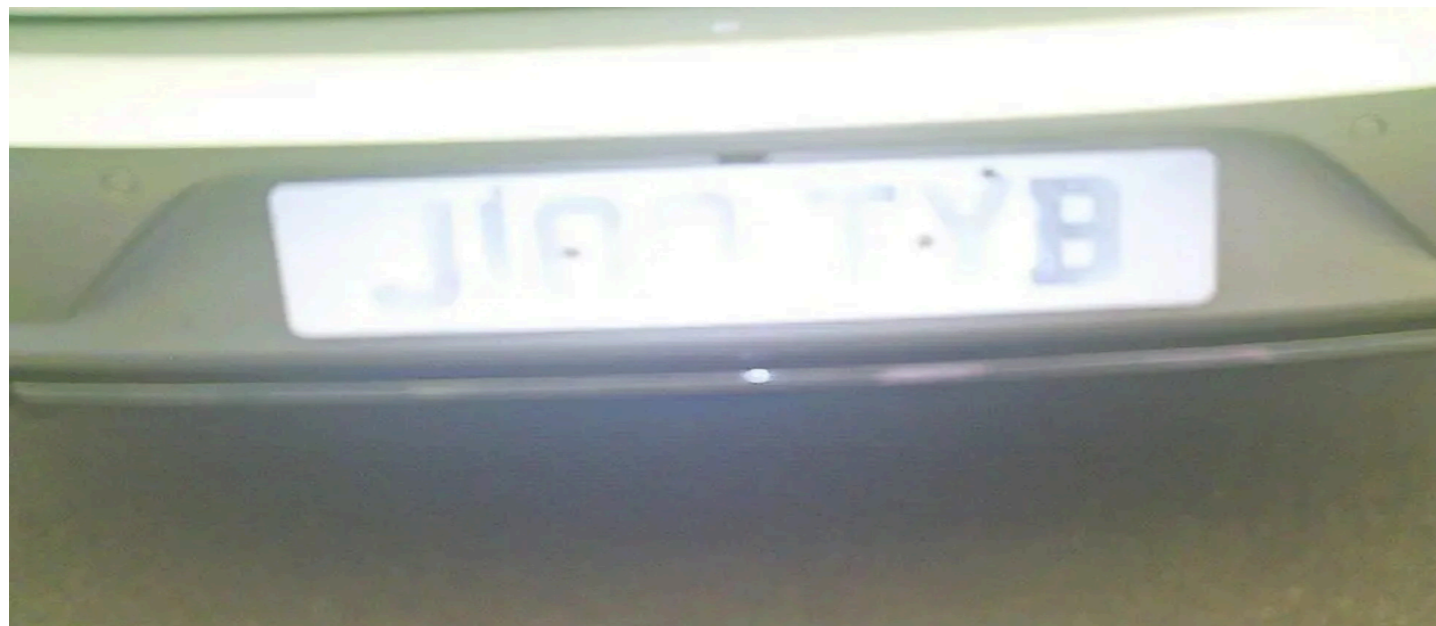
Although they often appear entirely legitimate, they may

incorporate reflective sprays, special films or minor alterations to lettering and numbering that confuse camera technology.

While it is not illegal to purchase these products, using them on a vehicle on public roads is a criminal offence.

Currently, motorists caught displaying an illegal number plate face a fixed penalty notice of £100. However, with growing concerns over their use by organised criminals, there are increasing calls for much harsher sanctions to deter offenders.

Road safety experts argue that without stronger enforcement and tighter controls on the supply of number plates, ghost plates will continue to provide criminals with an easy way to operate beneath the radar of law enforcement agencies.



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Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

More news from the 1990s

In the 1980s, 'Age Concern Romney Marsh' was formed and a wooden building at the rear of the Old School in New Romney was used as its headquarters. By 1990 the building had come to the end of its useful life, and a committee was formed to look for suitable new premises. Together with Shepway DC and other organisations, a site was found and together with funding from various sources, a new Day Centre was built in Rolfe Lane and was formally opened in November 1994.

There was an Old Boys reunion at New Romney when former members of New Romney Youth Football team got together for a game against a Romney Cavaliers side on Easter Saturday. Crowds at the New Romney Football Club headquarters in Station Road watched as the veterans from 1965-1968 brushed up their tackling skills in an exciting game that ended in a 3-3 draw. Both teams and the crowd enjoyed the game which was played in a very

good spirit.

More than 600 houses in New Romney could be put on mains drainage, but the work will cost each home owner over £500. Shepway District Council is to put money aside for a study into whether the town could set up such a scheme. They would also write to Southern Water asking them to justify the £500 charge. A public meeting in the town was to be held to get people's reactions to the mains drainage scheme. There has been talk since 1908 about getting mains drainage and there are about 625 homes in the town using either septic tanks or cesspools.

Policing on Romney Marsh was to undergo a radical shake-up under new plans as most of the area will be policed by officers based in Ashford instead of Folkestone. It is all part of a Kent Police cost-cutting programme to have nine separate areas rather than 13 as at present. Lydd will become the central office for policing on the Marsh and will get more officers based there.

An historic building on Romney Marsh was to be the newest place for couples to tie the knot. The owner of

Café Bistro on the outskirts of New Romney (see advert) was waiting for planning approval to hold civil ceremonies at his hotel that was a hospital in the 18th century. He applied for the licence and hopes to be holding weddings by the summer. The venue seats up to 35 diners or can hold up to 60 guests for a buffet style wedding breakfast.

The annual blessing of the Dungeness Lifeboat was performed by reader Geoff Crier of Greatstone. The Mayor and Mayoress of Lydd, Chris and Megan Albrow, joined the congregation for the traditional ceremony at the lifeboat house. Certificates were presented to retiring crew members William Richardson, coxswain of the lifeboat for 20 years and Pat Richardson, the mechanic for 18 years. Judith Richardson was also presented with a vellum of service after more than 16 years of fundraising.

Over the years, the people of Brenzett raised over £16,000 towards the cost of a new village hall. They held boot fairs, suppers, raffles and collections and with grants from the Kent County Council, Shepway District Council and the Rural Development Commission, building on the new hall started in 1990. Local farmer John Paine donated the land for the hall and the car park.

The go-ahead was given in 1990 to twin New Romney with the French town of Ardes. The committee travelled to France in September to sign the twinning charter and the second part will be signed in New Romney sometime in the future. Ardes is a small medieval market town with a population of 5,000

about seven miles south of Calais.

The families of Dungeness and the surrounding area were given an emergency plan in case of a radioactive leak from the power station. Every home in the Lydd parish got a special booklet compiled by the county council and Nuclear Electric. Locals were told that safety was the highest priority but added that 'small but significant amounts of radioactive material may be realised in adverse circumstances and carried by the wind.' People should take shelter, close all external windows and doors and shut off ventilation fans. Any tinned, packaged, wrapped or stored food in the home would be safe to eat. Mains tap water would be fit to drink unless told otherwise. Assembly points would be set up at Galloway Road, Dengemarsh Road, Dungeness Road and Coast Drive.

In January 1992, three New Romney doctors were presented with more than £2,000 worth of medical equipment at the official opening of their new Oak Hall Surgery in the High Street. The equipment was donated by funds raised at Dungeness 'A' Power Station to doctors Paul Cochrane, Steven Swaffer and Judith Deane. The doctors had previously had a surgery opposite in Aboyne House but needed more space and had bought and restored the 500-year-old medieval hall. They said that the building had been unoccupied for a number of years and was falling into ruin and becoming an eyesore. It is a well-loved local building and it was thought it would make a wonderful surgery.

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Then & Now



New Romney High Street, c.1960s.

St. John's Priory House is on the corner of the Ashford Road and it is an early 18th century building. Over the years, it has been the site of various businesses. For some years in the sixties, it was the local Co-operative store. It has also been a solicitors, doctors, carpet shop, antique shop and gift shop.



People From The Past

PAUL ABBOTT

Paul Abbott was born in Newcastle in 1918. In his late teens after college, he moved to Leeds where he met new friends. When the Second World War broke out, he was living in New Romney and for a time was a conscientious objector. Working in a first aid post he met and later married Ethel Prior and they lived in Church Lane. He eventually joined the Royal West Kents and was posted to Canada. After the war he returned to New Romney and realising his vocation, he took up a teacher training course. He moved to Churchlands and when he qualified, he taught English and French at Southlands Secondary Modern School. In 1956, he took up a post of head of the English department at Ashford North School for Girls. He was to remain there for the rest of his teaching career, retiring in 1980 when he moved to Church Road. His great passion was writing poetry and throughout his life he wrote about 500 poems. He died in 1995.

MARIE MASTERS

Marie was born in 1930 and was a Lydd Councillor for 25 years. She was Deputy Mayor in 1999 and also the Mayor of the town in 2000 and 2001. She was an Honorary Freeman of the town and a member of many local organisations. Residents said that she was one of the best councillors that

Lydd ever had. She was also a member of the Lydd Day committee in the 1990s. She died aged 85 in 2015.

DORIS JEMISON

Doris was well-known for being the landlady of the 'Red Lion' at Snargate for many years. The pub is one of the oldest on the Marsh and dates from the middle of the 16th century. Doris was born in Dagenham in Essex and went to Brenzett as a land girl during the Second World War where she met her future husband, Alf, who had a farm there. For some time, she worked at a dairy in Appledore and after four years of going out with Alf, they married in 1951. Alf had previously been a greengrocer and a bus driver. In 1960, they bought the pub from Alf's father who had owned it since 1911. When they took over the pub there was no electricity, just oil lamps and candles and was owned by Messrs. Courage. The only heating was a coal fire in the living room and two separate fires for both bars in the pub. Electricity was eventually installed around 1964. When Alf died in 1986, Doris took over as landlady with help from her daughter Kate, and decided to start selling real ale. The pub was listed in the 'Good Beer Guide' for a record 30 years. Doris Jemison died age 86 in 2016.

Sunflower Memory Café Members Get All Steamed Up!



Around 40 members of the Sunflower Memory Club enjoyed a memorable day out at the Romney Marsh Model Engineering Society (RMMES) in New Romney, despite the typical British summer weather doing its best to dampen proceedings.

The group, which included members from the Sunflower Memory Café in New Romney, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch, along with the Pebbles Memory Club, gathered on Thursday, June 11, for what has become an eagerly anticipated annual event.

For the first time since the tradition began 22 years ago, rain accompanied the occasion. However, this did little to spoil the spirits of those attending, with many sheltering under umbrellas while waiting to

enjoy rides on the society's miniature railway.

Members found warmth and comfort in the RMMES clubhouse, where conversations flowed freely and laughter filled the room. A delicious barbecue, cooked to perfection by Margaret and the dedicated RMMES volunteers, ensured everyone was well catered for throughout the day.

The annual outing offers much more than just train rides. It provides an important opportunity for people living with dementia, their carers, family members and volunteers to come together in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Approximately 25 members of the Romney Marsh Model Engineering Society were on hand to help throughout the event, receiving heartfelt thanks from the Sunflower Memory Café organisers for their hospitality and kindness.

Organisers described the day as one of the highlights of the year, praising the tremendous support shown by RMMES and the volunteers who helped make the occasion such a success.

Special thanks were also extended to Suzi Finch for her assistance in organising the visit, alongside the support of friends and volunteers who contributed to the smooth running of the day.

For more information about the Sunflower Memory Cafés, contact Suzi Finch on 01797 363888 or email Suzi.Finch@mch.org.uk.





Midsummer is upon us. How did that happen? Seems like only a few weeks that we were waiting for the soil to warm up, to get planting! I had occasion to take a photo of our back garden, a few months ago and have taken the same photo again. Then, everything was bare, now everywhere is full and lush and green! We are on holiday in Northern France, (16.6.) and we are all set for some hot days. We have a kind neighbour watering our greenhouse and a few vital plants, so we hope it doesn't get too hot and dry. While at home, have been saving all our grey water and using the hose pipe sparingly.

The jobs are the same as always. The eternal weeding never stops, and cutting back overgrown spring flowering shrubs, weigelia and Forsythia, and the everlasting brambles. Plants, flowers and weeds are growing like the clappers. Roses can be dead headed regularly, and we had to spray ours, the warm weather was showing black spot on the leaves. We try and use as few chemicals as possible, but sometimes you have to.

We have also watered the fruit trees, both at the base, and as a spray on the leaves. There was some overgrowth at the base, so we cleared it away with the strimmer. You don't want anything taking away water and nutrients from your fruit trees. Some of the leaves on a pear tree are looking suspect, so we hope it is not 'giving up the ghost'. If you have branches/shoots coming out from the base of fruit trees, cut it away. They are renegade shoots from the root stock, and will never bear fruit, but just take nourishment away from the tree.

You may find you are losing a lot of fruit at the moment. Don't worry, this is normal, and in fact is to be encouraged. Especially if you have apples with 4 or more apples to each bunch, you should remove them carefully, to leave a maximum of 3. It is better to have a smaller number of decent apples, than more small undeveloped ones. Ours are old fashioned trees, but increasingly people are planting managed cordons, which are another skill altogether. Many fruit trees are now being sold to be managed as cordons, with gardens getting smaller.

We have spent hours in recent days, harvesting soft fruit, gooseberries and all the currants. Hopefully there will be some left when we return. A storm took out our fruit cage a couple of years ago, so now we make do with weighted old net curtains.

As plants are growing so rapidly, make sure you are up to date with supports. This is often a tedious job, bending over all the time, but needs must! Herbs and other flowers, can also be dead headed. Plants are desperate to flower and make seed, so if you keep dead heading it will constantly make new flowers! With herbs, if you let them flower, the energy will go into flowers and seeds, rather than pungent and flavoursome leaves. In hot weather, Thyme and chives, tend to bolt and make flowers, so nip them off. If you are growing lettuce, they may also bolt, and are then bitter, so pull them up and put on the compost heap.

Another plant that sometimes goes a bit mad and flowers, is rhubarb. If you see the slightest sign of a strange stem shooting up, nip it off straight away. Once a rhubarb plants flowers, it will die.

AND NOW FOR THE VEG

At the time of writing we are travelling across Northern France in the Champagne area, heading east towards Strasbourg. As well as making champagne, the area seems to be well-endowed with potato crops! Acre after acre line the roads, and our thoughts turn to our own modest sowings at home. If you have first or second earlies, and the foliage is starting to wilt, it's probably a sign that your potatoes are ready for lifting. To check if they are ready, carefully insert a fork under a clump and feel for one or two. Anything larger than a golf ball or small apple can be ready to use. If you are happy with the size then lift the whole clump and enjoy a tasty meal with your favourite veg and salad or roast!

This year we are growing our potatoes in bags, basically because badgers have for years been digging ours up in the ground and spoiling whole clumps. In this case, feel in the bag and bring out one or two and if the size is right tip the whole bag out and enjoy. If you are storing potatoes in a veg rack for example, keep them covered over to prevent the light from turning them green and therefore making them unfit to eat. Put the stems on the compost heap which should rot down fairly quickly.

Maincrop potatoes won't be ready yet. They normally produce flowers before wilting and then you can test their progress. Depending on the variety you have, they will need another month or two before being ready to eat.

We lost a lot of autumn sown broad beans this year due to strong winds and cold wet weather. They normally do well here so a bit disappointing. Fortunately we still have some of last year's crop in the freezer. Equally disappointing have been the spring- sown broad beans, being reluctant to get going and make good growth. We take heart in Monty Don's confession that he, too, has his failures. You can't win them all!

Beetroots are thriving. In an earlier edition of The Looker we mentioned that we had sown some plug-raised beetroots and weren't sure whether they would take. We're pleased to say that they are doing well, so next year we might well invest in more plug plants, including leeks, which are also growing well.

If you have onions and shallots, keep them well-watered to prevent bolting as they love moist conditions.

Greetings from France and, as always, happy gardening!

Thrift -3. More ideas.

More ideas about day-to-day thrifting. Thrift is a mindset, as often mentioned, not something we do when money is short. Everyone who is wise uses thrift and is careful with money, and how it is spent. It doesn't matter, whether your income is £10,000 a year, or £100,000, the thrifty mindset will serve you well. One of the virtues that serves prosperous people well, **is thinking long term.** When you are very short of money it is hard to think long term, but do try. It is like saving for pensions. The Blair government introduced 'stakeholder' pension schemes for the lowly paid, but they were voluntary, which many experts believed was a mistake. When you are having to use foodbanks to feed your children, it is almost impossible to think about saving for a pension. If it is stopped at source like professional pension contributions, before you ever see your money, it is much easier.

In our early days, when money was tight, most of our children's clothes came from hand me downs, gifts, jumble sales (before charity shops) or were homemade. But I always saved up and bought them good shoes, from Startrite or Clarks. Some acquaintances were patronising and said "I wish I could afford decent shoes for my kids!" But in the meantime, they would have bought 3 or 4 pairs of cheap and cheerful pairs which lasted no time at all, and probably spent the same amount of money!

Yellow labels and offers. While it is always sensible to shop with a list, the yellow labels often offer great value, so worth changing your plans! When we lived in north Kent, our youngest son went to the Sea Cadets in Faversham. I once asked my husband to pick up something in the local big Tesco, when he fetched him. He came back with a tray of yellow label bread and rolls. They had been reduced to between 10 and 20p! We put it all in the freezer. After that he always looked in to see what was on offer!

Years ago, when only corner shops were allowed to open on Sundays, I had several friends who always shopped late on Saturday afternoons, when all perishables would be on offer at knock down prices. Like going to markets on Christmas Eve afternoon- traders just wanted rid of the stock!

Don't be proud, or worry about other people's opinion! My sister once picked up a 20p off the pavement, and her daughter, a self-conscious teen, was horrified. "Why?" asked my sister. "It looks so mean," argued the daughter. "Well," said mum, "it might as well be mine as someone else's!" They weren't in need, they owned 3 houses. The same niece thought it mean to use 2nd class stamps and was the sort who had holes in her pockets! She has probably changed her tune now they are so expensive! 1st class stamps are for legal documents only these days! I was once minding

grandchildren as tots for a son in Croydon. We were going out in the rain, and I found a £20 note outside their house, soaking wet. I carefully dried it out, and offered it to our son, in case it was theirs. He said they hadn't lost one, so encouraged me to keep it.

The same with clothes. Dress yourself to your taste and budget. If a trend appeals to you, is right for you, and you can afford it, go ahead. But don't buy stuff and get into debt, just because it is "the fashion" right now. We have a generation of teenagers with anxiety and depression, because their whole self-esteem depends on 'likes' and hopeless comparisons on social media. We were always keen to give our lads self-worth, telling them they are as important as royalty, the pope or the prime minister. Their worth was intrinsic and did not depend on achievement or what they wore, or how they looked. We have a granddaughter with Down's Syndrome, and she is as precious as the others.

Frittering money away. It is very easy, especially with contactless, to fritter your money away. Small amounts spent unnecessarily on snacks, fancy coffees and trivia will soon add up to a huge amount and you will find yourself short for big expenses. If you get into serious debt and need the help of a debt charity, the first thing they suggest is to use cash. It is an established fact that using cash is more mindful than flashing plastic around. Plastic cards make spending an academic exercise, rather than managing real money.

In cafes and restaurants, only order what you know you will eat. The amount of food and drink left on people's plates and in glasses is astonishing. For kids under 4 just ask for an extra plate and share yours. They are highly unlikely to finish even a child's meal, or have 1 meal between two, if you have two youngsters with you.

Don't be afraid of your children, if you are a parent or grandparent. With so many sources telling people how to raise their youngsters, parents are often "opting out" of discipline and creating boundaries and values. "What part of no don't you understand?" was a frequent phrase in our family! No means No. If they have a tantrum, walk away and ignore your drama queen or unruly lad. They will find it hard to keep up a tantrum if there isn't an audience! The same at mealtimes, don't have battles. If the children don't want the food you have provided, they go without, allowing for genuine dislikes, which we all have.

So, there are lots of ways of keeping an eye on spending, even if money is tight, as it is with many people at present. Hope you are enjoying the summer, and it looks like nice weather is again on the way.

An Open Letter to Sir Keir Starmer from the People of Great Britain

Dear Prime Minister,

There is an old saying in British politics: when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.

Sadly, Sir Keir, it appears that not only have you continued digging, but you have also changed your mind about which direction to dig in so many times that nobody is entirely sure what the original plan was in the first place.

This letter is not written out of malice. Nor is it purely a political exercise. Governments of all colours make mistakes. Circumstances change. Difficult decisions must sometimes be revisited. But there comes a point when a pattern emerges, and the British public begins to ask a very simple question:

What exactly do you stand for?

The British people elected your government promising change. Many voted Labour not because they were lifelong supporters, but because they wanted competence, stability and a clear vision for Britain after years of political turbulence.

Instead, Britain has witnessed a government that appears to operate by testing public opinion, announcing policies, retreating under pressure, and then presenting the reversal as evidence of listening.

Listening is admirable. Repeatedly getting it wrong in the first place is less so.

Since entering Downing Street, your administration has presided over a remarkable series of policy U-turns. Among them:

- Restricting the Winter Fuel Allowance for millions of pensioners before later reversing the policy following public anger and pressure from within Labour's own ranks.
- The controversial farmers' inheritance tax proposals, introduced despite widespread warnings from rural communities and farming organisations, only to be substantially softened after sustained protests.
- Repeated changes in position regarding WASPI women compensation.
- Shifting positions on the two-child benefit cap amid pressure from Labour backbenchers.
- Reversals regarding calls for a national inquiry into grooming gangs.
- Changes to proposals surrounding digital identity measures after concerns over privacy and civil liberties.
- Amendments to justice reforms and jury trial proposals.
- Retreating from planned increases in fuel duty amid the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

- Revisions to business rates relief following criticism from struggling businesses.
- Changes to proposed welfare reforms, including those affecting disability benefits and Universal Credit.
- Reconsideration of policies relating to immigration processing and asylum accommodation.
- Changes to housing targets and planning proposals following opposition from Labour-controlled councils.

This list is by no means exhaustive.

At first glance, one or two U-turns may appear sensible. After all, good leaders adapt to new information.

But twenty major reversals in less than two years do not demonstrate flexibility.

They suggest uncertainty.

Leadership is not about stubbornly refusing to change course. Equally, it is not about changing course every time public opinion becomes uncomfortable.

It is about conviction.

The British people deserve to know that when a Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and announces a policy, there has been enough thought, consultation and planning for them to believe it will still be government policy next month.

Businesses require certainty to invest.

Farmers require certainty to plan for future generations. Pensioners require certainty to budget. Families require certainty to make life decisions.

Instead, uncertainty has become the defining characteristic of this government.

Ironically, the very argument made repeatedly by Labour before entering office was that Britain needed an end to chaos.

Yet many people now feel that chaos has merely changed management.

This is not solely about opposition criticism, because that is the nature of politics.

Perhaps most significantly, this is about growing concern from within your own party.

When backbench MPs become increasingly uneasy, when ministers spend more time explaining policy reversals than promoting achievements, and when the electorate begins to lose confidence in both competence and direction, serious reflection is required.

No Prime Minister should cling to office simply because they can. The question should always be whether they should.

As this letter goes to print, the result of the Makerfield by-election remains unknown. Yet perhaps the actual outcome is almost secondary to what the contest itself represents.

In a constituency that Labour would ordinarily expect to hold

comfortably, the very fact that political commentators are discussing the by-election as a referendum on your leadership speaks volumes.

Whether Labour retains the seat, loses it, or simply sees a dramatically reduced majority, it will inevitably be interpreted as a verdict on the direction your government has taken.

By-elections have long been the electorate's way of sending messages to those in power.

Rarely are those messages subtle. The growing unrest within your own party, combined with increasing public frustration, suggests that the warning lights are flashing brighter than ever.

History teaches us that political authority ultimately rests not on parliamentary arithmetic but on public trust.

Trust, once lost, is extraordinarily difficult to rebuild. **The British people wanted leadership. They wanted honesty about difficult choices. They wanted a government prepared to make decisions and stand by them. They wanted a vision for Britain!**

Increasingly, many believe they have instead received a series of announcements followed by clarifications, adjustments, revisions, reconsiderations and complete reversals.

Prime Minister, there is no shame in recognising when circumstances have changed.

There is, however, wisdom in recognising when confidence in your leadership has been fundamentally damaged.

Britain faces enormous challenges: economic growth, NHS pressures, housing shortages, energy security, immigration concerns, support for businesses, support for pensioners and restoring confidence in public institutions.

These challenges require decisive leadership and a government capable of providing clear direction.

For many people across our country, rightly or wrongly, that confidence no longer exists.

There is another old saying in politics: it is often better to jump with dignity than to be unceremoniously pushed.

Great leaders understand when their continued presence serves the national interest and when it becomes a distraction from it.

Resignation is not necessarily an admission of failure; sometimes it is an act of responsibility. It allows fresh ideas, renewed energy and a chance to rebuild public trust before the damage becomes irreparable.

The question facing you, Prime Minister, is no longer whether there are critics of your leadership.

The question is whether you can genuinely claim to retain the confidence of the British people who placed their faith in your promise to deliver change.

Politics is ultimately about service, not survival.

The office of Prime Minister should never become an end in itself.

Britain deserves stable leadership, clear direction and a government capable of inspiring confidence both at home and abroad.

Increasingly, many voters feel they are witnessing a government that reacts rather than leads.

For the sake of your party, for the effectiveness of government, and most importantly for the country itself, perhaps the time has come to recognise that the most dignified exit is one taken voluntarily rather than one forced by events beyond your control.

After all, Prime Minister, when you are in a hole, the first step is to stop digging.

Yours sincerely,

The British Public

P.S. Closer to home, this also raises serious questions about the role of our own local Members of Parliament, Tony Vaughan and Sojan Joseph.

Throughout this Parliament, both have consistently supported the Prime Minister and the Government's agenda. Yet many local residents may reasonably ask: when have they publicly challenged policies that have directly affected the people they were elected to represent?

Whether it is the Winter Fuel Allowance changes affecting pensioners, concerns over inheritance tax reforms impacting farming communities, welfare changes, or the wider economic pressures facing families and small businesses across Kent, many constituents will struggle to identify occasions where either MP has visibly stood up to scrutinise or oppose decisions that have caused significant local concern.

The role of an MP is not simply to act as a lobby fodder for whichever party happens to be in government. It is to represent the views, interests and concerns of the people who sent them to Westminster in the first place.

Our local MPs were elected by the people of Folkestone, Hythe, Romney Marsh and Ashford and beyond to be the voice of their constituents, not merely another vote for the party leadership.

Blind loyalty to any Prime Minister, regardless of political colour, should never come before robust scrutiny and accountability.

Democracy functions best when elected representatives are prepared to ask difficult questions, challenge poor decisions and put the interests of local people first.

The people of Kent deserve MPs who will fight for them, speak up for them and, when necessary, stand against their own party leadership in defence of those they represent.

Ultimately, MPs are not elected to serve the Westminster bubble or what many perceive to be the Islington political elite. They are elected to serve the communities that placed their trust in them.

The question local voters may wish to ask themselves is simple: Do they feel genuinely represented?

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Wildlife

By Kerry King

A Gull's Prize Catch on the Royal Military Canal



reviewed the images on a larger screen, that I truly appreciated what I had captured. The close-up revealed an astonishing sight: a sizeable fish clamped firmly in the gull's beak, every scale and fin visible in remarkable detail. I sat staring at the image for several moments, genuinely spellbound by both the gull's success and the sheer size of its catch.

Gulls are often associated with scavenging, but they are far more versatile than many people realise. They are opportunistic feeders, capable of catching fish, hunting small prey and adapting to a wide variety of habitats. Their intelligence and adaptability have helped them thrive across our coastline and inland waterways alike. The Royal Military Canal provides a valuable feeding ground, supporting fish populations as well as the birds that depend upon them.

Adding a touch of irony to the morning, only a little further along the canal I came across a cormorant standing on the bank with its wings spread wide after fishing for its own lunch. Unlike gulls, cormorants are specialist underwater hunters, diving beneath the surface to pursue fish. Their familiar wing-spreading pose allows their feathers to dry after a successful fishing trip.

Seeing both birds within minutes of each other was a reminder of how rich the canal's wildlife can be. Along this historic waterway, nature still has a way of stopping us in our tracks and revealing something unexpected.

Wildlife note: Please enjoy wildlife responsibly and avoid disturbing birds while they are feeding or resting.

Picture 1: A gull proudly displays an unexpectedly large fish caught in the Royal Military Canal near Hythe – Credit Kerry King
Picture 2: A cormorant dries its wings after fishing along the canal bank, a familiar sight on local waterways – Credit Kerry King

I was walking along the Royal Military Canal near Hythe recently when a sudden splash and flurry of activity caught my attention. Looking across the water, I spotted a gull wrestling with what appeared to be a surprisingly large fish. The encounter took me completely by surprise and, in my haste, I found myself fumbling to get my camera out of its bag before the moment disappeared.

Fortunately, the gull remained in place long enough for me to take this photograph. It was only later, when I





Welcome Lookerites to another batch of cinema and TV reviews for your delectation. In this issue and with the World Cup fast approaching Netflix have served up three decent warts 'n' all football documentaries highlighting Liverpool's miracle in Istanbul, Wimbledon hard man Vinnie Jones and England and Leicester legend Jamie Vardy. We also have a Sky/Now TV heist thriller, and a couple of new releases on the big screen an excellent British Rom/Com and a reboquel from the Wayans Brothers.



Netflix are renowned for their cutting-edge documentaries, and they have a couple of hard-hitting ones that will appeal to football fans. First up is **Untold UK: Miracle of Istanbul**. When Liverpool looked dead and buried after they found themselves 3-0 down at half-time against AC Milan in the Champions League final. They somehow pulled off the greatest ever champions league comeback to lift the trophy.

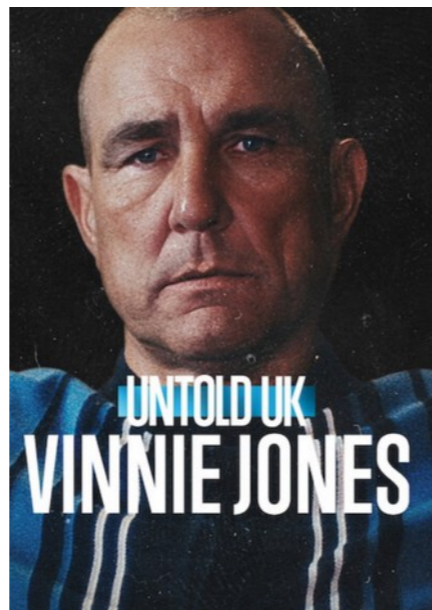
At the start of the year Liverpool were in turmoil. Rafa Benitez had just taken over, and Liverpool stars Michael Owen and Steven Gerrard were considering a future outside of Anfield. Owen wasn't convinced of Benitez' ability to turn things around and left for Real Madrid. Gerrard stayed but needed convincing. After scraping through the Champions league group stages, they managed to make the semi-finals to face the big spending Chelsea, who at the time were trying to tempt Gerrard to the Bridge. After dispatching Chelsea, they faced AC Milan led by Ancelotti and Maldini in Istanbul and staged an amazing fight back to win on penalties.

Miracle of Istanbul tells the story through the eyes of the players and staff of Liverpool FC. At times brutally honest but compelling throughout. The likes of Benitez, Gerrard, Carragher, Owen, Hamann and Dudek tell the same story but through their own perspective. The fact they didn't rate Benitez or their own team, citing they weren't good enough makes their achievements even more astounding.

So was it the genius of Benitez or the brilliance of Gerrard or the passion of the fans that drove them onto victory. Probably a mixture of all of those or maybe it was the fact that they were written off that united the team, either way football fans will find the story

compelling.

Second up under the banner Untold UK is that lovable, if he plays for your team, hated if he doesn't hard man **Untold UK: Vinnie Jones**.



The hod-carrying non-league footballer burst onto the scene when Wimbledon gave him the opportunity to ply his trade for the 'Crazy gang' A no nonsense tough tackling midfielder Jones immediately made Plough Lane his home as he kicked and grabbed anything that came up against the Don's. As Wimbledon climbed the league Jones reputation as a fierce opponent grew. Reputations mattered not for the Crazy Gang and the bigger the star the harder they set out to kick them.

The pinnacle came when the Crazy Gang beat the 'Cultured Club' Liverpool 1-0 in the FA Cup at Wembley. The Dons were on top of the world, but Jones was soon crashing down to earth as the FA paid particular interest in his on and off field antics and after 12 red cards and a change of manager Jones was shown the door. Several transfers followed with a mixture of success until Jones was recruited by film director Guy Ritchie for his film Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels for the role of Big Chris and the rest is history. Vinnie Jones the disgraced footballer transitioned into Vinnie Jones the Hollywood actor.

The documentary features Jones' managers and fellow ex-pros as well as Piers Morgan. Their insights into Vinnie Jones the person are insightful and Jones himself hangs his heart on his sleeve and doesn't pull his punches. It is a walk down memory lane and you can't help wincing at the tackles and thinking that they would not have been tolerated in today's game but were dismissed at the time as acceptable.

Jones remains as colourful as his playing days but his transition from Wimbledon hard man to Hollywood superstar is one worthy of a documentary and a view.

The parallel opposite of the hard man could be the scrawny striker with the Albert Steptoe features who like Jones rose from non-league football to represent his country at International level.

UK Untold - Jamie Vardy is the story of how a non-league footballer from Sheffield defied the odds to become part of the greatest footballing fairytale when Leicester City won the title and who went on to represent his country.



Vardy by his own admissions admits that had he not taken his football seriously that he may have taken a different path. But football led him to fame and fortune and an unlikely career that saw him play on the biggest stages in the world. From a factory worker to professional footballer, from Fleetwood to England, Vardy's story is a real Boys Own, Roy of the Rovers fairytale.

Vardy's pathway wasn't all plain sailing, as self-doubt and controversy plagued his rise to stardom. Married life seemed to settle him, but Vardy found being in the spotlight difficult at times. However, he still shone on the pitch scoring in 11 consecutive games breaking Ruud Van Nistelrooy's record and lifting the Premiership title in one of the greatest ever footballing achievements.

Told by Vardy, his Leicester teammates, and his drinking friends 'The Inbetweeners' Vardy's story is a fascinating one and an underdog story to inspire anyone.

Our next film had a brief cinema outing before going straight to streaming. **Fuze - Sky/Now TV**. Fuze is a British crime/heist thriller.



When an unexploded bomb is discovered on a building site in London, a joint Police/Military operation to evacuate the area is put in place. Major Tranter (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) and his bomb disposal team are sent to diffuse what is believed to be a World War 2 device.

Meanwhile Karalis (Theo James) and his three associates break into the nearby Bank Al Muraqabah. Their heat signature is spotted by a Police drone and bomb disposal operation is put on hold as the Police investigate the area. The Police spot Karalis and give chase, meanwhile the bomb goes off.

Without giving anything away there are the customary double-crosses with a few twists thrown in for good measure. But Fuze is a decent crime/heist movie which has enough action to keep you gripped and twists and

turns to keep you guessing.

Every now and then along comes a film that hits the spot. A film that clicks with a great cast, great writing, and a great storyline. The film in question on this occasion is Finding Emily on general release

When sound engineer Owen meets a girl while working at the student union, he finds himself falling in love. He takes 'Emily's' number at the end of the night, but the following morning discovers the number is missing a digit. Not to be put off, despite his brother mocking him, Owen sets about finding Emily.

Owen attempts to contact all the Emily's at the University, the first being Emily Raine. Emily is a third-year psychology student who is struggling to finish the thesis that will help her gain her dream job. When Owen explains his mission Emily decides to use him as a case study for her thesis, despite her professor trying to dissuade Emily.

When Owen emails all the Emily's on campus he incurs the wrath of the Emily's becoming known as 'Email guy' and is invited onto a podcast to speak about his quest, even writing a song which he performs. When student union president Emily uncovers Owen, he loses his job and finds out that his Emily was basing her thesis on him. With Owen giving up he discovers his true love again. Will Owen find true love? Will Emily get her dream job? Will there be a twist in the tale?

Finding Emily is an excellent British rom com that carries the feelgood factor and is a heartwarming tale of young love. Spike Fearn is superb as the young and naive Owen driven by the quest for true love. Angourie Rice is a perfect foil as Emily who is a good Samaritan with an ulterior motive. You can probably spot the twist, I did, but it still won't spoil your enjoyment of this endearing British comedy.

When the comedy Scary Movie first came out its sole intention was to parody horror movies and it did so successfully. Now we have the sixth movie in the franchise **Scary Movie** - on general release, a reboquel but while the franchise is still parodying horror movies, the characters are still churning out the same old gags, and this is where Scary Movie falls flat. I loved the Final Destination Theme park but after that the gags were well spaced out.

If you want a parody of horror movies then Wes Cravens **Scream** is the benchmark and sends horror movies up in a manner that is far superior and scarier than Scary Movie.

I think that maybe this is one franchise that has run its course.





Dear Looker ,

An Open Letter from the Lydd Resident Group.

As a community, we wish to express our collective shock, dismay, and deep concern at the unprovoked attack recently suffered by visitors to our town.

First and foremost, we offer our sincere and heartfelt apologies to those affected. Anyone visiting our country whether for sport, work, tourism, or any other purpose has the right to expect safety, respect, and basic human decency.

It is profoundly distressing that instead of receiving the welcome they deserved, these individuals were subjected to violence while simply going about their day.

We want to make it absolutely clear that the behaviour of those responsible is wholly unacceptable and stands in direct opposition to the values held by the overwhelming majority of our community. Their actions do not represent who we are.

We also condemn the false rumours and misinformation that circulated in the aftermath of the incident. Attempts to distort events or excuse violence only deepen the harm and undermine the truth.

We are grateful to the authorities for addressing these claims and ensuring that accurate information is available.

It saddens us deeply to think that the victims' experience of our community and of the UK more broadly may now be overshadowed by this traumatic event.

We hope they can take some reassurance in knowing that local residents are united in their condemnation of what occurred and stand firmly in support of their recovery.

We extend our warmest wishes to all those affected and hope for their full physical and emotional healing.

As a community, we urge anyone with relevant information to come forward to the appropriate authorities so that those responsible can be held to account.

You deserved far better from your time here.

We send our sincere regrets and our very best wishes for your wellbeing and safety.

Peter Webb

Chairman

Lydd Residents' Group

Dear Looker,

The Hythe Venetian Fete is taking place on The Royal Military Canal, Wednesday 19th August, with gates open from 4pm. Tickets (general entry and seated) are available for purchase through the website using the QR code or at www.hythevenetianfete.co.uk Ticket information with prices, seating plan and parking arrangements can be found on the website.

The Hythe Venetian fete is also providing four free band concerts on the canal's South bank centre stage. The concerts take place on the centre stage on the canal bank on Sunday 16th August; beginning with the Hythe Town Concert Band (14:00-16.00), followed by the Kent Soul Choir (17:00-17:45) ending with Kylie on Show (19:30-21:30). On the Monday 17th August we have Jason Lee performing on the stage (19:30-21:30).

So, we have a great line up and best of all the concerts are free to attend.

We are still looking for volunteers to help on the fete day, so do get in contact through the website, we would love to hear from you.

Also, WE HAVE ONLY THREE FLOAT SPACES LEFT so if you are interested in entering a float go to the hythevenetianfete.co.uk website and click onto Build a float.

The Hythe Venetian fete Water Spectacular is sponsored by AW Construction Services Ltd, Hythe Town Council and The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust.

Elizabeth Quinn

Vice chair

Dear Looker,

The solar farm arrogance aligns with the house building development arrogance, a lot is coming out that is being avoided by both developers and authorities.

At outset, we are being conned, quiet clearly, the scientific evidence, well documented, supports such a viewpoint.

The information received prior is in your ownership, please utilize as required.

Please feel free to adjust, modify, discard, claim ownership or add my own name if preferred.

Best regards,

Barry Gilbert.



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For the Love of cats

By Vinny Shell

When I'm not at the cinema or watching a good film at home or cheering on my beloved Lions at The Den. In my spare time you can find me volunteering or fundraising for the RSPCA Cattery Ashford. The cattery holds a special place in my heart as my present cats Riley and Treacle came from the cattery and we previously adopted Ryan and Bruiser, who are sadly no longer with us.

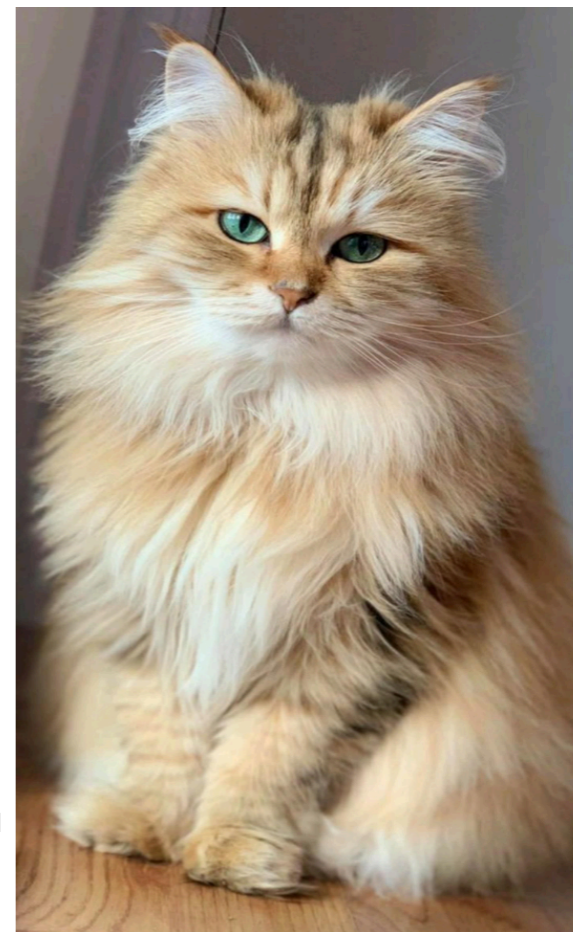
There is something extremely rewarding and incredibly therapeutic after a hard week at work clearing out litter trays and pods and socialising with cats. Every now and then I'm greeted with a new litter of kittens who look at me with initial caution until they let their curiosity get the better of them and use the 'hooman' as a climbing frame. I never knew you could get so much feline enjoyment out of a pair of shoelaces before they go tearing off chasing their siblings. The term heartwarming cannot be underestimated, and I often find myself smiling to myself. So why am I telling you all this, well, sadly the cattery is under threat of closing.

The cost-of-living crisis means charities are feeling the pinch. I would add that the cattery is an independent charity that operates under the umbrella of the national RSPCA but funds itself so is reliant on the generosity of the public and has to find every penny. So what makes the cattery worth saving?

The cattery since 2006 has rescued, rehabilitated and re-homed over 5,000 abandoned, injured, neglected or surrendered cats. Every cat receives veterinary treatment, care and socialisation then stringent checks are carried out before

matching the cats with their forever home. Being a volunteer I hear of some of the back stories, and they are truly heartbreaking and you then realise just how important the cattery is in giving the cats a genuine chance of happiness.

Besides the rescue aspect of the cattery they run a weekly pet food bank that allows families in financial hardship to keep their beloved pets. They also issue vet treatment and neutering vouchers to low income families that help prevent suffering and unwanted litters. Through regular school visits and community talks they inspire the next generation to grow up with empathy, kindness and responsibility towards all animals. The community work extends to working closely with Kent County Council and Ashford College. As well as providing me with something to do in my spare time, I run a mean bingo night and quiz night. The cattery provides adults with learning difficulties and social anxieties the chance to work with the animals which has a big impact on their wellbeing and mental health. There are over 70 volunteers at the cattery and they are always on the look for more.



It costs £250k annually just to stay open and provide what is a priceless service to the community. Each cat pod, which you can sponsor, costs around £250 a week to run and it costs around £5,000 per week to keep their services operating for the community. So what can you do?

To begin with you can follow the cattery on Facebook Rspca Ashford Garden Cattery or on Instagram rspcaashford both those platforms will keep you updated regarding the various Open Days, Bingo and Quiz nights. You can also donate via the GoFundMe link <https://www.gofundme.com/f/ashford-garden-cattery-rescue-appeal> no donation is too small and every donation is greatly received. Then again why not find out about volunteering either helping out with the cats or bringing fresh ideas for fundraising.

I hope I have convinced you that the cattery is a charity worthy of rescuing and like I said S.O.C (Save our cats)

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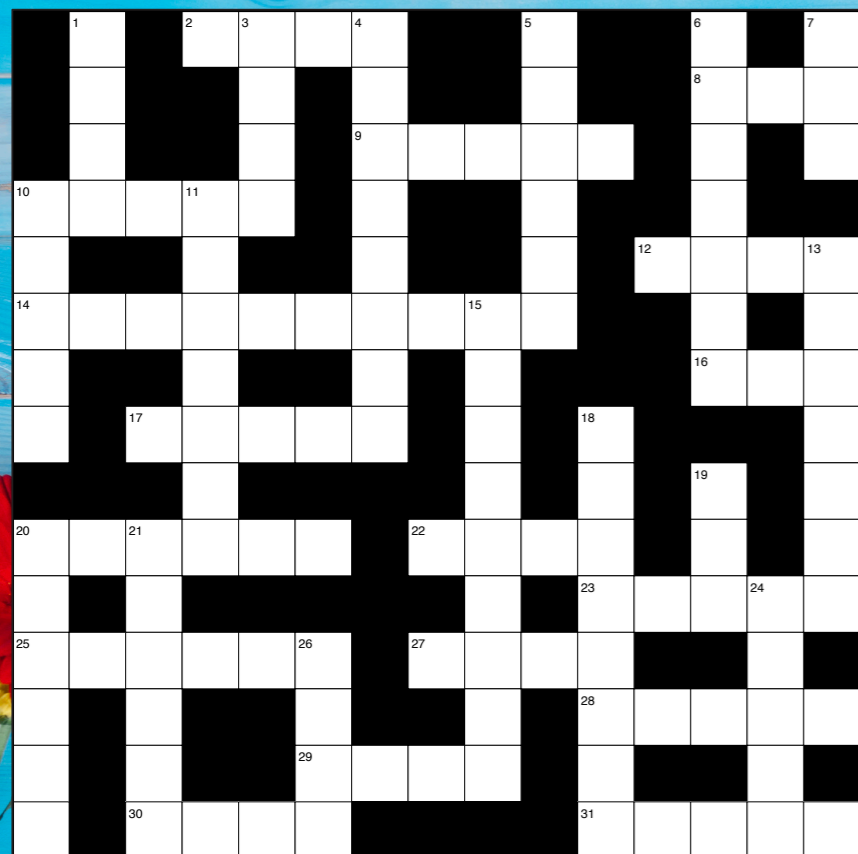
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General Knowledge Crossword #066



- Across Clues:**
 2. Bus or full point (4)
 8. Large antlered deer of North America (3)
 9. British nobles ranking below marquesses (5)
 10. Device for hauling heavy loads (5)
 12. Bookmaker's figures (4)
 14. Grasp the meaning of (10)
 16. Poet's word for a meadow (3)
 17. Bill ____, villainous brute in Oliver Twist (5)
 20. Bob Marley's musical genre (6)
 22. Flightless bird or New Zealand native (4)
 23. Long work of fiction, or refreshingly new (5)
 25. Party balloon-bursting device (6)
 27. Drink down in one go, or train sound (4)
 28. Complete fool (5)
 29. Hired soldier, informally (4)
 30. Oil platforms or sets up dishonestly (4)
 31. Shades between black and white (5)
- Down Clues:**
 1. Arnaz of 'I Love Lucy' fame (4)
 3. Silicon Valley shorthand (4)
 4. Comes before in time (8)
 5. Drooped, like a neglected flower (6)
 6. Give a kitchen a fresh new look, say (7)
 7. Hit the slopes on these (3)
 10. Conditional helping word (5)
 11. Masticating, as with gum (7)
 13. Chekhov play or coastal scavenger (7)
 15. Relating to the late Stone Age (9)
 18. Hurling with force (8)
 19. Engine speed unit, informally (3)
 20. Small wave on a pond's surface (6)
 21. Burrowing North American rodent (6)
 24. Dense black wood used in fine furniture (5)
 26. Edges of glasses or wheels (4)
- Answers:** Across: 2: Stop; 8: Elk; 9: Ears; 10: Winch; 12: Odds; 14: Understand; 16: Lea; 17: Sikes; 20: Reggae; 22: Kivi; 23: Novel; 25: Popper; 27: Chung; 28: Idiot; 29: Merc; 30: Rigs; 31: Grays
 Down: 1: Desi; 3: Tech; 4: Predates; 5: Witted; 6: Remodel; 7: Ski; 10: Woid; 11: Chewing; 13: Seagull; 15: Neolithic; 18: Fling; 19: Rev; 20: Ripple; 21: Gopher; 24: Ebony; 26: Rims

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			8		9	7	6	2

Sudoku Challenge

Car Brands Wordsearch

Car Brands Wordsearch

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

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Spot the Difference!

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



THE RANT!!!



The Great British Holiday: Why Do We Do This To Ourselves?

There comes a point every year when the average Brit decides they desperately need a holiday. The weather at home has been disappointing, work has become unbearable, and you've convinced yourself that sitting by a pool in 34-degree heat whilst paying £9 for a lukewarm lager is exactly what your mental health requires.

Now, I have flown a lot in my life. Partly through work and partly because I genuinely enjoy holidays—or vacations, as some people insist on calling them nowadays. I've cruised across oceans, flown long-haul, short-haul, business class, economy class and, on a few occasions, what I can only describe as "livestock transport with wings."

Inclusive package holidays undoubtedly offer incredible value. For a few hundred pounds, you can have flights, accommodation, food and drinks all bundled together. Fantastic.

However, like most bargains in life, there are hidden costs. Not financial ones necessarily, but costs to your sanity.

Take, for example, the airport experience.... For years, holidays meant setting your alarm for a time usually reserved for dairy farmers and burglars. Nothing says "relaxing break" quite like getting up at half past two in the morning to arrive at the airport for 4am, so you can catch your 6am flight.

This year, however, we thought we'd cracked it.

An afternoon flight. Luxury.

No crawling out of bed in the middle of the night. No trying to remember whether you've packed your passport whilst functioning on approximately four minutes of sleep. Civilised.

Until, of course, reality intervened.

The flight due at 6pm finally appeared around 8.45pm.

Then we sat there. And sat there. Eventually taking off around 9.45pm.

By this point, people had moved through the classic stages of airport grief:

Optimism: "Oh well, these things happen."

Annoyance: "Why don't they tell us what's going on?"

Acceptance: "Anyone fancy another £14 airport sandwich?"

And finally:

Madness: watching a grown man argue with a charging station because his phone was on 3%.

Then comes one of humanity's greatest mysteries. The landing.

The aircraft touches down safely. Everyone applauds internally that they haven't become a Channel 5 documentary entitled Air Disaster Abroad.

The plane taxis towards the gate...The seatbelt sign remains illuminated then... DING!

The seatbelt sign goes off.

Suddenly, the entire aircraft transforms into scenes from the opening moments of a zombie apocalypse.

People launch themselves upright with Olympic precision. Overhead lockers burst open. Bags the size of small family cars are dragged down.

And somehow, despite being in Row 32, these people believe standing bent double in an aisle for the next twenty minutes will somehow allow them to exit before Row 1.

Why? Where exactly are we all rushing to?

The plane doors aren't even open. I've never once heard a pilot announce: "Good news ladies and gentlemen, the first ten passengers off the aircraft win £10,000 and immediate access to baggage reclaim."

Even more concerning are those individuals who decide that your seat is apparently an acceptable step ladder.

There you are, still seated, waiting patiently, then suddenly you find yourself intimately acquainted with a complete stranger's nether regions as they climb onto the armrests and seat cushions in pursuit of their suitcase.

Nothing quite destroys your post-holiday glow faster than having Trevor from Doncaster's backside hovering approximately three inches from your face.

Personal space becomes merely a distant memory. Then there are the children.

Now, before parents sharpen their pitchforks, I appreciate travelling with young children must be incredibly difficult.

However, there appears to be a growing phenomenon of complete parental obliviousness.

We've all experienced it.

The child behind you who spends four hours repeatedly kicking your seat, not enough to warrant international intervention.

But enough to make you contemplate whether prison might actually provide a welcome period of peace and quiet....Then comes the screaming...Not crying...Actual screaming.

Usually accompanied by parents who have apparently developed complete immunity.

You can see them calmly watching films or reading books whilst everyone within a ten-row radius wonders if the child is being possessed.

Occasionally, they offer helpful interventions such as:

"Archie, stop that..." Archie does not stop that.... Archie hasn't stopped that since Gatwick.

Then, after eventually arriving at your destination airport, you face the coach transfer package holiday brochures proudly proclaim: "Only 40 minutes from the airport!" What they fail to mention is that your coach driver appears contractually obliged to visit every single hotel on the island first.

You arrive excited....Hotel number one...Then two...Then six. By hotel twelve, you begin recognising local landmarks.

At one point, I genuinely believe we drove past our own hotel twice...Finally, several geological eras later, you arrive, tired, hungry, slightly dehydrated.... Only to discover: "Sorry, the restaurant has just closed." "The bar shuts in ten minutes."

Wonderful.

Nothing says "welcome to paradise" quite like a cheese sandwich from a vending machine and panic-ordering two drinks before last orders.

Then comes the most competitive sport in Europe....The Great Sun Lounger Championships. Now, apparently, some people set alarms for 6am whilst on holiday, not to enjoy a peaceful sunrise, not for an early swim.

But to place towels on sun loungers!

This ritual involves silently creeping around the pool area like some sort of deckchair ninja before returning to bed for another five hours, By 7am, every lounge is occupied.

By actual humans? Of course not...By faded Union Jack beach towels and copies of last Tuesday's Daily Mirror, the owners won't reappear until 11am.

I've often wondered whether hotel staff should introduce a simple system, if your towel occupies a lounge for more than two hours without evidence of life, it's auctioned off to the highest bidder.

And then there are our fellow Brits abroad, the unofficial ambassadors of the United Kingdom, The man who insists on wearing football shirts to every evening meal, the woman who demands fish and chips because "I don't eat foreign food."

The gentleman already sunburnt beyond medical recommendation by 9.30am despite claiming: "I never burn."

The holiday drinkers who start at breakfast because "you can't drink all day if you don't start in the morning."

Those who loudly compare everything with home: "It's not like this in Benidorm." "The bacon's different." "The tea tastes funny." Of course it does, Sandra.... You're in Cyprus.

The nightly entertainment provides its own fascinating observations, the same people who spent all day avoiding eye contact suddenly become professional dancers after three cocktails, middle-aged men discover hidden talents for karaoke, unfortunately, these talents remain hidden because they don't actually exist.

Yet despite all of this...The delays...The screaming children. The aerial gymnastics involving overhead lockers. The coach tours of every hotel within a hundred-mile radius. The towel wars. The sunburn. The buffet stampedes....

We do it all again next year.

Because somewhere amongst the madness, there are moments that make it worthwhile, the first glimpse of sunshine.

The complete switch-off from everyday life.

The laughter.

The memories.

The feeling of having absolutely nowhere important to be.

And perhaps that is the real beauty of holidays.

They remind us that whilst human beings can be utterly ridiculous creatures, we're all simply trying to escape reality for a little while.

Even if that means rubbing our backsides in strangers' faces whilst fighting over overhead locker space.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to set my alarm for 6am.

Apparently there's a sun lounge near the pool with my towel's name on it.



Hythe in Bloom Brings Colour Back to the Town for Summer 2026

Operating under the auspices of Hythe Civic Society, Hythe in Bloom has been enhancing the town's appearance since 2004, providing vibrant seasonal floral displays throughout Hythe. These include the tubs along the High Street and the railing-mounted troughs in Prospect Road, which together help create a colourful and welcoming environment for residents and visitors alike.

The High Street tubs have now been planted by volunteers and are once again overflowing with flowers. The Prospect Road troughs are also in place, ensuring that Hythe is ready for another spectacular summer display. This year's multi-coloured planting

scheme promises to be particularly eye-catching.

A dedicated team of volunteers – which includes pupils from Brockhill Park Performing Arts College and members of Hythe Scouts – will continue to care for the displays in the High Street throughout the season, undertaking the regular watering and maintenance needed to keep them looking their best. Thanks to their commitment and hard work, the town centre will remain vibrant and colourful well into the autumn.

The project continues to benefit from generous support from a range of organisations and businesses. Contributions in cash or kind have been received from Hythe Civic Society and Hythe Town Council, and commercial sponsors supporting the project this year include Lawrence and Co Estate Agents, Charlier Construction and - new for this year - H V Wooding Ltd, whose generosity is greatly appreciated.

Hythe in Bloom Organiser, Sally Chesters, said: "Once again, Hythe is looking colourful, vibrant and ready to welcome residents and visitors throughout the summer. The floral displays make a significant contribution to the town's appearance, and this would

not be possible without the dedication and hard work of our fantastic team of volunteers. Their commitment to planting, watering and maintaining the High Street displays throughout the season ensures that Hythe continues to look its very best.

We are also extremely grateful to our sponsors for their generous support. Their contributions are invaluable and enable us to provide and maintain the extensive floral displays that help make Hythe such an attractive and welcoming place. The success of Hythe in Bloom is a true community effort, and we thank everyone who plays a part in making it possible."

Photograph shows volunteers Penny, Tony and Daria planting the troughs in Bank Street.



The Hythe Venetian Fete

The Hythe Venetian Fete is taking place on The Royal Military Canal, Wednesday 19th August, with gates open from 4pm. Tickets (general entry and seated) are available for purchase through the website using the QR code or at www.hythevenetianfete.co.uk. Ticket information with prices, seating plan and parking arrangements can be found on the website.

The Hythe Venetian fete is also providing four free band concerts on the canal's South bank centre stage. The concerts take place on the centre stage on the canal bank on Sunday 16th August; beginning with the Hythe Town Concert Band (14:00-16:00), followed by the Kent Soul Choir (17:00-17:45) ending with Kylie on Show (19:30-21:30). On the Monday 17th August we have Jason Lee performing on the stage (19:30-21:30).

So, we have a great line up and best of all the concerts are free to attend.

We are still looking for volunteers to help on the fete day, so do get in contact through the website, we would love to hear from you.

The Hythe Venetian fete Water Spectacular is sponsored by AW Construction Services Ltd, Hythe Town Council and The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust.

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Adam's Walking Routes

'It was twenty years ago today...' begin the lyrics of one of the many legendary songs of the Beatles. Twenty years must have seemed a long time to the young Paul McCartney who wrote the song in 1967. After all, in 1947 we were barely over the Second World War and Paul was five!

Personally, I think the twenty years since I walked the entire Greensand Way footpath have passed in a flash. I understand that plans are afoot for a kind of 'official' start to the path in Forge Gardens in Hamstreet. The path begins at the 'Gateway to the Marsh' (as poetic types sometimes refer to Hamstreet) and gets progressively hillier as it heads westward, taking its name from the Greensand Ridge, a line of hills running parallel to the North Downs across Kent and Surrey. The opposite end is c.110 miles away in the small and attractive town of Haslemere. I walked the local section, up through Hamstreet Woods and on via Kingsnorth, Chilmington and Great Chart back in the winter. I was pleased to see that the route of the trail around Chimington hasn't been severely marred by the recent housing development, retaining a mostly rural feel throughout. Speaking of which, a decision should be imminent as to whether or not the Mountain Farm development gets the go ahead in Hamstreet.



The 'mountain' is merely a hill overlooking Romney Marsh between the village and the Royal Military Canal. I wonder how many folk can remember the Blue Peter stunt on TV where 'Romney Marsh Mountain Rescue staged a walk up the 'Marsh Mountain' from here, culminating in a crawl along New Romney High Street as though it was a rock face. This bizarre inclusion to the BBC children's TV show was aired c.1989. If anybody still has this on video I'd love to know.

Back to my hike, beyond Great Chart, the route bridges the Ashford to Tonbridge railway line, and I had to abandon my walk due to the path being flooded all the way down to the Great Stour. I've never been a fan of swimming!

My second dabble at the Greensand Way covered the section which runs along the edge of Godinton Park, again not hugely troubled by the suburban developments, before heading west to pass to the south of Hothfield, descending towards the edge of Hothfield Common and then up and over to Little Chart. From here on, I followed the Stour Valley Path to Lenham, the source of this river which flows via Ashford, Canterbury and Sandwich.

I walked my third section of the Greensand Way backwards, catching a bus from Headcorn to pick up the trail at Sutton Valence, heading eastward. This was, and probably still is, my favourite section of the walk. Kent lives up to its epithet of being the 'Garden of England' here, with numerous orchards along the route. The views from the top of the ridge are

panoramic, and the path remains fairly high up the slope until dropping off beyond Boughton Malherbe. After Egerton (pictured above), the route dips and then climbs again to Pluckley, where the orchards take over again for the descent to Little Chart. After a pint in the Swan's beer garden, I negotiated a route to Pluckley Station, being somewhat gutted to find that Dering Arms was closed and the next train was in 55 minutes time. Time for some stoicism.

Most recently, I booked myself a Travelodge in Dorking, with the aim of completing the sections of the Greensand Way from Reigate to Dorking and from Reigate to Oxted.

Alighting the train at Reigate Station, the town is reached via a foot tunnel, which was the first road tunnel to be built in the UK, opening in 1823. This was constructed for the ease of stagecoaches, travelling from London to Brighton, so-called because these long journeys were completed in stages, with a change of horses being needed at regular intervals.

The route of the Greensand Way to Dorking was far more scenic than I remembered it. The path drops dramatically into the valley of the River Mole, which runs from Gatwick to the Thames. The Greensand Ridge doesn't reassert itself until Dorking area, leaving the North Downs on the right hand side to dominate the skyline.

I passed through the pretty villages of Betchworth and Brockham and passed a small woodland that I camped in in 2006. I described this as 'cake shaped' in my book about the walk ('Mud, Sweat and Beers') and I can confirm that it still gives that impression! The 'cherry on top' was passing a blue plaque in Dorking marking Strawberry Studios where 10cc, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder and others had all recorded music. For someone who sometimes writes album reviews for The Looker this was a treat to stumble across.



On the following day I would catch the train to Reigate and walk the 'GW' eastward. It was nice to walk a section of the trail that my friend Tom and I had completely missed twenty years ago, having made a hash of the map-reading and ended up in Redhill town centre. Thankfully, modern apps make following a trail of this kind much easier today. However, signage for the trail was still non-existent on the lanes to the west of South Nutfield so I reported this to Surrey County Council. Modern apps make this easier too!

My lunchtime refreshment break was at a pub in Bletchingley, a village straddling the A25 at the top of the ridge. It was doing brisk business and the barmaid was clearly feeling the pressure.

The next section feels similar to the Pilgrims' Way (along the North Downs), with the Greensand Way running along the lower part of the ridge's scarp slope in an easy-to-follow straight line. Crossing the A22 near Godstone was more of a challenge, but the section via Tandridge to Oxted passed very quickly. Oxted is perhaps most famous for the being the origin of a certain Keir Starmer. Not far from here is the furthest known mention of Hamstreet, where the 'GW' crosses the Kent border, with the village signed as being 55 miles away.

I'll fill you in on the rest of Greensand Way in the next edition. In the meantime 'Mud, Sweat and Beers' can be found digitally or physically via your favourite online book distributor.



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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. Long life juice, long life milk, cooking oil, washing capsules for clothes, coffee, squash, salad cream, mayonnaise, veggie meals in a tin, and sugar. Fresh food is now being distributed, but depends on availability.

At present they have plenty of tinned goods, (including vegs, beans, tomatoes, potatoes and soup), liquid hand soap, toothpaste and pasta.

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. Check the venue when you register for your voucher.

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.

Village Halls. Many villages and towns on the Marsh have new village halls, which are always available for one off occasions or regular hire. The high costs we are all facing have affected them as well, so they will be very happy to host your event/s. The contact will be on the notice board outside the hall.

Paul Sanderson, former editor of the Marsh Message died in September, 2025. He was a talented artist, and there is an exhibition of his work, at the Nest (formerly the RM Visitor Centre on the A259) from Friday August 14th until Sunday 16th. The proceeds of the exhibition will go to the Canterbury Oast Trust, who look after Nicholas, his son with learning difficulties.

Brenzett village is holding a "Club Day" on August 8th, when all the organisations in the village will be taking part in a large variety of activities and events. A tremendous effort is going into this effort, so they are hoping for good weather, and support. Look out for more details in the church magazines.

Jam on the Marsh. This interesting and varied series of concerts and exhibitions takes place from July 8th-12th. Leaflets available, and all the details can be found online.

Brookland, St Augustine.

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

The next sung evensong will be on July 12th at 6.30pm. The practice for the choir will be on the previous Thursday, at 1.15pm. There were a few new faces in May, so we look forward to seeing them again.

The fortnightly midweek HC services continue on alternative Thursdays at 6.30pm. All welcome. See notices for dates.

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. Recently some good quality long life floral displays have been purchased, which are very realistic, and will be useful for when the "flower rota" is rather thin!

The recent quiz with fish and chips was a great success, and £400 was raised for church funds after the expenses. It is hoping to be repeated in October.

There will be another coffee morning with the Seaside Singers on Saturday, July 11th 10.30-1pm. All welcome to this friendly event.

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

Dymchurch Methodist church. This is now part of 'Marsh Methodist Church' with a central administration, and services will be on a rotating pattern. See notices for dates.

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. Recently the Wednesday morning drop-in has had to be withdrawn, because the numbers were so low, that it wasn't worth continuing. Many 2 and 3 years old now have free nursery places, which the parents, of course, are happy to take up.

Craft Fair. After joining with the Lydd club day in June the Craft Fair is back at Greatstone on Saturday July 18th from 10am-2pm. All welcome to this lively craft fair, the stalls spill out into the church, as well as the church hall.

Ivychurch, St George.

The clock is being repaired. During the work, a 200-year-old piece of mechanism has had to be replaced, with additional expense. If anyone would like to help this fund, the account can be accessed online by The Parochial Church Council of Ivychurch. The account number is 59164042 and the sort code is 60.01.21.

The March production of "Jane Eyre" was very well received, and enjoyed by the full house audience. It was performed by the "My Theatre" company, and they will be returning on August 30th to perform the "Great Gatsby."

On July 18th, there will be a big day of celebration in Ivychurch, centred around the completion of the clock repairs. The church is forever grateful to the Romney Marsh Historical Churches Trust, for their help with repairs to the clock, and also to the private individuals who contributed. There will be a full day of events, culminating in a concert by the Ashford Invicta Choir. More details in the next magazine.

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.

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, (provided by other charities) 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.

Lydd Methodist Church. This is now part of Marsh Methodist Church flannels under one administration, with rotating services. See notices for dates.

New Romney, St Nicholas.

Like Lydd church, St Nicholas' is very large and needs a lot of cleaning and care. If anyone has an hour to spare, the church would be very grateful for any help. Maybe you don't attend regularly, but feel for the history of this ancient church, your help would be much appreciated. Call Ann Rolfe on 362719.

The church is sponsoring a week of accompanied prayer, when people can promise to pray for 30 minutes during the week of June 21st to 27th. For further details see church magazine, and fill in a form.

The church is acting as a centre for collecting **Christmas Shoe boxes** for needy children in other places. You can put various things in shoebox for a boy or girl, and in 3 age groups. Under 5s, 5-12s and 12-16. There will be literature in the church later on. Respecting other nation's cultures and laws, there are things that cannot be put in the boxes, like Christian literature, anything warlike, sweets, chocolates and food, medicines, aerosol cans, toothpaste and liquid toiletries. And new this year, we are not allowed to include tablet soap. Hats, scarves, mittens, small toys like balls, and other small toys, flannels, school supplies, are all allowed. If you cannot put a whole box together, any contribution is welcome.

The church's monthly coffee morning and sale is on Saturday, 18th July. from 10am-midday. There will be live music, lots of delicious cakes, and the usual amazing collection of DVDs, CDs, books and records. All warmly invited.

New Romney Methodist Church.

The Saturday morning coffee mornings take place from 10am-noon, and the Meeting Point on Thursday mornings from 10-12md is continuing. All warmly welcome to both events.

The church is now part of 'Marsh Methodist Church' and services are on a rotating basis. See notices for details.

Newchurch, St Peter and Paul.

A successful coffee morning was held in May, will continue on the first Saturday of every month, during the summer. So, the next one will be on Saturday, July 4th from 10am -midday. All welcome to come along and support the village and meet fellow villagers.

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 church is also the local food bank, so see head of column for details

All preschool children, their nans and carers very welcome to the toddler group from 8.45am to 11am on Thursday mornings in term time. Fully equipped, helpers police checked and spaces available. Cost is £3 per family.

The Youth Space sessions meet on Thursdays at 3.30pm, after school for years 5,6. And 7. All children in those year groups welcome. Children must be dropped off and collected by a parent or known responsible adult.

The craft group which met on alternative Wednesdays, has now joined the craft group at the Nest (the reopened café and craft shop at the old Nature reserve on the road between NR and SMB. This takes place every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Snargate, St Dunstans.

The Holy Communion services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays continue, so the next one will be on Sunday, June 28th, followed by refreshments and fellowship. The new curtains, blessed earlier in the Month were much admired by all who saw them.

St Mary's Bay, All Saints.

The normal fund raisers have resumed, and the Café church, on Mondays and Wednesday morning get togethers continue to flourish, with increasing number, and a tremendous time of fellowship is enjoyed by all. The next fund raisers will be in July, see notices for times and dates.

A new venture is starting in SMB village hall, called "Renew Wellbeing Café" This is a nationwide effort aimed at those who may just need some friendship, activity, and someone to talk to! There will be space for craft, you can take part, of bring your own, and most importantly, a space where it is "ok to be not ok." It takes place on Wednesdays, from 2-4pm. All activities are free, and there are gentle sessions on wellbeing and health, both physically and mentally. All very welcome. For more information, ring Revd Penny Lowe on 07810 717408 or email pslowe9@gmail.com

St Mary in the Marsh.

The Haywardians Choir practices every Friday evening in the church at 7.30pm. They raise large amounts for Charity and have regular local concerts. The next one will be at St George's Ivychurch, on Saturday, July 4th at 7.30pm.

Fund raising is taking place for the St Mary in the Marsh Project Fund to complete the village hall.

Church Chuckle.

Two little boys, who were taken to the Catholic church, often saw a nun in costume, who was the parish sister. They were having a discussion about the different robes they saw in church, and one said to the other, "I think she is one of those things that go into the fields to scare the birds away."

Wit and Wisdom.

"Comparison is the thief of joy." Theodore Roosevelt.

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