

AIRPORT READY FOR TAKE-OFF



Could Lydd Lead the Way in International Drone Cargo

Ambitious plans for drone and autonomous aviation hub could create more than 500 jobs and inject £75 million a year into the local economy

Lydd Airport could be transformed into a national centre for drones, autonomous aircraft and aerospace testing under ambitious proposals that could create hundreds of highly skilled jobs on Romney Marsh.

The Good Growth Foundation is calling on the government to fast-track changes to the airspace surrounding the airport, allowing Lydd to become Britain's first Centre for Future Flight Innovation.

The independent think tank believes the project could create 535 direct jobs at the airport and support more than 1,000 additional jobs through supply chains and increased spending in the local economy.

It estimates that the development could generate £75.5 million in gross value added for the area every year, breathing

new life into an airport that was once among the busiest in Britain.

Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, Cllr David Wimble, has been working tirelessly with Lydd Airport, government ministers and international aviation businesses to help turn the vision into reality.

The Romney Marsh county councillor has also been pursuing opportunities through the Straits Committee and holding discussions with drone companies in France and Belgium about the potential for cross-Channel cargo operations.

Cllr Wimble said the proposals could secure the airport's long-term future while bringing investment, innovation and well-paid employment to Romney Marsh.

"We were all worried when Bristow relocated its search-and-rescue operation to Manston, because the

Continued on page 2

Does It Really Matter What Councillors Wear?

Lydd Town Council has told its members to smarten up after concerns that standards of dress and conduct have slipped. But should we judge our elected representatives by their jackets—or by the decisions they make?

It is a debate that sounds as though it belongs in the pages of a fashion magazine rather than the minutes of a council meeting: what should a councillor wear?

For generations, the answer was fairly straightforward. Male councillors wore suits, shirts and ties, while female members generally attended meetings in equally formal business attire. Council chambers were places of ceremony, tradition and, occasionally, enough gold chains to make a 1980s rapper feel underdressed.

Times, however, have changed.

Jeans have replaced pressed trousers, trainers have appeared beneath council tables and open-necked shirts have become increasingly common. At Lydd Town Council, it seems things may have gone one step further, with reports of councillors attending meetings in shorts, T-shirts and even Hawaiian shirts.

According to a KentOnline report, Cllr Jean Jones raised the issue at the council's July meeting, arguing that standards had slipped and that some members were no longer dressing appropriately for official business.

Her concerns were initially met with laughter, but councillors eventually voted unanimously to adopt a policy requiring members to dress appropriately when attending meetings or representing the

Continued on page 3

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Lifeboat crews steal the show at Littlestone 999 Day

Hundreds of visitors descended on Littlestone Lifeboat Station for its annual Emergency Services Day, which once again proved to be one of the most popular family events on the Romney Marsh calendar.

Held on Sunday, August 30, the free event gave the public an opportunity to meet the men and women many of them volunteers who respond when emergencies happen on land or at sea.

Throughout the day, visitors were able to inspect emergency vehicles and specialist equipment, speak directly to crews and learn more about the work carried out by the different organisations.

Among those represented were Kent Police, Sussex Police, British Transport Police, HM Coastguard, Border Force, Port of Dover Police, Kent Highways, Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat and SERV Kent Bloodrunners.

Alongside the emergency-service displays, there was plenty to keep the whole family entertained, including a funfair, craft stalls, food stands and, helped by the better weather, a very popular ice-cream stall.

However, it was the RNLI which once again stole the show.

The home crew from Littlestone took to the water aboard the station's Atlantic 85 inshore lifeboat, Jean McIvor, and were joined by visiting lifeboats and crews from Dungeness and Dover.

The sight of the three lifeboats operating together off the coast provided the highlight of the afternoon and drew a large crowd to the shoreline.

The on-water display demonstrated the very different capabilities of the fast and highly manoeuvrable Littlestone inshore lifeboat and the much larger all-weather boats operated by Dungeness and Dover.



It also gave spectators an impressive insight into the way neighbouring RNLI stations work together during emergencies in the English Channel.

Although the display was entertaining to watch, it carried a serious message. The exercises demonstrated the training, teamwork and seamanship required when crews are called to assist people in difficulty at sea often in darkness and in some of the worst possible weather conditions.

The event was particularly special for Littlestone, giving its volunteer crew an opportunity to welcome the community into the station, explain the equipment they use and promote important water-safety advice.

Children were able to see emergency vehicles at close quarters, while adults had the chance to ask questions and discover more about volunteering opportunities within the emergency services and supporting organisations.

Littlestone's Emergency Services Day has become a firm favourite with local families, and this year's excellent attendance demonstrated the enormous affection and respect people across the Romney Marsh have for those who work and volunteer to keep the community safe.

The event also served as a reminder that the RNLI remains a charity, relying on public donations to train and equip its crews and maintain a lifesaving service around the clock.

Once again, the organisers, emergency-service personnel, stallholders and volunteers delivered a hugely successful community occasion but when the lifeboats appeared together on the water, there was little doubt about who had stolen the show.



Photos with thanks to Susan Pilcher



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Editor's Word

David Wimble



I promise this is not going to be another rant although I appreciate that some readers may find that difficult to believe!

Last weekend, we travelled to the NEC in Birmingham for the Reform UK Party Conference. Other political parties are, of course, available and will no doubt be rammed down your throats over the coming weeks.

I was there to announce the launch of Reform Radio and to conduct a series of interviews. However, on Saturday morning, a story broke about masked protesters in Dover bringing the port and many of the surrounding roads to a standstill.

When I was asked for my opinion, my response was simple: an important part of living in a democracy is having the right to protest peacefully.

Personally, I would have preferred the protesters not to have worn masks. Seeing groups of masked people can be extremely intimidating, particularly for families and those simply trying to go about their everyday lives. Nevertheless, peaceful protest is a democratic right, whether or not we agree with the cause.

But what reportedly happened the following day crossed a very clear line.

As migrants rescued in the Channel were brought ashore by an RNLI lifeboat, volunteer crew members were subjected to abuse

and harassment. In two reported incidents, crew members were punched, while stones were also thrown.

Both The Looker and I, as a former RNLI crewman, believe this behaviour was utterly disgusting. It has no place in our country.

By all means protest. Make your opinions known. Challenge politicians and government policy. **But never attack the volunteer crews of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.**

Lifeboat crews are not politicians. They do not make immigration policy, control our borders or decide who should be allowed to remain in this country. Their purpose is simple: to save lives at sea. When the Coastguard requests their assistance, they respond without fear, favour or political judgement.

The RNLI should never be politicised, and its volunteer crews should never be blamed or attacked for carrying out their duty.

My comments caused something of a stir, and the national media soon became involved as social media erupted with posts both defending and attacking the RNLI.

The institution itself rarely becomes involved in political debate, so when I was asked to speak about the issue, I agreed to appear on GB News, BBC News, ITV News, Good Morning Britain and BBC Radio 4's PM programme.

I would like to thank the hundreds of people who have sent kind messages following those appearances. More importantly, thank you for the overwhelming support shown for an institution that played such a significant part in my life.

Whatever our political beliefs, surely we can all agree on one thing: those who volunteer to save lives deserve our gratitude and protection never abuse or violence.

David

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Bobby on the beat

Green Motorcycle

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I wouldn't normally appeal for information with regards to trying to identify a vehicle but as this one doesn't appear to display a number plate and the rider appears to have no regard for any other road user I'm wanting information to its whereabouts so that the rider can be spoken with to.

I am aware of a distinctive green coloured motorcycle that has been tearing around at ridiculous speeds and has been sighted between Dymchurch and Lydd and earlier today as I was leaving Taylor's Lane St Mary's Bay heading towards New Romney the bike went past towards New Romney and overtook a number of vehicles well in excess of the speed limit but unfortunately wasn't displaying a number plate.

As I said, the bike is very distinctive being a bright green colour and although I'm not a motorcyclist I'd say it was at least a 1000cc sports type bike.

Any information that is given to me I will treat in confidence.

Please email me 13183@kent.police.uk

If the rider reads this and wants to get in touch with me please do so as this can be easily sorted out, my main consideration is everyone's safety including the rider's who is currently giving law abiding riders a bad image!

Thank you

Steve.



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Cockreed Lane: Infrastructure First, Brownfield First

By John Huston



Cockreed Lane Action Group is stepping up its campaign against another major housing development — and is asking a simple question: can the local infrastructure cope?

Cockreed Lane Action Group is stepping up its campaign against proposals for approximately 110 further homes on agricultural land at Cockreed Lane.

The group is not opposed to new homes. Its concern is where those homes are built, whether suitable brownfield and previously developed land has been properly considered, and whether the infrastructure is capable of supporting further development.

The campaign is becoming increasingly visible along Cockreed Lane, but behind the signs is a question that goes beyond the current planning application.

We have been here before

In 2015, planning application Y15/0164/SH proposed up to 110 homes on land bounded by Cockreed Lane and Rolfe Lane, known as Land Opposite Dorland.

The council recommended approval subject to a Section 106 agreement covering infrastructure and financial contributions. A subsequent reserved-matters application, Y17/0674/SH, was approved for 109 dwellings. Council monitoring later recorded that the development increased to 118 dwellings following a new plan.

What is particularly relevant today is the proposed infrastructure that accompanied the original development.

The Section 106 agreement was signed on 10 February 2017 and required almost £683,000 in contributions.

After indexation, the amount due was recorded as £716,223.92. That money was intended to help address the impact of the development on local services and facilities.

The contributions included:

Infrastructure	Original contribution
Education	£236,096
Open space	£163,350
Highways & High Street	£136,960
Travel plan & cycle voucher	£66,000
Healthcare	£64,864.80
Social care	£8,125.70
Libraries	£5,282.20
Community provision	£2,318.80
Total	£682,997.50

The contributions were intended for additional education provision, open-space improvements, highway and junction works, sustainable transport, healthcare, social care, libraries and community facilities.

These were not simply optional extras. They formed part of the infrastructure mitigation associated with the development.

So what happened to it?

This is where Cockreed Lane Action Group believes the debate needs to move beyond simply asking whether money was collected.

Council records show that contributions were received and allocated at different stages, with payments linked to the terms of the Section 106 agreement.

For example, the council's infrastructure evidence records education contributions being transferred to Kent County Council. It also records highway contributions and the implementation of improvements to the Cockreed Lane/St Mary's Road junction before first occupation.

The council's 2020 Infrastructure Funding Statement also recorded £136,794 associated with Y15/0164/SH in education and other infrastructure categories.

Healthcare is another area that deserves attention.

The original agreement required £64,864.80 be allocated for healthcare, which the council records as received in August 2019. Subsequent council records also identified NHS funding associated with the development being held for transfer towards a proposed new surgery in New Romney.

For the Action Group, the question is not simply whether these contributions were paid. It is: What infrastructure was actually delivered, what additional capacity did it provide, and how much of that capacity remains today?

Capacity matters

A contribution towards a school does not create unlimited school places.

A road improvement does not remove congestion forever. Healthcare funding does not mean additional medical

capacity remains available indefinitely. Infrastructure has to keep pace with the population using it.

The previous Cockreed Lane development therefore provides an important reference point.

Around 110 homes were originally proposed, and significant infrastructure mitigation was required.

Those homes were then built and occupied.

Now another development of approximately 110 homes is being proposed in the same area.

What has changed?

That is the question Cockreed Lane Action Group wants answered. What infrastructure was actually delivered? How much additional capacity did it create? How much of that capacity has subsequently been used? What is the current position on school places and healthcare? Can the local road network cope? What is the situation with drainage, sewage and water? What additional public transport and sustainable travel provision would be required?

And, crucially, what infrastructure would be needed to support another 110 homes?

The Action Group believes these questions should be answered with evidence before another major development is considered.

Brownfield before agricultural land

There is also a wider issue behind the campaign.

Cockreed Lane Action Group is calling for suitable brownfield and previously developed sites to be properly identified and considered before further agricultural land is lost.

The group is not arguing that no more homes should be built.

It is arguing that where homes are built is what matters.

Once productive agricultural land is covered by houses, roads, gardens and associated infrastructure, it is effectively removed from agricultural use for generations.

The Action Group therefore wants the planning process to demonstrate that suitable alternatives have been properly considered before agricultural land is sacrificed.

What residents are asking for

Cockreed Lane Action Group is now calling for a clear infrastructure assessment covering both the previous development and the new proposal.

Residents want to know:

What was required?
What was paid?
Where did the money go?
What was actually delivered?
How much additional capacity was created?
How much capacity remains?
And, most importantly: **What would another approximately 110 homes require?**

These are not questions against housing. They are questions about proper planning.



If another major development is to be added to the area, residents should be able to see the evidence that the roads, schools, healthcare, drainage, sewage, water, public transport and other services can support it.

For Cockreed Lane Action Group, the principle is straightforward:

**Infrastructure first.
Brownfield first.
Agricultural land last.**

The campaign will continue to press for the evidence behind the development proposals — because, in the Action Group's view, building homes should not come before making sure the infrastructure is there to support them. Lane financial arguments

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Hythe High Street is fighting for survival but where is the help?

Another familiar name is disappearing from Hythe High Street, and with every set of closing-down signs the same question becomes more urgent: what is being done to help our town-centre businesses survive?

TG Jones, the retailer formerly known as WH Smith, has confirmed that its Hythe branch will close on October 13.

Large yellow closing-down signs have appeared in the shop windows, delivering yet another blow to a High Street already facing enormous pressure.

The closure forms part of a nationwide restructuring programme that will see about 150 TG Jones stores shut. The company, which operates approximately 450 shops and employs around 4,700 people, reportedly faced an £8 million financial shortfall without substantial changes to its business.

Most traditional WH Smith High Street stores were rebranded as TG Jones after being bought by Modella last year. WH Smith retained its travel outlets at locations such as airports and railway stations.

A TG Jones spokesperson said the company was working to secure its long-term future and acknowledged that the Hythe closure would be

disappointing for employees, customers and the wider community.

The company says its immediate priority is supporting affected staff while continuing to serve customers until the doors close.

Hythe will be the second TG Jones branch in Kent to disappear, with the Deal store due to close on September 19. As the restructuring process remains ongoing, the company has not confirmed whether any more Kent branches could be affected.

Of course, not every national retailer can be saved by a local authority. Changing shopping habits, internet competition, rising wages, energy bills and operating costs are problems being felt in towns across Britain.

But that cannot become a convenient excuse for doing nothing.

Hythe has a wonderful High Street, packed with independent shops, cafés, restaurants and family-run businesses. These are not simply places where people buy things. They employ local residents, support community events, attract visitors and help give the town its character.

When one shop closes, the impact spreads. There is one fewer reason to visit the town, one more empty window and less passing trade for every neighbouring business.

So, what has Folkestone and Hythe District Council actually done to help?

From the perspective of many struggling traders, the answer appears to be: nothing meaningful.

Businesses continue to face hefty rates bills while customers are asked to pay increasingly expensive parking charges. That hardly encourages people to spend a leisurely afternoon browsing Hythe's shops, stopping for lunch and supporting local traders.

For accuracy, the main business-rates multipliers are set by central government, not the district council. However, the council collects the bills, can administer eligible relief and has considerable influence over local economic-development policies. Parking charges, meanwhile, are very much a local decision.

It is therefore reasonable to ask what practical help the district council has offered Hythe.

Where is the serious High Street recovery plan? Where are the meaningful parking incentives, targeted support, coordinated promotion and action to bring empty premises back into use?

Why not introduce periods of free or discounted parking to encourage shoppers into the town? Why not provide more visible support for independent retailers, improve High Street promotion and work with landlords to prevent shops remaining empty for months?

Why not appoint a dedicated town-centre champion whose job is to listen to traders and ensure their concerns are acted upon?

Businesses do not need another glossy strategy document filled with warm words, attractive photographs and promises of "stakeholder engagement". They need customers through their doors.

They also need a council that recognises parking policy is not simply a source of revenue. Every increase risks persuading another shopper to visit an out-of-town retail park, use a supermarket with free parking or stay at home and order online.

TG Jones is a national company making decisions as part of a much wider restructuring programme. Folkestone and Hythe District Council cannot be blamed directly for that decision.

But it can be challenged over the conditions facing every independent business left behind.

Hythe's traders are fighting to survive. They are dealing with rising costs, reduced spending and competition from enormous online retailers. Many owners are working longer hours while taking home less money simply to keep their businesses alive.

What they need is a council prepared to fight alongside them.

Instead, the most noticeable contributions have been higher costs and increased parking charges. That is not a rescue package. It is another obstacle.

The closure of TG Jones must serve as a warning. Once a High Street begins losing familiar names and accumulating empty units, reversing the decline becomes increasingly difficult.

The district council should now explain publicly what it has done, what measurable results have been achieved and what immediate action it intends to take.

Because unless something changes, those yellow closing-down signs will not be the last ones Hythe sees.



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Match Celebrates the Farming Heritage of Romney Marsh



The Romney Marsh Ploughing Match and Dog Show is always one of our favourite annual events to cover here at The Looker — and this year's gathering at Shingle Hill, just outside St Mary in the Marsh, certainly did not disappoint.

We arrived shortly after 10am to find the event already attracting an impressive crowd, with around 100 vehicles filling the designated parking area and more visitors continuing to arrive.

Our first stop was a quick sweep of the craft stands, where local traders and exhibitors offered a varied selection of goods. From there, we breezed past a remarkable collection of tractors of every conceivable shape and size including one that looked small enough even for Sarah to drive!

Among the most impressive attractions were the twin steam-ploughing engines. Working together, the magnificent machines made surprisingly light work of turning the rock-hard ground, despite the Marsh having received very little rainfall over the previous two months.

It was a wonderful demonstration of the machinery and agricultural techniques that transformed British farming. The sight, sound and smell of the engines at work transported spectators back to an age when steam power was at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

We then crossed the road to watch the main ploughing competition, where there was a real mixture of competitors and machinery from across the generations.

A traditional team of plough horses demonstrated the skill and patience once required to work the land, while an assortment of beautifully maintained vintage tractors took their turn at attempting to create the perfect furrow.

Visitors were even offered the opportunity to have a go at ploughing for themselves, discovering first-hand that keeping a straight line across a field is considerably more difficult than it looks.

The judges assessed each competitor on the straightness and consistency of their furrows, together with the evenness of the soil being turned. It is clearly a highly specialised business requiring a very experienced eye.

We must confess that we thought they all looked pretty

spot-on. Despite studying the various plots carefully, we could not tell the difference between a winning performance and a bad one — although we are sure the judges knew precisely what they were looking for.

The accompanying dog show added another dimension to the day and ensured that four-legged competitors also had an opportunity to take centre stage. It helped make the event a genuine family occasion, attracting not only members of the farming community but residents and visitors of all ages.

For us, supporting traditional ploughing matches is important because they represent so much of what Romney Marsh has always been about.

This is a landscape shaped by farming and by generations of people who have worked the land to produce food, whether through arable farming or livestock. Events such as this provide an important reminder of those traditions and offer younger generations a glimpse of how farming was carried out in days gone by.

However, the match was not merely a nostalgic look into the past. It was also a powerful demonstration that the countryside remains a working environment rather than simply an attractive backdrop.

At a time when productive agricultural land across Romney Marsh faces the very real threat of being swallowed up by vast solar developments, the event served as a timely wake-up call.

Renewable energy has a role to play, but there must surely be a serious conversation about whether covering enormous areas of productive farmland with industrial-scale solar panels is the right answer. Once the character and agricultural purpose of the Marsh have been lost, they may never be recovered.

The Romney Marsh Ploughing Match and Dog Show celebrates skills, machinery, animals and traditions that have helped define this unique corner of Kent for generations.

This year's event once again proved why it remains such an important and enjoyable fixture in the local calendar — and why The Looker will continue to support it.





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£70,000 PLAYGROUND BOOST FOR CHERITON YOUNGSTERS



Young people in Cheriton can now enjoy a wider range of play equipment following a major £70,000 investment at the town's recreation ground.

Fourteen new pieces of apparatus have been installed at Cheriton Recreation Ground in Stanley Road, providing more activities for both toddlers and older children aged up to 14.

The improvements have been funded through



development levies collected by Folkestone and Hythe District Council to support and improve local infrastructure.

Among the new attractions for older youngsters are somersault bars, a turbo carousel and a cliff rider.

Younger children have also been catered for with a new seesaw, sunflower-inspired swing and tipi carousel, together with improved equipment designed to encourage imaginative play.

The new facilities complement the play equipment already available at the recreation ground and follow requests from local residents for activities suitable for a broader range of ages.

The council's Cabinet Member for Assets and Local Government Reorganisation, said: "I'm really pleased we've managed to accommodate a wider age range, as this is something residents have been asking for."

"We are committed to investing in local communities, including our young people – as demonstrated by this and the recent £750,000 refurbishment of the Lower Leas Coastal Park fun zone."

Further improvements are also being planned for play areas elsewhere in the district.

Nearly 250 residents recently took part in a council survey asking for their views on local play facilities. Their responses will now help shape proposed work at play areas in Seabrook, Lydd and East Cliff later this year.

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Happy Birthday Ernie

"On 6th September, Ernest Thompson reached the amazing age of 100. Well known in New Romney, Ernest is so loved in the community. He walks for half an hour every morning, visiting shopkeepers he's known for years. Sometimes stopping for a coffee and chat, he always interested in other people and is such an interesting man."

Along with around 22 of his family and friends we gathered together at The Coach House for a delicious meal. There were short speeches, even from Ernie and everyone raised a glass to him. Thanks to his sons Chris and Daniel, the Coach House staff who worked so hard and of course Ernie himself for letting us attend his 100th birthday. A wonderful day."



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Wednesday 16th September

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
Woman's Wednesday Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Thursday 17th September

Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves with Chris, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10.15 a.m.
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Gardening Group, Village Hall, 2 p.m. (3rd Thurs)
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Friday 18th September

Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Social Ballroom Sequence Dancing, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Saturday 19th September

Open Morning, Old School Trust, New Romney, 10 a.m. (1st & 3rd Sat)
Craft Fair & Market, St. Peter's Church, Greatstone, 10 a.m.

Sunday 20th September

Garage Safari around Lydd, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Monday 21st September

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

The Games Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Belles WI, Village Hall, 2 p.m. (3rd Mon)

Tuesday 22nd September

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 10.30 a.m.
Dymchurch Art Society, Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m.
New Romney WI, Scouts Hut, 2.15 p.m. (4th Tue)
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Wednesday 23rd September

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

Thursday 24th September

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 25th September

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.

JAM on the Marsh: The Lost Boy comes to Romney Marsh

Expect to be immersed in this intimate tale of love and loss. Following performances in North Wales and London, The Lost Boy comes to Romney Marsh on Saturday 19th at 7pm in St George's Church, Ivychurch TN29 0AL.

Following its sell-out festival this July, JAM brings this new production telling the tragic love story between two teenagers set in a fictional 1980s fishing village, blending voices and classical music. Harrison is torn between his duty to his recently widowed mother, and his devotion to his childhood sweetheart, John. Meanwhile, John yearns to escape to a life of perceived freedom in the city. When John's opportunity finally arrives in the form of a scholarship to a London conservatoire, Harrison is confronted with an impossible choice: love or duty? Driven by despair and poor mental health, Harrison chooses the only way out: to drive his boat into a storm and 'free' those he loves. This tragedy becomes the basis for an exploration of grief from John and Mary's perspective: how can we ever let go and move on?

The libretto was written in residence on Romney Marsh and inspired by the natural coastal environment as well as writers Derek Jarman and Caroline Bergvall.

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No More Great Escape: Lgr Pause Means Green–Lib Dem Council Must Now Face the Voters

District elections will go ahead next May as serious questions emerge over a reported 14.5% spending increase and millions of pounds in additional borrowing

The political “get out of jail” card may just have been snatched from the hands of Folkestone & Hythe District Council’s Green–Liberal Democrat administration.

Local Government Reorganisation has been paused following updated legal advice to the Government—and elections will now go ahead in May 2027 using existing council boundaries.

That means the people of Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh will once again have the opportunity to pass judgement on the district council’s record.

Until this dramatic announcement, Folkestone & Hythe District Council was due to disappear in April 2028, with its responsibilities absorbed into a new Mid Kent unitary authority covering Folkestone and Hythe, Ashford and Swale.

Instead of district elections, residents had expected to elect councillors to a new shadow authority. That escape route has now been blocked...at least for the time being.

LGR has been paused, not necessarily abandoned permanently. But the Government has confirmed that elections in May 2027 will proceed on existing boundaries while the reorganisation programme is reviewed. The Government’s reported LGR decision

For the Green-led administration and its two-member Liberal Democrat support group, that changes everything.

They can no longer assume that Folkestone & Hythe District Council will quietly disappear before voters have another opportunity to examine its promises, priorities and financial decisions.

Reality Arrives After the Election There is an old truth in politics: winning an election is the easy part. Reality normally arrives the following morning.

When you have spent years in opposition, it is easy to criticise every decision and promise that, if elected, you will fix the world.

Projects can apparently be cancelled without consequences. New facilities can be delivered without financial pain. Businesses can be supported, services protected and council tax kept under control.

Then you take office. Suddenly, the slogans meet the contracts, the promises meet the planning system and the manifesto meets the balance sheet.

That is precisely what appears to have happened at Folkestone & Hythe District Council since the Greens took the reins in 2023 with Liberal Democrat support.

The administration started on rocky ground and, at times, appeared to descend into a political flat spin as one election promise after another collided with financial and legal reality.

A 14.5% SPENDING RISE? The latest financial figures

will now face even greater scrutiny.

Figures being cited indicate an increase in council spending of approximately 14.5%, alongside additional borrowing approaching £15 million.

These are substantial sums for a district authority and the administration must publish a clear explanation of exactly what has increased, what the money has funded, how much borrowing has actually been undertaken and how it will be repaid.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council describes its £23 million revenue budget for 2026/27 as balanced and says it is the third consecutive budget not funded from general reserves. It also increased the district council’s portion of council tax by 2.99%. The council’s account of its 2026/27 budget

However, describing the day-to-day revenue budget as balanced does not tell residents the whole story.

The council is also pursuing a substantial capital programme, much of which depends upon borrowing.

Its own capital papers show that £5.012 million of capital expenditure during 2025/26 required borrowing. The approved programme for 2026/27 forecast a further £11.151 million financed through borrowing.

Taken together, that represents more than £16 million of borrowing-supported capital expenditure across the two financial years although planned borrowing, expenditure financed by borrowing and money physically borrowed from lenders are not always the same thing at the same moment.

The council’s medium-term programme also anticipates approximately £60.7 million of prudential borrowing through to 2030/31, including more than £51 million associated with Otterpool Park, £6 million for FOLCA 2 and £2 million for Hythe Pool refurbishment.

The council argues that some borrowing will ultimately be repaid through land sales, investment returns, rental income or other capital receipts. Nevertheless, the borrowing carries costs, risks and repayment responsibilities.

Those responsibilities do not disappear merely because councillors believed the authority might soon be replaced.

If spending decisions were taken on the assumption that a future Mid Kent authority would inherit the bill, **residents would be entitled to regard that as reckless!**

Local government reorganisation was never a debt-forgiveness scheme. Assets and liabilities would have transferred to the

successor council, meaning local taxpayers would still have been responsible.

Now that LGR has been paused, the current administration may have to remain in office and account directly for those commitments.

Princes Parade: The £4.4 Million Promise Few issues defined the 2023 district election more than Princes Parade.

The Greens had opposed the proposed leisure centre and housing development. After taking control, the project was abandoned. However, cancelling a major development did not make its contracts, professional fees and previous expenditure vanish. The total bill to the authority has been put at approximately £4.4 million.

That reportedly included £304,000 in legal costs associated with defending the planning permission against an unsuccessful Judicial Review challenge.

Around £300,000 was spent installing hoardings around the site, followed by an estimated £100,000 to remove them. Almost £1.88 million was paid to BAM Construction, which had been appointed in 2021 to build the leisure centre and deliver supporting infrastructure. That included nearly £495,000 in pre-contract, management and design costs, as well as more than £154,000 for vegetation clearance.

Much of that expenditure originated before the Greens took control, and they unquestionably inherited an expensive and difficult contract.

Nevertheless, they campaigned to cancel the scheme. They must therefore answer whether residents were told clearly and honestly what cancellation would cost. The council has since pledged that there will be no further development activity on its Princes Parade land and says consultation demonstrated support for retaining the site as open space.

With LGR paused, it will now be for the next district council and the councillors elected next May to decide whether that commitment survives.

Otterpool: From Opposition to Delivery Then there is Otterpool Park. Before taking office, the Greens gave residents the clear impression that they would stop the proposed garden town. That position did not survive contact with senior officers, existing commitments and government housing demands. The council now remains closely involved in delivering an 8,500-home garden town and has signed a collaboration agreement with Homes England.

Council leader Jim Martin has described Otterpool as an “exemplar” scheme promising sustainability, infrastructure, schools, healthcare, shops, leisure facilities and green space.

But the first proposed parcel consists of only around 300 homes near Hillhurst Farm!

Otterpool Park’s own published answers confirm that the initial development will not contain a dedicated school, doctors’ surgery or other major community facilities. Financial contributions will instead be made towards future provision or the expansion of existing services. Otterpool’s answers about its first 300 homes

Residents are entitled to ask whether 300 homes relying initially upon existing services truly represent the infrastructure-led garden town they were promised.

They are also entitled to ask how much more public money will be committed before the council begins recovering its huge investment through development and land sales.

Where Is Hythe’s New Swimming Pool? The future of Hythe’s swimming pool presents another collision

between political promises and financial reality.

Residents were presented with the prospect of a new leisure facility connected to development land reportedly offered for a nominal £1, together with millions of pounds in developer contributions.

Instead, the ageing Hythe Pool continues operating while the council considers refurbishment and alternative leisure proposals. The authority has discussed setting aside £6 million for work at Hythe Pool, potentially supported by £5.5 million in Section 106 funding and a land offer.

That may eventually produce an improved facility, but it is not the completed, oven-ready new swimming pool residents were led to expect.

At the same time, councillors have promoted newer leisure activities such as padel or pickleball. There may be demand for them, but they are no replacement for a funded and deliverable swimming-pool strategy and within weeks there will already be 6 centres within the district. People were promised a pool...not another consultation followed by another expensive report.

Businesses, Events and Energy The administration also promised to place local businesses first. Those businesses will judge that pledge against parking charges, difficult trading conditions, town-centre closures and the practical support they have received from their district council.

The 2024 Folkestone Air Display was cancelled when the Red Arrows were unavailable and the council decided it could not risk funding an event expected to attract fewer visitors.

The council had financial reasons for that decision, but local traders were still entitled to ask why no alternative event was organised to preserve some of the lost visitor economy.

On energy, the administration also created uncertainty by amending a motion that would have given explicit backing to new nuclear generation at Dungeness. References to “nuclear” and “Dungeness” were replaced with the broader language of “clean energy” across the district.

Now They Must Face the Electorate Until this week, the Green–Liberal Democrat administration could reasonably have expected the district council to disappear before another full district election.

Unfinished projects, capital commitments and controversial decisions would have been transferred to a much larger authority.

Political responsibility could have become blurred among the finances and functions inherited from three district councils and part of Kent County Council. That is no longer the immediate prospect.

Next May, residents will be able to judge the administration for themselves.They can examine Princes Parade and ask what the cancellation achieved for its £4.4 million cost. They can examine Otterpool and ask why a promise to oppose the scheme became a commitment to deliver it.They can examine Hythe Pool and ask what happened to the promised new facility.

Most importantly, they can examine the council’s spending and borrowing and demand to know precisely how much has been committed, why it was considered affordable and who will repay it.

The administration deserves the opportunity to explain its figures and defend its decisions. But residents deserve complete figures—not carefully selected headlines about a balanced revenue budget that leave substantial capital borrowing in the small print.

The promised great escape through local government reorganisation has been postponed. Folkestone & Hythe District Council remains standing. Its bills remain payable. Its promises remain on the record.

And next May, its councillors will have to face the voters.



Rodeo Rides Into Hythe for Martello Manor' Big Launch



Martello Manor's gardens turned into a corner of the Wild West on Saturday 22 August, as the Hythe care home threw open its gates for Rodeo Fest, its community grand launch.

Throughout the day, the lawns and courtyard at 18 Farmer Road filled with residents, families, team and neighbours from across Hythe, all dressed for the occasion, right down to the youngest guests in cowboy hats and cowgirl outfits. Guests of all ages took to the courtyard for a group line dancing session, and the Bucking Bull drew a steady queue all afternoon, including one resident who sat down for a go and grinned straight at the camera, thumbs up, alongside another guest. Nearby, the Saddle Up Saloon and a barbecue cookout run by the home's culinary team kept the day fed and watered.

Among those who braved the Bucking Bull was Tracy West, Chairman of the Hythe Dementia Awareness Forum, who was at the home that day for a special reason. Partway through the afternoon, she unveiled a plaque marking the Forum's partnership with Martello Manor, a relationship the home has



been building since it opened. "Line dancing certainly took a bit of practice, but there were plenty of laughs along the way. And then there was the Bucking Bull... quite an experience! Let's just say the hips definitely felt it this morning. A wonderful atmosphere, lots of laughter and smiles all round. It was also a real honour to unveil the plaque for you. Thank you for allowing us to be part of such a special occasion," she said.

What struck the team most, though, wasn't any single moment. It was the sight of the home simply full: residents who moved in earlier this summer mixing with the families who chose Martello Manor for them, staff members off duty and enjoying the day alongside the people they care for, and local people who had never set foot inside the home before finding a reason to come through the doors.

Jude Coveney, Admissions Manager at Martello Manor,



has spent recent months guiding families through the decision to move a parent or partner into care, and says the day put that trust into sharper focus. "So many of the families I've worked with, some who've already made the move and some who are still deciding, were there mixing easily with residents and the wider community. When you see that kind of ease on a day like this, you know the trust people place in us is well founded."

For Home Manager Marlene Abreu, the day was as much about her team as it was about the guests. "My team gave up their Saturday to make this happen, and you could feel it in the atmosphere they created. Seeing residents, families and neighbours all in one place, laughing at the same jokes and cheering each other on the Bucking Bull, that's the warmth we want this home to be known for."

Rodeo Fest builds on relationships Martello Manor has been forming since opening its doors in June, including its ongoing work with Hythe Town Football Club and the Royal British Legion Hythe & Saltwood Branch. Martin Murphy, Director of Operations at Boutique Care Homes, said delivering a day of this standard is not left to chance. "An event like Rodeo Fest looks effortless from the outside, but it takes the same discipline and attention to detail we apply to care itself. As we grow as a group, that consistency is what we hold every home to, whether it's day forty or day four hundred," he said.



For Ameet Kotecha, Founder and Managing Director of Boutique Care Homes, the day was proof of something he has believed in since the company's earliest homes. "Martello Manor has been open a matter of months, and already you can see a real community taking shape around it. That's exactly what we set out to build when we open a new home:

not just a place where people receive care, but a place people want to be part of. Seeing residents, families and neighbours together on the lawn like that tells me this home is already becoming what we hoped it would".

Martello Manor is still a young home, but days like this are exactly what its team set out to build: a place where care extends naturally into community, and where residents, families and neighbours find they belong together. That's not a happy accident. It's what Boutique Care Homes sets out to deliver, at Martello Manor and at every home in the group.



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COMMUNITY AT HEART OF FOLCA PLANNING APPLICATION



A planning application aimed at preparing the Art Deco section of a former department store in Folkestone to become an active mixed-used building with commercial units and a medical centre has been submitted.

This forms part of the next phase of work at Folca 2, which will follow the current programme focused on weather-proofing and making good the



building.

The key town centre site – on the corner of Bouverie Place and Sandgate Road, has remained vacant since 2020 and the proposal seeks to bring it back to life.

Planned improvements include: Accessibility: All public entrances will have level access off Sandgate Road and new external ramps will provide wheelchair access to staff and visitor areas. A Changing Places toilet will provide a facility for people with severe and complex disabilities.

Energy efficiency: Solar panels and air source heat pumps will be introduced to the flat roof behind the Art Deco façade (removing reliance on fossil fuels and to meet the project's energy targets).

Heritage: The large and characterful central staircase is at the heart of the design. New entrances and signage will match the original positioning of Bobby's department store. Interventions are planned to reverse adaptations and insensitive repair work carried out over the years.

Subject to NHS approvals, two GP practices will occupy the upper floors – accessible by the original central staircase and two new passenger lifts – while retail and commercial tenants will be located on the ground and basement levels.

Other additions proposed include a shallow canopy along the full width of the Sandgate Road elevation, providing shading and rain shelter for residents and visitors.

The local planning authority is currently consulting on the application. You can view and comment on it (reference 26/1453/FH) by visiting the planning portal before Thursday 8 October 2026.



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We know it's still the summer but...a request for help from the Rotary Club of Romney Marsh

Although we're still in the summer holidays, the Rotary Club of Romney Marsh is starting to plan for this year's Santa sleigh runs. One of our first jobs will be to get the sleigh in top condition for the work ahead.



We are always on the lookout for volunteers on these evenings, either to help as 'elves' to assist with the collecting or drivers to pull our sleigh on the various evening routes we follow.

Each year we aim to take our sleigh out on 15 weekday evenings (weather permitting) thanks to our volunteer drivers



who give both their time and vehicles in assisting us raise thousands of pounds for local charities and deserving causes.

We are keen to increase our pool of drivers to help us. We cover Lydd, Lydd on Sea, Littlestone, Greatstone, New Romney, St Mary's Bay, Dymchurch, Old Romney, Brooklands, Brenzett, St Mary in the Marsh, Ivychurch, Newchurch and Burmarsh.

Would you be keen to get involved? Are you someone who is licensed and insured to drive a vehicle and trailer, has your own towing vehicle and has experience in operating such a combination on the roads across the Romney Marsh area?

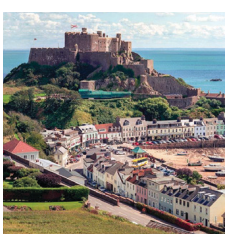
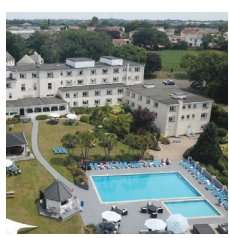
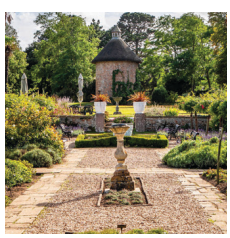
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Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

More news from the 1990s

Thousands of youngsters from all over the country descended on Lydd Airport for an all-night dance party or 'rave'. Despite some misgivings by local people, the event passed off without serious disturbance. Shepway District Council and the police said they were satisfied with the organisation of the event. There were only three arrests, all drug related. Two people were taken to hospital, and several others were injured after an accident on a fairground ride at the site.

It was stated that lives were at risk because several Marsh houses have names instead of numbers. The warning came from Lydd ambulancemen who said that crews have to waste precious time during an emergency looking for a patient's home. A spokesman said that the numbering on the Marsh was diabolical, particularly in New Romney and the coast road area. Several houses have names but no door numbers which means crews have to waste time going up and down a street. Both Lydd ambulance station and New Romney town council are calling for a proper address system. Additional delays are caused by the coastal road between Littlestone and Dungeness. The same long stretch of road changes its name six times and Marsh crewmen say the problem gets worse when 999 men from elsewhere have to man their station and don't know the area.

Shopkeepers in Lydd declared a victory after plans for a Sunday market at Lydd Airport were scrapped through lack of interest as would-be stallholders were not interested in going to the market. When plans for the market were first proposed, shopkeepers in Lydd and New Romney were outraged saying they would be forced out of business. They said that the market would have had an unfair advantage over the local traders as they wouldn't have business rates and energy bills etc. Market stallholders do not have such overheads and could undercut the shops.

More than 200 people turned up for the funeral in 1994 of the film maker, Derek Jarman, who lived at Dungeness. Pop star Neil Tennant from the 'Pet Shop Boys' was among the mourners including actors and writers who flocked to St. Nicholas Church in New Romney. The church was full and during the service more people came in. Mr. Jarman's coffin was simple and made of unvarnished pine and the service was led by the Reverend Peter Ford. After the service there was a private burial as St. Clement's Church, Old Romney attended by



close friends and family.

The long-awaited Romney Marsh Heritage Centre took a step closer to becoming reality when planning bosses gave the thumbs-up to the scheme. (See aerial photo in taken in 2015). The centre is to be built on land at New Romney Warren, Dymchurch Road and is intended to promote Romney Marsh to visitors. It will include displays showing the life and times of the area, a tourist information centre and craft workshops. There is also the possibility of a station for the light railway which runs through the site. The site is owned by the District Council and the planning committee voted unanimously in favour of the scheme.

The Romney Warren Golf Club opened in 1992, 20 years after the scheme first went on the drawing board. The project by Littlestone Golf Club is to provide a second club next door for members of the public. It includes a £40,000 restaurant, nine-hole course and parking for 90 cars. The restaurant and club were opened by Romney Warren president, Ashley Warman, and the nine-hole course will be unveiled next year.

A man made a grisly discovery while digging up the floor of his garage when he found human bones buried in the soil. He immediately called the police who launched an investigation. The man made the gruesome discovery at his detached house in Sussex Road, New Romney and the bones are thought to be at least 300-years-old. The house is believed to stand on the site of an old church cemetery and in the past, there was a St. Lawrence Church and a St. John's Church in the area.

The long-awaited £2 million Brookland bypass was opened in 1995, nearly three months early. It was opened by the Roads Minister, John Watts and the local MP, Home Secretary Michael Howard was also there. It was thought that life would now be more peaceful for villagers now that the new road was open.

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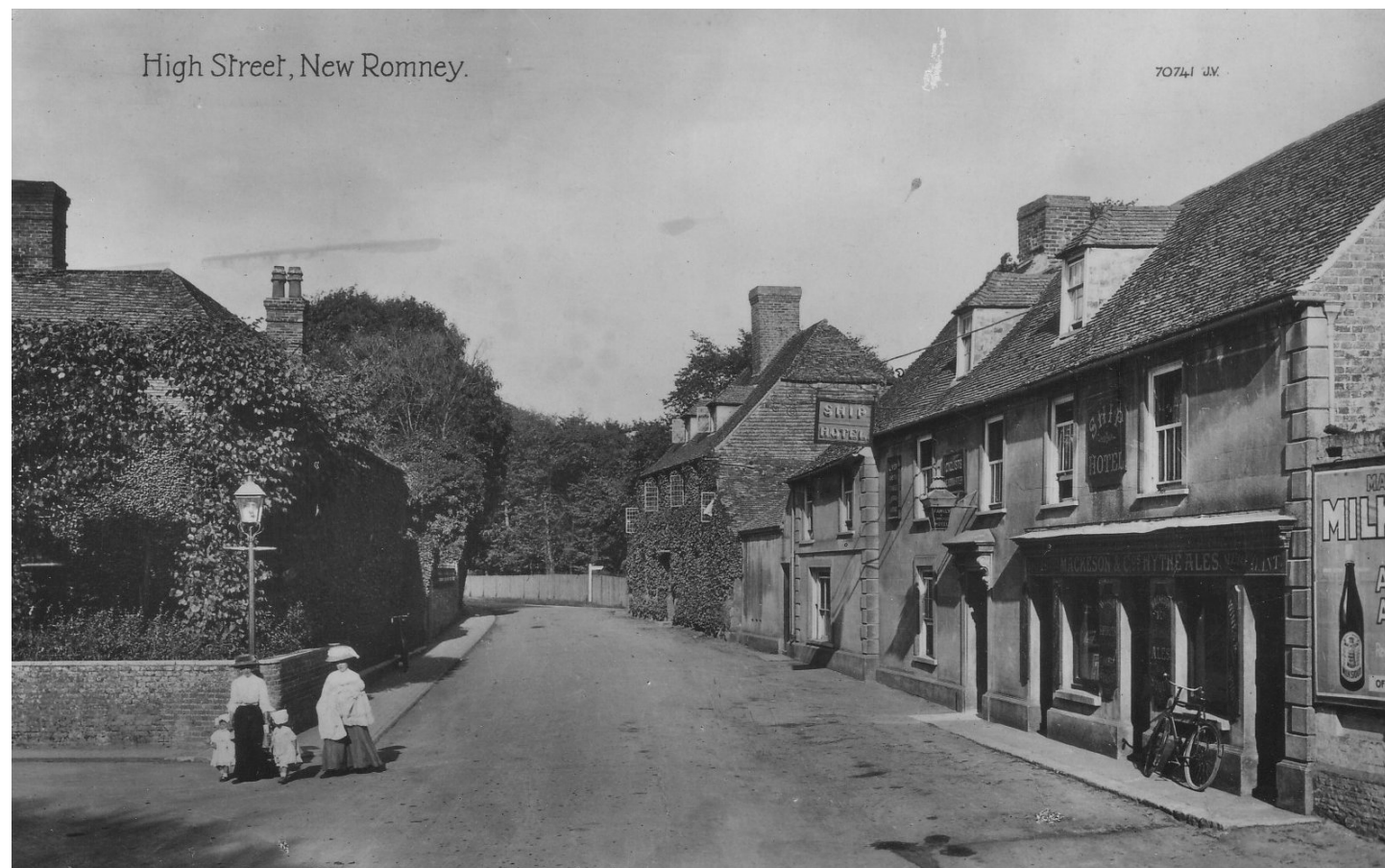
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Postcards From The Past



Rotary Gives Local Young Carers a Memorable Day at the Rare Breeds Centre

Young Carers from across Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh enjoyed a memorable day out last week thanks to the continued support of local Rotary clubs. Each year, Rotary clubs in the district come together to give Young Carers a much needed break from their daily responsibilities, offering fun, friendship, and a chance to simply be children for the day.

The initiative is organised in partnership with Imago Community, a respected social action charity providing dedicated support for Young Carers under 18 across Kent. Imago helps children and teenagers who shoulder caring responsibilities at home, supporting family members who are ill, disabled, or living with mental health or addiction challenges—to balance their caring role with their own wellbeing, education, and social development. Four Rotary clubs, Folkestone, Folkestone Channel, Hythe, and Romney Marsh, work together under a long standing community youth programme that delivers a

calendar of enriching events throughout the year. Their shared commitment ensures Young Carers receive recognition, encouragement, and opportunities that many would otherwise miss.

Last week's outing took the group to the Rare Breeds Centre in Woodchurch, a working 100 acre farm and popular Kent visitor attraction. The Young Carers enjoyed a full day of hands on experiences: meeting native livestock breeds, exploring the adventure play areas, cheering on the famous pig racing, and discovering the rhythms of life on a real farm. Laughter, fresh air, and new friendships filled the day from start to finish. Transport was kindly provided by the Hythe Community Minibus, and Rotary volunteers ensured everyone was well looked after, including providing lunch and refreshments.



The accompanying photograph shows Rotarians from clubs in Hythe, Folkestone, and Folkestone Channel and Imago staff at the Rare Breeds Centre, celebrating another successful and heart warming day of community partnership.

Rotary continues to champion local Young Carers, recognising their resilience, supporting their wellbeing, and helping them create joyful memories that last far beyond the day itself

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At last, it has started to rain. We felt like doing a fandango out on the lawn! It was amazing how quickly the grass started to recover, with a green haze. Experts always say don't worry about the lawns, and we didn't, but it was heart breaking to see it all frazzled up and the colour of sand! We are actually on holiday at present in the South lakes/ Morecambe Bay area. Obviously, being the wettest part of England, they haven't had the excessive heat, and the fields and countryside are glowing with 'green', and are gorgeous. I'm Irish by birth, and not a heat worshipper. The 'forty shades of green', come at the cost of liberal amounts of rain! To the Irish, 3 days at 20d without rain is a heatwave! We now have an extra hour in our days, not everlasting having to water everything!

If I was at home, the jobs would be very much the same. Weeding (I guess the weeds will have gone berserk with the rain) pruning, tidying borders, and deadheading roses, dahlias and the other flowers that benefit from it. Plants with tall, one off, showy stems, like foxgloves or gladioli, aren't going to reflower, and can just be tidied up. Sweet peas are still going strong up here, but mine are over back home, so you can save the seed pods if you like to save seed and plant your own next year. Seeds can also be saved from other flowers, liked marigolds, antirrhinums, cosmos, foxgloves etc. Collect them when brown, and place into a paper bag or old envelope, and label and keep in a cool, dry place. Don't place in a plastic bag, or a damp environment, or they will get mouldy and decay. Bring them indoors somewhere.

Some experts suggest leaving spent perennials to lay over winter, as a kind of mulch. You have to be moderate. Some are alright to leave, sometimes you just have to tidy the garden a bit, especially if you have something else growing around it.

With the drought, the ground dried out a lot, so it takes a while to remoisturise. Keep on eye on roses and other tall plants that they haven't risen out of the ground when the soil shrunk around them, and could be blown over in winter storms. Put some extra soil, compost or any mulch around them. We will probably have an early autumn; the leaves are already falling thickly. If you need to gather them up, like on paths or the lawn, put them into an old compost bag with holes with the top open. In about a year, you will have excellent 'leaf mould' which makes a good compost.

If your leaves have fallen onto the veg patch, or flower beds or border, leave them be. Getting washed into the soil is a natural process, which will be helped by earthworms and other living creatures.

Like grass clippings, don't put great clumps of leaves on your compost, they can suffocate the compost. Always your compost heap should be a mixture of 'green' and 'brown' and other organic matter. If you have cotton or other natural fibres clothes or bedding that has worn out, that can be cut up small and put on the compost heap. Small quantities of shredded paper can be put there as well!

AND NOW FOR THE VEG (plus fruit and tidying up)

Carrying on from compost, this is a good time to start organising your compost facilities. Ideally, if you have the space, at least two bins or containers will help rotate the composting process. One bin for fresh composting material and a second to turn the compost over once it starts to decompose. This turning allows the compost to aerate and help an even spread of the material. You'll probably notice

worms and other insects which is a good sign of healthy compost.

Again, if you have space a third bin would enable you to transfer the mature compost ready for use and free up room to add to the other two bins. You can buy bins which are essentially wooden frames, or you can make your own out of palette wood which is usually easily obtainable. Also on the market are large plastic containers which have a shutter at the bottom which enables you to remove the compost from below, rather like a coal bunker. The disadvantage of these is that you can't easily turn the compost and removing the compost from the base is sometimes a bit difficult. The composting material also requires moisture so don't let it dry out.

As crops come to an end, there will be a certain amount of suitable composting material available. Break up any large stems or stalks as this will speed up the composting process. Brussel sprout stalks, for example, are tough, so chop them up into small pieces.

After the prolonged dry spell your soil may have developed a hard pan in spite of recent rainfall. It's important to break this up, if only to allow water to seep through to the roots of your crops, so a good hoeing or forking between the rows will not only keep the weeds down but will also loosen up the soil.

Our autumn – fruiting raspberries have been very disappointing this year as we usually get a decent crop. Pollination seems to have been very spasmodic and the berries themselves have been small and prone to shrivelling up quite quickly. The raspberry canes can be cut down to ground level and any dead wood removed. Give the soil a good forking over and cover with a much of compost. This seems drastic but autumn- fruiting raspberries produce fruit on new canes, which will start to appear next spring.

Brassica crops should be maturing well now, and if you have brussels don't forget to support the stems as they tend to get top heavy as the sprouts mature. Marrows and courgettes tend to grow very quickly so keep an eye on their sizes. Courgettes seem to grow into marrows overnight! If you have squashes and pumpkins these will benefit from a good liquid feed as they start to mature and ripen, and also like plenty of water.

As always, happy gardening!

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Please stop fussing.

Probably the best way to help your purse these days is to switch off all the voices of modern life. Advertising, commerce, media and fashion, have got to us in big ways, and insisted we can't be happy or fulfilled unless we have this, or look like that or achieve something dictated by modern life. But it is all so shallow! What are the essentials of life? A roof over our heads, enough money to be feed and clothe ourselves and pay our rent or mortgage and taxes. And, equally as important is the relationships of people we love.

One generation's luxuries become the next generation's necessities. We are boomers, the first post war generation. Our fathers and mothers, fought for our freedom, and endured unimaginable terrors and worries, making us look pathetic, when we whinge about anxiety and mental health problems. As a society, have we become entitled, and self- centred and grasping?

We were brought up with the remnants of rationing. The last of the rationing didn't finish until 1952. Our fathers grew vegetables, and our mothers cooked proper meals, eeking out small quantities of meat with lots of vegs. Research has shown that our generation had one of the healthiest diets ever in our history. Snacking was virtually unknown and we never got too much of a sweet tooth, because we didn't have much in the way of sweeteners in our food. The only sweeteners were natural ones in fruit. If you wanted something to eat between meals, mother shooed us out of the kitchen telling us that dinner was in an hour and you could wait. Or you helped yourself to some bread and jam.

At present I am reading a book called "Steaming to Victory" about the big part the railways played in our victory in WW2. The heroic feats of our railwaymen were almost beyond comprehension. And they were doing this daily. They evacuated several hundred thousand children from the cities. They moved about 200,000 military personnel away from Dover in a matter of days, after the evacuation of Dunkirk. All the time keeping trains running for civilians, and moving soldiers around, in blackout condition and with speed limits. The enemy, of course was keen to destroy the railways, so they were often under attack, as they kept the trains going. Despite the blackout, the miles of steel tracks could not be concealed on a moonlit night. Railwaymen unhitched carriages and trucks and drove away from cities and towns, when they had been hit and had blazing ammunition trains at the back of them.

Railwaymen received many civilian medals. Somewhere in one of the London stations there is a memorial to the railwaymen who died doing their job. Many more thousands were injured in the line of duty. All the time working in horrendous conditions, often finding their own homes had been bombed and their own loved ones killed or injured. For every driver, guard, and firemen there were dozens of engineers, engine shed and permanent way men, working around the clock repairing lines, and keeping the trains running.

Modern life seems to have turned everything into a crisis and a big 'thing'. I read the other day, that 50% of women reckon they have PTSD after birth. Really? Giving birth is a very big and special event in your life, but as a trained midwife I was always taught, that there is a switch off in your brain, that

remembers only the joy and delight of having your baby. This I found to be true in my own experience. There is a moment having 2nd or subsequent babies, when you start in labour and think, "oh dear, all that stuff again!" If we all remembered every moment of a painful labour, there'd be an awful lot of only children! One of the disadvantages of having husbands present, is that they haven't this switch off mechanism, and are horrified and traumatised by all that is going on. I have friends with 5- and 6-year gaps between their children, because it has taken them that long to persuade their husbands to have another baby, and that they wouldn't die in the process!

When we were married the natural thing was to start a family. In our keenness we were pretty penniless. We bought a 2nd hand pram, highchair, carry cot and a new mattress for an old family cot. I sewed, knitted and bought 2 dozen good quality nappies. I cut up and hemmed old sheets for cot and pram sheets, and accepted hand-me-downs. The high chair wasn't needed straight away, but the cleaner on my unit was selling it for 10 shillings, and I couldn't resist it! (It was solid wood and still going strong for the grandchildren!) But really, that was all we needed. Babyhood and childhood have become a big industry, rather than just a natural part of life. After feeding my babies myself, I just used ordinary crocks and cutlery, we never bought specialised stuff. The sooner children learn eat with proper cutlery, the better. We did have a little melamine set as a gift and used that for the tiny amounts babies have when they first wean (which was 3-4 months in those days.)

Hygiene has become another sacred cow. I did have one bottle in use, when necessary, which went into a Milton solution but that was the only special hygiene concession to having a baby in the house. I just tried to keep the house clean. I had a priority list in my head. Feed everyone. Keep washing up to date. Keep the kitchen and bathroom clean. Everything else was a luxury! On the recommended list for having a baby was a bottle of Dettol. I never worked out what it was for! All cleaning jobs seemed to be covered. After being on the kitchen windowsill for 2 years and looking cloudy I ditched it down the sink!

We were in a café recently, and a young couple came in with a child about 9 months. She reached for a high chair, and proceeded to clean the entire thing, the child, and her part of the table with wipes. OTT! Wipes hadn't been invented when we started a family. They had started with our youngest, but they gave him a rash so we went back to cotton wool and water for nappy change. When out, I took a damp flannel in a plastic bag for clean ups of hands and face. I have often mentioned that I once heard a top immunologist say that "socially clean is clean enough." Many doctors believe that the huge increase in allergies and atopic diseases, is due to our immune systems not developing properly. Remember "Homo Sapiens" our race of people, have been around for upward of 80,000-100,000 years before Dettol was invented and has developed an amazing immune system, which we are messing up to our peril.

So please don't fuss about hygiene, or anything else. Concentrate on the basics if you are short of money, providing 3 simple meals a day and keeping your house clean with a minimum of fancy products. Look after your body by eating a healthy diet, and getting plenty of exercise and sleep. If you can see through the overpowering cloud of consumerism, keeping your head above water can be done!

Reform UK Conference Review: The Party They Laughed At Is No Longer a Laughing Matter

Over the coming weeks, The Looker will be covering the conferences of all Britain's major political parties, examining the headline announcements, the promises and the political direction offered by each.

First out of the traps was Reform UK, which gathered at Birmingham's NEC for a conference built around one clear theme: "The First 100 Days."

The atmosphere was unmistakably different from that surrounding the smaller, insurgent party of previous years. Reform's opponents once dismissed it as little more than a protest movement—a political flash in the pan that would eventually burn itself out. Kemi Badenoch and other senior Conservatives repeatedly played down its prospects, even as Reform began eating into the Conservative vote.

They are not laughing now.

The decisive breakthrough came in the 2025 local elections, when Reform won 677 seats—41 per cent of all those being contested—and secured control of ten councils. At the same elections, the Conservatives lost control of 16 authorities. Those are not the results of a fringe protest group; they represent a substantial change in British politics. House of Commons Library

Reform now describes itself as Britain's largest political party by membership, claiming more than 270,000 members. Its website also records eight MPs, more than 2,400 councillors and 14 additional council gains in the 2026 local elections. Whatever view people may take of Nigel Farage or Reform's policies, it is becoming increasingly difficult to deny the scale of the movement that has been created. Reform UK

More than 8,000 people attended across the conference's two main days, following Reform's first dedicated Business Day. The size of the exhibition hall, the number of commercial organisations represented and the increasingly professional presentation all suggested a party preparing for government rather than merely campaigning from the sidelines.

At the heart of the conference was the contrast between Prime Minister Andy Burnham's call for ten years to reshape Britain and Farage's argument that the country cannot afford another decade of managed decline. Farage said that, in another ten years, Britain could already be beyond repair—its borders weakened, debts increased and public services deteriorating further.

Instead, Reform promised visible action within its first 100 days in office.

The most striking commitment was not simply the policies themselves, but the personal accountability attached to them. Reform's published programme states that every senior minister would be required to make a

clear, written 100-day pledge. Anyone failing to deliver would be expected to resign. If they refused, Farage said he would sack them.

Robert Jenrick went as far as publishing a prepared resignation letter after promising that, as chancellor, he would deliver his tax pledge in Reform's first Budget. Suella Braverman similarly said she would resign if she failed to meet her education commitment.

That is an extraordinary standard to set. Politics is normally full of carefully worded aspirations, targets that can be quietly moved and promises that survive only until the votes have been counted. Reform is attempting to replace that culture with a simple proposition: deliver what you promised or lose your job.

The party published four principal 100-day pledges.

Robert Jenrick's tax pledge is to increase the personal income-tax allowance from £12,570 to £15,000. Reform calculates that this would save most taxpayers £486 a year—nearly £1,000 for a working couple—benefit approximately 40 million taxpayers and remove 2.9 million lower earners from income tax altogether. It would also prevent the state pension from being drawn into income tax during the official forecast period.

Reform estimates that the change would initially cost £17.7 billion. Jenrick proposes funding it through a much wider programme of savings, including £52 billion from welfare reform, £7 billion from reducing foreign aid, £10 billion from Net Zero programmes and £7 billion from cutting the size of government and the number of quangos. These are substantial figures and will inevitably face intense scrutiny, but Reform has at least begun publishing the calculations behind its promises. Reform's 100-day policy document

Richard Tice's energy pledge is to reduce the average household energy bill by more than £250 a year. The proposed saving would come from removing carbon charges from electricity generation, transferring government policy costs away from household bills and permanently removing VAT from domestic gas and electricity.

Reform estimates that scrapping carbon costs would save around £90, removing policy costs another £80 and abolishing VAT approximately £90. Critics will ask whether shifting some costs to the Treasury truly removes them or merely changes where they appear. Nevertheless, the pledge gives voters a clear figure against which a future Reform government could be judged.

Zia Yusuf's border pledge is to stop small boats reaching Britain by deploying the Royal Navy under a plan called Operation Fortress. Boats would be intercepted in the Channel and those aboard returned to their country of departure.

The conference also saw Farage sign a memorandum of

understanding with Jordan Bardella, president of France's National Rally. It commits a future National Rally-led French government to accept the return of migrants intercepted after leaving French shores. Whether the policy could overcome the practical, legal and diplomatic obstacles involved will be heavily debated, but Reform has placed an unambiguous marker in the ground: it says the crossings would stop within 100 days. Reform UK

Suella Braverman's education pledge contains three commitments: cutting the issuance of student loans by 20 per cent by withdrawing taxpayer support from the lowest-value courses; lifting the cap on British medical-school places; and introducing interest-free student loans for British nurses working in the NHS.

The party says medical-school capacity would eventually rise from 7,670 to 17,000 places, reducing Britain's dependence on recruiting doctors trained overseas. Savings from reducing loans for poorly performing university courses would also support apprenticeships, including a wage credit for smaller employers and a £2,000 retention bonus.

These policies will be challenged, tested and—in some cases—probably copied. That has already become a familiar pattern. Proposals once denounced as extreme have later reappeared, sometimes almost line for line, in the programmes of parties that originally ridiculed them.

The conference was not solely about speeches and policy. Our own editor gave ReformRadio.uk its soft launch from the NEC ahead of the station going fully live on November 5. The new online station will combine news, interviews and robust political debate with the very best of British music.

Saturday evening also provided some welcome light relief, with a superb conference party featuring Boney M. It was a reminder that political conferences can create enthusiasm and fellowship as well as produce policy documents.

Reform still has questions to answer. Its spending plans must withstand independent examination, its organisation must continue maturing and its leaders will discover that governing is considerably more difficult than campaigning. The 100-day deadline could become either its greatest demonstration of accountability or a rod for its own back.

However, one conclusion from Birmingham is unavoidable: Reform UK is being taken seriously. Its rivals are watching, businesses are engaging and thousands of members believe they are no longer supporting a protest party but a government in waiting.

The conference also marked an exciting moment for Reform Radio, which received its soft launch live from the NEC. Created by our own editor, the new national online station will officially launch on November 5 at ReformRadio.uk. Combining lively political debate, news and interviews with the very best of British music, Reform Radio promises to give its listeners a genuine voice. If the energy and ambition witnessed in Birmingham are any indication, the station will become an important new platform for political discussion across Britain.

Whether that ambition ultimately carries Nigel Farage into Downing Street will be decided by the British people. But after the scale, confidence and professionalism displayed in Birmingham, Britain's established parties would be extremely unwise to laugh again.

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Wildlife

By Kerry King

Burdock: The Humble Wildflower That Changed the World

At first glance, burdock looks more like a roadside nuisance than a botanical treasure. Its prickly, globe-shaped flower heads seem designed to catch on clothing and dog fur, while its broad leaves often blend into the untidy edges of paths and hedgerows across the coast between Dungeness and Folkestone.

But look closer in midsummer and a remarkable transformation takes place. Rich purple florets begin to emerge from the spiny green burs, creating an irresistible feeding station for bees, hover-flies and butterflies. A single open flower can become a busy nectar café, helping pollinators at a time when many insects are working hard to raise the next generation.

Those familiar burrs are more than just nature's Velcro—they inspired it. In 1941, Swiss engineer George de Mestral examined the hooked burrs clinging to his clothes after a countryside walk. Under a microscope he discovered thousands of tiny hooks that attached perfectly to loops of fabric and animal fur. His observations eventually led to the invention of Velcro, now used in everything from children's shoes to space missions.

The plant itself, a burdock (*Arctium* species), has an equally long history. For centuries its root has been used in traditional herbal medicine and remains a popular ingredient in parts of Asia, where it is cultivated as the vegetable gobo. Herbalists have traditionally recommended it for a variety of skin complaints, although modern medical evidence for many of these uses remains limited.



As summer progresses, the flowers fade and the hooked burrs become nature's hitch-hikers, attaching themselves to passing mammals and birds before dropping off to begin a new generation elsewhere. It's an elegant example of seed dispersal—and proof that even the most overlooked wildflower can hide extraordinary stories of ecology, engineering and history.



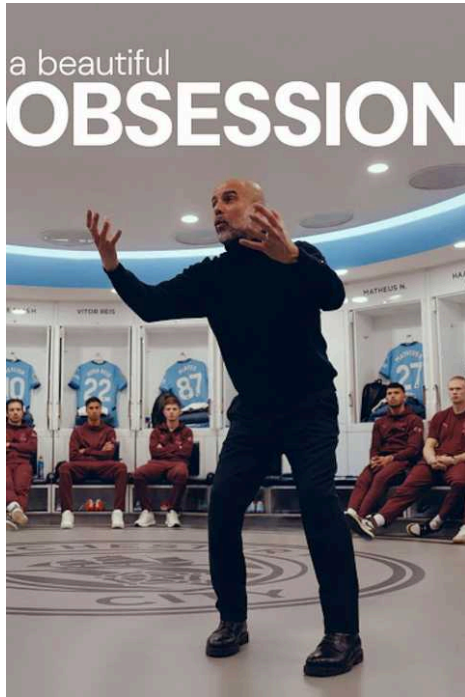
So next time you pass a flowering burdock, pause before dismissing it as a weed. You may be looking at a plant that feeds bees, travels the countryside on passing animals and helped inspire one of the world's most ingenious everyday inventions.

Picture 1 - Burdock in bloom — a bee gathers nectar from the vivid purple florets of a burdock flower which inspired the invention of Velcro — Credit: Kerry King

Picture 2 - Nature's inspiration — an artist's impression of Swiss engineer George de Mestral - licensed to Kerry King.

Welcome Lookerites to another batch of movie and TV reviews for your consideration and delectation. In this issue and with the football season about to begin we will look at Amazon Primes new documentary about Pep and Man City, a new Ridley Scott apocalyptic thriller, the latest action film from Jason Statham, the latest in the Rise of the Footsoldier franchise and a dinosaur movie The End of Oak Street.

The departure of Pep Guardiola from Man City rocked the football world. Ten successful years which reaped a phenomenal 20 trophies including 6 Premier league trophies and the Champions league. **A Beautiful Obsession** - Amazon Prime takes an up close and personal look at Pep's last two seasons from the changing rooms to the Boardroom to Pep's inner sanctum.



This documentary shows the passion of Pep he enjoys every win and feels every loss. He is a masterful tactical genius, but the documentary shows that he puts his heart and soul into the club. The titles and trophies haven't come without sacrifice, and Pep has recently divorced and has been away from his family.

Football fans will enjoy the scenes from the changing room, but this is Pep's documentary and will provide an insight into the difficult life of a football manager even a successful one.

After ten successful years at City you can see why Pep felt it was time to call it a day. A tired figure in desperate need of a break. Pep makes it clear that he plans to do nothing.

Pep remains the greatest club manager of the modern era. It wouldn't surprise me if he resurfaces someone else, perhaps his beloved Barcelona but for now Pep will enjoy doing nothing.

Film makers have become obsessed with putting their vision of a post-apocalyptic world. Its Blade Runner director Ridley Scott's turn to explore the genre with **The Dog Stars** - on general release.

Based on Peter Hellers novel of the same name and set after the aftermath of a flu epidemic which has wiped out

most of the world's population. The film centres on mechanic Hig (Jacob Elordi) and ex-marine Bangley (Josh Brolin) the pair live on an abandoned airfield which provides them shelter and an escape from the maurauding gangs. Bangley has everything he needs at the airfield, but Hig who lost his wife and child to the epidemic dreams of a better world. Hig goes on regular missions and is in contact with a community of Mormons.

Hig has received radio communication from Grand Junction and believes they may offer a better life. Bangley tries to put him off but Hig, who lost his dog Jasper in a raid on the airfield, goes off in search for paradise.

When his plane breaks down, he comes across the home of medic Cima (Margaret Qualley) and her father Pops (Guy Pearce) an ex- Navy Seal. Cima welcomes Hig but Pops wants him gone. The trio are forced to work together when a gang invades their home, and they barely escape before joining Hig on his quest to Grand Junction.

The Dog Stars vision of a post-apocalyptic world bears many similarities to The Walking Dead, a world decimated and facing a new threat mankind. Communities that either survive in peace, seek to destroy others or live in a self-indulgent nihilistic manner. The happy ending that everyone craves comes in a form that no one expected.

The Dog Stars is a decent film if taken in context of character observations. The action is ok although I wasn't a fan of the third part of the film and the hedonistic community but in a world that has gone to the dogs, what would you expect.

When it comes to action films you know what to expect if the lead is Jason Statham. The chiselled featured assassin with a heart of gold who is willing to take on the bad guys to defend the weak and vulnerable.

The latest from Statham is **Mutiny - on general release**. Statham plays ex Police officer and commander Cole Reed. Reed now works as a bodyguard for shipping

magnate Tibu Campallo CEO of the KMG shipping company but when the pair are ambushed Cole kills the attackers but not before Tibu is killed. Tibu before his death asks Cole to take care of his son and heir Kameron. However, Cole is framed for Tibu's murder and is forced to go on the run.

Cole goes after the assassins, who he learns are boarding the cargo ship Artemis. Cole boards the ship using the identity of one of the assassins he killed. While on board he encounters Katie a KMG employee and the pair discover a container with a number of men, women and children who are being trafficked. Cole and Katie alert the US navy and then take on the crew.

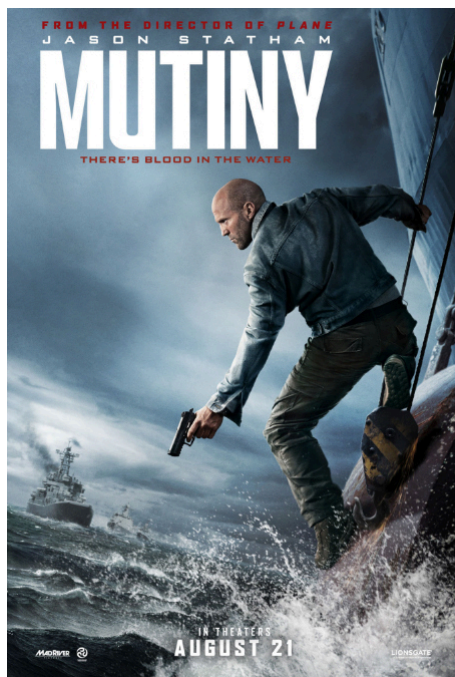
This is typical Statham fare, but the violence and gore are extreme. Expect some very gory deaths as Statham dispatches the bad guys. Statham is good at this stuff and knows his stuff. Special mention for Annabelle Wells as Angie who provides a perfect foil to Statham's hard man. Angie is the mum determined to make it home to her daughter.

Mutiny does what it says on the tin and Statham is effective as always as the good guy killing off the bad guys. Think Die Hard on a boat and that's Mutiny.

When they released Rise of the Footsoldier in 2007, the story of Carlton Leach, the ICF member and friend of Tony Tucker who along with Pat Tate and Craig Rolfe were executed in a Range Rover in Rettendon in 1995. They produced a hard-hitting British crime thriller. They followed this up with a sequel in which Ricci Hartnett replayed his role as Carlton Leach. Rise of the Footsoldier 2 was again successful but the Carlton Leach story had run its course, So, the franchise focused on Tate, Tucker, and Rolfe

ROTF 3 told the Pat Tate story, ROTF 4 took the trio to Marbella and introduced some new protagonists Harris, Greener, Fisher three gangsters operating out of Marbella, ROTF 5 origins told Tony Tuckers story and introduced Bernard O'Mahoney (Vinnie Jones) Once again it seemed that the directors had run out of steam so wrote another Pat Tate story ROTF: Revenge (6) in which his best friend Kenny is killed when a drugs deal goes wrong and Pat goes after those responsible.

Rise of the Footsoldier: Retribution - on general release is the 7th in the series and sees Pat Tate (Craig Fairbrass) go to Ibiza to finish off those responsible for Kenny's murder. Aided by his criminal mentor Sam (Jamie Foreman) Tate goes looking for Greener (Nick Nevern) and Fisher (Andrew Loveday) Nevern and Loveday wrote and directed Retribution. However waiting for Tate are gun running mercenaries led by Colonel Sullivan (Tamer Hassan) and his violent right hand man Captain Sergio (Leo Gregory) who dishes out a basic Eastern European



accent. Hot on the mercenaries' tail are the CIA led by Miller (Ross McCall) and the elusive agent (Vincent Regan)

Instead of the drugs, Southend and violent beatings of the previous 6 films Retribution ups the ante and you can expect the heavy artillery as Tate dodges bullets and bad guys. Retribution is a decent action film but maybe should have stuck with the plots and scenery it knows best. Fans of the franchise will appreciate the violence, and the writers remember to bring the action back to the UK so that they can clear up loose ends and leave it open for ROTF 8.

Where the franchise goes next is anyone's idea but with several main characters killed off its anyone's idea. ROTF 8 the schooldays (Oi, you slag) aka It's all kicking off in the playground. One thing is for certain ROTF 8 will be hitting cinemas at some point.

If Mutiny was Die Hard on a boat, then **The End of Oak Street** - on general release is Jurassic Park: Dinosaurs in my neighbourhood.

Set in 1982 aspiring novelist Denise (Anne Hathaway) and pizza delivery man Greg (Ewan McGregor) live with their children Audrey and Brian. Their marriage is strained and Denise is considering divorce then a comet leaves their part of the neighbourhood full of dinosaurs. With their neighbours being picked off one by one it's up to Denise and Greg to work together to keep their family alive and try to escape the dinosaurs.

When I saw the trailer, I was apprehensive and initially thought what the hell are Hathaway and McGregor doing in such a seemingly ridiculous film. However, this is on reflection a send up the Scary Movie to Scream? Hathaway and McGregor definitely play this for laughs and the scene where they take selfies in front of two randy dinosaurs is both ridiculous and funny.

The End of Oak Street should be viewed with an open mind and then I'm sure you will enjoy it.

That's your lot for this issue lookerites. I will see you next issue until then happy viewing.





Dear Looker,
We felt compelled to write after watching David Wimble appearing across the news channels over the past few days.

We have always enjoyed reading The Looker, including David's famous rants, but we did not vote for him at the last election. However, what we have recently learned about him has completely changed our opinion.

Until now, we had no idea that David had served with the RNLI. As we understood from the Sky News report, he spent around 20 years as a volunteer lifeboat crew member before working professionally aboard the lifeboats on the Thames. During that time, he was credited with helping to save many lives at sea.

To us, that places him in a very different light. Anyone prepared to put saving the lives of others above their own safety possesses a strength of character that deserves recognition. Yet David has never appeared to make a great deal of his service. Like thousands of other volunteers, he seems to have done it simply because it was the right thing to do not so that he could shout: "Look at me, aren't I brilliant?"

We have also been shocked by the negative comments directed at RNLI crews after they helped a migrant boat carrying children. What on earth is wrong with this country? Lifeboat crews exist to save lives. They do not and should not—ask about someone's nationality, religion or immigration status before going to their aid.

What comes next? Should firefighters check your religion before leaving the station? Should ambulance crews examine the colour of your skin before agreeing to treat you? The very suggestion is appalling. The world seems to have gone mad.

We regularly see people attacking David in the Hythe Community Group. Social media has made it far too easy for individuals to hide behind a keyboard and abuse those who step forward to serve their communities. Perhaps if some of these critics spent less time attacking others and more time contributing something positive themselves, our town and our country would be a much better place.

Hythe remains, for the most part, a lovely town filled with decent people. We simply wanted to write and say to David: thank you for your service, both to the RNLI and to the wider community.

Finally, as Hythe residents who voted Green last time, this may come as something of a shock to him: if there is a general election anytime soon, Mr Wimble will have our

votes.
Sue and Roger Hamilton
Hythe

*Dear Sue and Roger,
Thank you so much for your very kind email. Your words genuinely mean a great deal to me.*

I first started helping at Littlestone Lifeboat Station when I was just 16, sweeping out the boathouse and doing whatever jobs needed to be done. About ten years later, I formally joined the lifeboat crew.

Lifeboat crews, which these days include a great number of dedicated female volunteers—do not serve for praise or recognition. They do it because it is the right thing to do. When someone is in danger at sea, their nationality, religion, background or immigration status should never determine whether they are rescued.

Politically, I believe the RNLI must respond to the Coastguard's instructions without question. However, if lifeboat crews are being called upon to assist Border Force, then the Government should properly fund the RNLI for carrying out that task. The charity and its volunteer crews should not be expected to shoulder the cost of what is ultimately a government responsibility.

Thank you again for taking the time to write—and, of course, thank you very much for pledging your votes. Let us hope that election comes sooner rather than later!

With my very best wishes,

David Wimble (editor)

Dear Looker,
I pride myself on my knowledge of acronyms, but even I was stumped by the recent book (sorry letter!) in The Looker 2nd September written by Mrs Gerry Cole.

The world of aviation is alien to me apart from the odd chartered flight on holiday, so it would have been helpful if Mrs Cole could have written the full description after the abbreviation.

I have worked out that PPL must stand for Private Pilots License, ATC must be Air Travel Control and CFI Chief Flying Instructor? and I think we all know what ETA stands for.

However what is/are CAVOK IMC ETS NFT RT W/V and a CPL 5 computer??

Perhaps Mrs Cole would like to write in again, (in brief!) and explain.

Michael Simmonds

I also had trouble with this but I think I can help with some Perhaps Mrs cole can fill in the blanks?

DW Ed

CAVOCK = "Ceiling And Visibility OK,"

IMC = "Instrument Meteorological Conditions,"

ETS = "Emissions Trading System"

As luck would have it....

eith was a good electrician. He knew his stuff alright. He was also a trained assassin. His regular job was a good cover and had served him well for many years but Keith liked the high life. A nice sunny spot on the Med, a few casinos, good food, maybe a cruise here and there. His lucrative sideline kept him in a lifestyle he loved. He'd been in this game a long time and knew the key was watertight communication with clients and with victims.....

He popped the flier through her letterbox. He'd not worked in this area before but he knew she'd be much too jittery to answer the door. She'd moved here to find anonymity but she still had to be on her guard as she knew a lot of secrets. Too many actually. Keith's client couldn't afford any leaks. He'd just have to wait a week or so for the right moment...

The supermarket guy had a lot to unload. 'Gerry' (the name he'd chosen for this job) nipped through the gate and into her line of vision while the front door was open. It all sounded so plausible- even to him. The apology first 'so sorry...you might of received my flier last week.....blasted printer got the phone number wrong....having to come round personally don't want to miss any customers. Home security is so vital these days isn't it? Trust is so important with local burglaries and mugging incidents escalating'. Look smart, smell nice call at a time when she's already flustered and off guard. Joy of joy the delivery driver overhearing him chirps in with tales of another local lady on his round being robbed. 'Gerry' rolled out his well practised charm with ease. Yes, of course he could make the house secure, especially in this neighbourhood.

She went for the full package but let's face it his quote was designed to be extremely competitive and the phoney website clinched the deal. Hi smiled as he worked thinking of his next travel plans. His wiring was faultless- well the faults were all precisely where he needed them! Lights that came on at dusk, curtains that closed, doors that locked automatically by voice, washer, drier, cooker, heating....all controlled by her - or so she thought. He'd be safely bronzing on an idyllic beach by the time the 'accident' occurred. Folk were so gullible thinking technology was safe. Everything controlled by the homeowner- yea right- and installed by a chap who knew his stuff.

While Alice slept her doors automatically locked. Appliances turned on and silent devices ignited sockets. Fire alarms disabled. There'd be no escape for Alice. The fire investigation unit would have a hard time finding one specific cause and there were plenty of red herrings. Keith was on his third cocktail in a rather good casino when he



checked the news. He was a lucky guy. The grateful client had topped up his account nicely.

Back in the UK the supermarket delivery driver pulled up at the police station. Yea, all the vans had multiple cameras and he also had a discreet body cam. Maybe the police would get lucky? He'd noticed the chaps deep tan too. You didn't get that colour from the UK sunshine that's for sure! It was just luck he'd seen the appeal for witnesses notice as he was driving by. He didn't often get that particular round so if there was anything he could say that might help.....

By Diane

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Come and Have a Go at Morris Dancing!



Romney Marsh Morris are inviting local residents to step forward, join in the fun and have a go at one of Britain's most colourful and historic traditions.

The invitation follows the group's hugely successful 10th anniversary celebrations, held over the weekend of August 15 and 16. The special anniversary attracted a number of visiting Morris sides, with dancers performing at various locations around New Romney on the Saturday before taking their music, costumes and energetic routines to Dymchurch on the Sunday.

The weekend provided a wonderful celebration of traditional Morris dancing and marked an important milestone for Romney Marsh Morris, which has now been entertaining audiences and keeping the tradition alive on the Marsh for a decade.

Members were delighted by the support they received throughout the weekend, with residents and visitors stopping to watch the performances and enjoy the lively atmosphere.



As the group approaches the end of its 2026 dancing season, attention will soon turn to its winter programme and the return of regular Sunday morning practice sessions.

Before then, Romney Marsh Morris will be opening its doors to anyone interested in discovering more about Morris dancing and perhaps trying it for themselves.

Three special introductory sessions will be held at the Romney Marsh Community Hub in Rolfe Lane, New Romney. They will take place from 7.30pm until 9pm on Wednesdays October 7, 14 and 28.

No previous dancing experience is necessary, and those attending will be given a warm welcome by existing members of the group.

Morris dancing offers plenty of fun, friendship and gentle exercise. It is also an opportunity to learn new skills, meet people and play a part in preserving an important piece of Britain's cultural heritage for future generations.

Whether you have watched Morris dancing at a local event and wondered what it would be like to take part, or you are simply looking for an enjoyable new activity during the winter months, Romney Marsh Morris would love to meet you.

Members will be on hand to explain the dances, demonstrate the steps and help newcomers become involved at their own pace.

Further details, together with the latest information about the group's programme and performances, can be found on the Romney Marsh Morris Facebook page or by visiting www.romneymarshmorris.com.

Alternatively, anyone interested can contact the group by emailing rmmorrissec@gmail.com.

So why not come along, meet the team and have a go? You may discover a new hobby while helping Romney Marsh Morris begin the next exciting chapter of its story.

Colin Driver
Squire, Romney Marsh Morris



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General Knowledge Crossword

#069

Across Clues:

- Drawing ever nearer to a destination (11)
- Under the influence of an evil spirit (9)
- Lines where fabric panels are joined (5)
- Twenty-third letter of the Greek alphabet (3)
- Office paperwork and organisation, informally (5)
- Work dough with your hands (5)
- One who reduces or diminishes something (6)
- Where a farmer's milk comes from (6)
- Flat surface or airborne vehicle (5)
- Bubbling with heat, as a pot might be (5)
- Put something to practical purpose (3)
- Long-legged bird said to deliver babies (5)
- Different types or assorted kinds (9)
- Creative power of the mind (11)

Down Clues:

- Sudden involuntary muscle contraction (5)
- Medieval warriors on a holy mission (9)
- Question asking about a person's identity (3)
- Confined as a prisoner of war (8)
- Earhart, pioneering female aviator (6)
- Something that might just happen (11)
- Red-faced and wishing the ground would open up (11)
- Mortify someone publicly (9)
- Toddler's furious outbursts of temper (8)
- Manage to get hold of something (6)
- Backless seat for perching on (5)
- Freudian concept linked to self-importance (3)

Answers: Across: 5: Approaching, 9: Possessed, 10: Seams, 11: Psi, 12: Admin, 13: Knead, 15: Abater, 17: Udders, 19: Plane, 20: Abol, 21: Use, 23: Stork, 24: Varieties, 26: Imagination
Down: 1: Spasm, 2: Crusaders, 3: Who, 4: Interned, 6: Amelia, 7: Possibility, 8: Embarrassed, 14: Humiliate, 16: Tantrums, 18: Obtain, 22: Stool, 25: Ego

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

Sudoku Challenge

Hidden Message Wordsearch

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

Board Games

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

Operation	Diplomacy	Battleships
Boggle	Perudo	Stratego
Frustration	Yahtzee	Carcassonne
Backgammon	Sequence	Reversi
Trivialpursuit	Scrabble	Halma
Jenga	Risk	Taboo
Chess	Blokus	Acquire
Cranium	Mancala	Cluedo
Ludo	Mousetrap	Pandemic
Mancala	Mahjong	

Write the hidden message here:

Spot the Difference!

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





When Did Breakfast Require a Degree in Computer Science?

There was once a time when going on holiday was relatively simple. You packed a suitcase, found your passport, drove to the airport and handed your car keys to a man wearing a fluorescent jacket. You then went inside, ordered breakfast and boarded an aeroplane.

Today, you apparently need a degree in computer science, an advanced diploma in electronic engineering and the patience of a Buddhist monk.

On our way to the airport, we decided we would have breakfast before the flight. The first job was checking the bank account to make sure I would not need to take out a second mortgage. Airport food has now reached the stage where two sausages, an egg and a slice of toast require a meeting with a financial adviser.

Having established that we could just about afford breakfast without selling the house, we were shown to a table.

I waited for the menu. There wasn't one.

Instead, we were told to take a picture of something called a QR code. This looked like a dyslexic person's attempt to create a crossword puzzle after six pints of lager.

Apparently, you point your phone at it and a menu magically appears. At least, that is the theory. In reality, I pointed my phone at it and took 14 photographs of the table.

Eventually, after rotating the phone, adjusting the light and holding it at an angle normally associated with photographing a rare bird, the menu appeared. I then had to scroll through dozens of options.

All we wanted was two full English breakfasts and two cups of tea. I did not want to download an app, register an account or create a password containing three capital letters, two numbers, a hieroglyphic and the blood group of my first pet.

Standing nearby was a member of staff who had just about mastered the ability to grunt, "Have you ordered?"

He was holding a tablet. God only knows what for. Presumably, he could have used it to take our order, but that would have been far too easy. His role appeared to be watching customers struggle with their phones while occasionally wandering

over to remind them that they had not yet ordered.

Then we reached the tea section.

What was wrong with Lipton English Breakfast tea? You put a teabag in a cup, poured boiling water over it and added milk. Job done.

Now you can have Earl Grey, Darjeeling, Assam, jasmine blossom, peppermint infusion, camomile, lemon and ginger, green tea with Himalayan goji berries or something called "organic hand-picked morning serenity".

I did not want morning serenity. I wanted tea.

Then came the question: "What kind of milk would you like?"

What do you mean, what kind of milk? Surely the answer is skimmed, semi-skimmed or full-fat?

No. There was almond milk, oat milk, coconut milk, soya milk and something that appeared to have been extracted from a cashew nut.

This leaves one important question: how the hell do you milk a nut?

Is there a tiny milking parlour somewhere with thousands of almonds standing in little stalls while a very small farmer attaches machinery to them? And how many almonds does it take to produce a pint?

Breakfast finally arrived, and very nice it was too, although by then we had spent so long ordering it that we were nearly ready for lunch.

Then came airport check-in.

Once upon a time, you handed your passport to a human

being. They looked at it, looked at you, typed something into a computer and gave it back.

Now you must check yourself in. You scan your passport, print your own boarding pass, attach your own luggage label and send your suitcase down a conveyor belt. Presumably, next year we will be expected to load the bags onto the aircraft and help the pilot reverse away from the terminal.

I approached the passport scanner with confidence. Unfortunately, someone had left an enormous, slimy fingerprint across the glass. The machine refused to acknowledge my passport.

I tried again.

Nothing.

I wiped the passport, wiped the scanner and tried a third time. Still nothing. The screen simply stared at me with the electronic contempt normally reserved for someone who has forgotten their online banking password.

Eventually, I moved to another machine, which scanned the passport immediately. The first machine had not been broken. It had simply taken a personal dislike to me.

Then came passport control and the fingerprint scanner. "Place your finger on the screen," it said. I placed my finger on the screen. "Please place your finger on the screen." I T IS ON THE SCREEN!

I tried my thumb, index finger and middle finger. I pressed gently, firmly and with enough force to leave my fingerprints on the other side of the machine.

Eventually, it accepted that I had fingers. Then it wanted a photograph.

By this stage, I had got up at stupid o'clock, battled around the M25, searched for a car park that I had already booked and paid for, fought with a QR code, interrogated an almond and been rejected by three electronic scanners.

The expression on my face was not my normal expression. I looked like someone who had just been told that the flight had been cancelled and the replacement bus service was being operated by Southern Water.

The machine compared this photograph with my passport picture, which was taken years ago when I still looked vaguely human.

It clearly had doubts.

Then there is the wonderful mobile boarding pass, another marvellous invention designed to make travelling "quicker and easier".

In the old days, you were given a piece of paper. You put it in your pocket and, when somebody asked for it, you took it out. It did not require charging, updating or connecting to the airport Wi-Fi.

Now your boarding pass lives somewhere inside your phone. When you finally reach the gate, with 200 people behind you, the phone immediately decides to install an update, reduce the screen brightness and log you out of the airline app.

You then stand there frantically pressing the screen while the person behind the desk says, "Can you make it brighter?"

I would love to make it brighter, but the phone has decided that it knows best. Meanwhile, the queue behind you is growing, your battery is down to 3 per cent and your boarding pass has vanished into something called a "digital wallet".

A digital wallet is very similar to a real wallet, except a real wallet does not suddenly ask you to confirm your identity using a six-digit code sent to an email account you cannot remember the password for.

After five minutes of technological panic, you finally find the boarding pass. You hold it over the scanner and the machine makes a noise which sounds like you have just lost on Family Fortunes.

"Try turning your phone the other way," says the member of staff.

Of course! Why didn't I think of that? Apparently, after everything else, I am also holding my own telephone incorrectly.

Modern technology is everywhere, and it is all supposed to make life easier. Yet absolutely nothing is easier.

You cannot park a car without downloading an app. Every town has a different parking app, so your phone ends up containing RingGo, PayByPhone, JustPark and several others that sound like rejected contestants from Britain's Got Talent.

You cannot speak to your bank without answering 17 security questions. You cannot turn on a new television without creating an account. Even modern cars have touchscreens requiring you to navigate six menus just to turn down the heating. In my old car, there was a knob marked "HOT" and "COLD". It was not sophisticated, but it worked.

Want to buy a train ticket? Download the app. Want to see a doctor? Complete an online form. Want to pay a bill? Create a password.

Want to speak to a human being? Press one, press four, press seven, listen to 40 minutes of dreadful music and then be disconnected.

Supermarkets now expect us to scan and pack our own shopping. Restaurants expect us to take our own orders. Airports expect us to check in our own luggage. Banks want us to manage everything ourselves online.

Yet somehow prices keep going up despite the customer now doing most of the work.

I fully expect my next restaurant visit to involve cooking my own dinner, washing the dishes and then being presented with a screen asking whether I would like to leave a 20 per cent tip.

Technology is wonderful when it works. The problem is that it rarely works when you actually need it.

And when it goes wrong, there is never anyone available to help—just a man holding a tablet who wanders over, looks at the screen and grunts:

"Have you tried turning it off and on again?"





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 summer has left the food bank with a long list of urgent needs. This includes Chocolate spread, gluten free, large tinned ham, washing up liquid, men's deodorant, sanitary pads, shampoo, slower gel, salad cream, pasta in sauce packets, white cook in sauce, mayonnaise, tinned fish, vege meals in a tin, noodles, and corned beef.

At present they have plenty of tinned vegs, (including beans, tomatoes, potatoes), soup, 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.

Brenzett, St Eanswith.

There will be a patronal service for St Eanswith at the church on September 20th, at 3pm. St Eanswith was a Folkestone noble woman, who founded a convent in Folkestone in the 7th century, and is much revered. Some ancient bones found hidden in a wall in the church of St Mary and Eanswith in Folkestone in 19th century, have since been examined scientifically, and are probably her bones. They are from the 7th century and are of a well-fed noblewoman, and of a young woman. She is known to have died young.

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 October 11th at 6.30pm. There will be a practice for the choir on the previous Thursday at 1.15pm. The Holy Communion service that takes place on alternative Thursday continues. See church magazine for dates.

There will be harvest supper at the Woolpack inn on October 8th at 7pm. A 3- course meal is available at £29 and 2 courses at £25.

Dymchurch, St Peter and Paul.

The church is still in need of help with prayers and intercessions, and an organist to play for the Sunday services. A bible Study

group meets at the church on Tuesdays at 10.30am for refreshments and the study starts at 11am and finishes about noon.

The Harvest service will be on Sunday, September 27th, at 10.30am. Food will be collected for the Rainbow centre foodbank, see top of column for most urgent needs, and those things not needed at present. Congregation are encouraged to bring a picnic and enjoy fellowship afterwards.

There will be a Quiz with fish and chips from beach 48 on Saturday, October 3rd. Teams of no more than 6 and tickets are £12. To book ring 07811 614229 or email elizabethcarnley898@gmail@gmail.com

Dymchurch Catholic church, St Monica's on Chapel Road. 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. All welcome at any of these events.

Craft Fair. The next Craft Fair will take place on Saturday, September 19th, from 10am-2pm, and everyone is invited to this large and diverse craft fair. Several stalls sell edibles of various kinds, and cater for those with restricted diets.

Ivychurch, St George.

The Harvest service will be on Sunday, September 27th, at 6.30pm. Food will be collected for the Rainbow centre foodbank, see top of column for most urgent needs, and those items not needed.

The recent production of The Great Gatsby was a well-received success to a packed church. The 4 actors did an amazing job, and without benefit of curtains and much in the way of scenery, they brought the story to life. At Christmas they will be producing 'A Christmas Carol'. Be sure to book your seat, it will be worthwhile.

The harvest supper will be in the church on Saturday, October 3rd at 7 for 7.30pm. A superb 3 course meal will be served, and diets can be catered for. Tickets will be £20 for adults.uk and £10 for children, and can be obtained from mlwaite@hotmail.co.uk

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 new type of get together has started for babies and toddlers, parents and carers, on the 2nd Sunday of each month. It starts at 9am, for coffee and croissants, and suitable refreshments for the

children. The service itself starts at 9.30am, and is specially geared up to the youngsters and their parents. Several of the helpers have travelled to London for appropriate courses, to give them lots of ideas for activities. For more detail contact Les Carter on 01797 320108 or email bubbleinlydd@btinternet.com The next event will be on Sunday, October 11th.

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 01797 362719.

Samaritan's purse, the organisation that oversees the shoebox project is also helping with the Ebola crisis in DRC. If interested go to the Samaritan's Purse website, and find out more, and how you can help. As well as delivering shoeboxes to the needy, they have crisis response teams ready at any time.

The book sales and coffee mornings resume on Saturday, September 20th from 10am to noon. All welcome, cakes, books, CDs and DVDs available at knock down prices.

New Romney Methodist Church.

The Saturday morning coffee mornings take place from 10am-noon, and the Meeting Point is on Thursday mornings from 10-12md. Although well attended Meeting Point is having leadership problems and may have to close. If anyone feels they could help to keep this Christian group going, call in on any Thursday morning.

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

Romney Marsh Community Church. North St. NR.

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

The toddler group has started again on Thursday mornings, on September 10th from 8.45 to 11am. All preschool children and their parents, grandparents and carers welcome. All staff are police checked, and a wide range of toys are available, and

refreshments are available. The cost is £3 per family. Lots of spaces, several of our children have moved on to school or nursery.

The Youth Space has begun again on Thursdays, from 3.30-5pm for years 5,6 and 7. All children in this age bracket are welcome, and they must be brought and fetched by a parent or responsible adult. Lots of activities, games, music and teaching.

The new Pastors, a couple called Jhon and Lannah, are settling into New Romney, and their teenage daughters have settled into the Academy. Their official welcome and commencement of ministry will be in October. More details later.

Snargate, St Dunstans.

The Holy Communion services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays continue, so the next one will be on Sunday, September 27th followed by refreshments and fellowship.

St Mary's Bay, All Saints.

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 All Saints Harvest Supper will be on Saturday October 3rd at 7 for 7.30pm. The cost will be £25 for a delicious 3 course meal, which includes a complimentary drink.

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, or 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.

St Mary in theMarsh

The Haywardians choir, based at the church is a vibrant choir that raises large amounts of money for Charity. The next concert is on October 24th and is a soloist's concert in St Mary's. The choir meets in St Mary's each Friday evening at 7.30pm. New members are always welcome. For more information ring Andrew on 07814 292027.

Church Chuckle

A vicar was leaving his parish for pastures new, and was having a farewell service at harvest time. After a heartfelt speech about how much he was going to miss them, the last hymn was announced. "Now thank we all our God....."

Wit and Wisdom.

As we all know, Dolly Parton died recently. THE queen of country music, she was also a master of one-liners. Among them was "It takes an awful lot of money to look this cheap!" and, in her sixties, when people were being personal about her figure. "I got everything I had 40 years ago. Only it's 6 inches lower!!"

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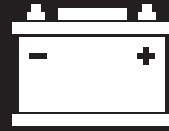
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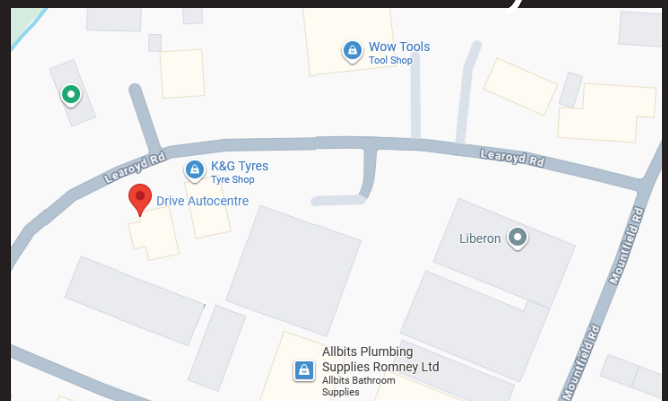
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