

OUR HOSPITAL CANNOT COPE

And Winter Has Not Even Started



William Harvey declares another critical incident as full beds and soaring A&E demand leave health services struggling. What is causing the crisis — and, more importantly, what is being done to solve it?

William Harvey Hospital has once again been forced to declare a critical incident after every available bed was filled and “extremely high” numbers of patients arrived at its accident and emergency department.

The warning was issued on Monday, September 28 before the traditional winter surge in flu, Covid, respiratory infections, falls and other seasonal illnesses has even begun.

That should concern every resident across Ashford, Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh.

East Kent Hospitals University NHS

Foundation Trust said there was “very limited capacity” to admit further patients requiring urgent hospital care. People were asked to attend A&E only in cases of life-threatening illness or injury and warned that anyone arriving with a less serious condition could face an extremely long wait.

Patients have instead been directed towards NHS 111, GPs, pharmacies and urgent treatment centres. Families have also been asked to collect relatives who are ready to leave hospital at the earliest opportunity.

These are sensible requests during an emergency, and nobody should underestimate the extraordinary efforts being made by doctors, nurses, paramedics, care workers and support staff.

But the public is entitled to ask a much bigger question:

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Hythe needs a future as well as a past: the case for Imperial Gardens



Should the £120 million seafront proposal deserves to be judged on the jobs, homes and opportunities it could bring alongside the concerns it raises.

A £120 million investment in Hythe should be an opportunity to discuss how the town can prosper. Yet much of the debate surrounding the proposed Imperial Gardens development has concentrated on what residents might lose, with considerably less attention paid to what the wider community could gain.

New jobs. More customers for local businesses. Affordable homes. A public swimming pool. Improved leisure facilities and an expanded hotel bringing more visitors into the town.

These are substantial potential benefits, particularly at a time when high street businesses need customers through their doors.

The GSE Group's application proposes 291 homes, with 25% designated as affordable housing, alongside an expansion of the Hythe Imperial Hotel and a reshaped leisure offering.

Construction would create demand for workers, trades and suppliers. Once completed, the additional hotel accommodation and leisure facilities could support further employment in

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Why is one of Kent’s most important hospitals already full when winter has not even arrived?

This is not an isolated event. William Harvey declared a similar critical incident in February because of exceptional demand. Another was declared in July during serious disruption to the trust’s computer systems.

Three critical incidents in one year cannot simply be dismissed as a series of unfortunate coincidences.

A system running without enough spare capacity
The immediate explanation is straightforward: too many patients are arriving while too few beds are becoming available.

But that describes the problem; it does not fully explain its cause. Hospital beds do not operate in isolation. When medically fit patients cannot be safely discharged because a care package, rehabilitation place, community bed or suitable support at home is unavailable, they must remain in hospital.

That bed cannot then be given to the next patient waiting in A&E.

The result is a blockage running through the entire hospital: ambulances wait to hand over patients, A&E becomes overcrowded, planned procedures may be reviewed and staff are placed under relentless pressure.

Kent County Council’s own strategy recognises that timely discharge depends on sufficient home-care capacity, community support, rehabilitation services and a social-care workforce capable of responding to changing demand. It also identifies recruitment and retention as serious concerns. kent.gov.uk

This is therefore not solely a hospital problem. It is a whole-system failure involving hospital capacity, primary care, community health services and adult social care.

If patients cannot obtain a timely GP appointment, some will inevitably turn to A&E. If community services cannot prevent avoidable admissions, more people will arrive at hospital. If social-care support is unavailable when someone is ready to leave, beds remain occupied.

Every weakness elsewhere in the system eventually appears at the doors of the emergency department.

Inspectors had already raised the alarm
There is also uncomfortable independent evidence that William Harvey’s emergency services have been operating beyond their available capacity.

A Care Quality Commission assessment, published in July, rated the hospital’s urgent and emergency care as “requires improvement”.

Inspectors found that the number of patients attending consistently exceeded the department’s capacity. They reported overcrowding, delays in triage and medical reviews, lengthy waits and increased risks to patients.

The department was operating at OPEL 4 — the highest level of operational pressure — and a critical incident was declared during the inspection itself. The CQC identified multiple breaches relating to safe care and treatment, as well as a breach concerning dignity and respect. Care Quality Commission

These findings must not be used to attack exhausted frontline staff. They demonstrate what happens when good people are repeatedly expected to deliver safe care inside a system operating at or beyond its limits.

The trust is investing in improvements, including emergency-department redevelopment, same-day emergency care and a new purpose-built stroke unit. Those developments are welcome, but the latest critical incident shows that the underlying capacity problem has not disappeared. East Kent Hospitals

Where is the winter resilience?
Hospitals will always experience exceptionally busy periods. Emergencies cannot be scheduled and demand will fluctuate.

However, a system that reaches breaking point in September is clearly entering winter from a dangerously weak starting position.

What happens when flu and Covid cases rise? What happens when cold weather increases respiratory illness and falls among older residents? What happens when staff sickness increases at the same time as patient numbers?

Telling people to use another service is helpful only if that alternative has the capacity to see them. Residents cannot be endlessly passed between telephone services, pharmacies, GP surgeries, urgent treatment centres and A&E while every part of the system struggles with the same underlying demand.

The public deserves clear answers from East Kent Hospitals and the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board.

How many beds were occupied when the critical incident was declared? How many patients were medically fit to leave but waiting for care or support? How many nursing and medical vacancies exist? How many people attending A&E could not obtain help elsewhere? What additional capacity will be available before winter reaches its peak?

Without that information, it is impossible to distinguish between an exceptional surge and a system that is now routinely operating too close to failure.

What needs to change?
There is no single solution, but several actions are urgently required.

More discharge support must be available seven days a week so patients can return home safely as soon as they are medically ready. Community nursing, rehabilitation, home-care and short-term care-bed capacity must be expanded.

GP and urgent-treatment services must offer genuine, accessible alternatives to A&E, particularly during evenings and weekends. Patients must know where to go — and be confident that somebody will actually see them.

William Harvey also needs sufficient permanent capacity and staffing. Temporary measures may help during a crisis, but recurring emergencies require more than another short-term winter plan.

Most importantly, health services, community providers and social care must operate as one system. Each organisation cannot simply move pressure onto the next and then blame “exceptional demand” when the entire chain becomes blocked.

Declaring a critical incident may unlock additional help, but it does not solve the conditions that made that declaration necessary.

The doctors, nurses, ambulance crews and care workers serving East Kent deserve better than continually being asked to hold together an overstretched system.

Patients deserve better than hours spent waiting in an overcrowded emergency department.

And the public deserves an honest explanation.
If William Harvey Hospital cannot cope at the end of September, how can residents have confidence that it will cope with the winter still to come?



hospitality, maintenance, cleaning and other services. The number of jobs needs to be demonstrated, but the opportunity deserves serious consideration.

Then there is the spending power of the people who would live here.

A development of this size could bring hundreds of additional residents within reach of Hythe’s shops, cafés, pubs, restaurants and other businesses. Their spending could help sustain jobs and give traders greater confidence to invest.

More hotel guests would offer another potential boost. An additional 24 bedrooms would increase the Imperial’s capacity to 116 rooms, creating opportunities to attract visitors who could spend money beyond the hotel itself.

That spending would not automatically reach every shop. But a town with more residents, visitors and reasons to stay has a stronger opportunity to support a thriving high street.

For businesses facing rising costs and uncertain trade, that matters.

The proposed 25-metre public swimming pool also deserves attention. So do the gym, public park, heritage trail and plans for more accessible golf facilities.

The developer says its proposed nine-hole course, practice facilities and adventure golf could attract a much wider range of users. Existing golfers understandably dispute whether that adequately replaces their 18-hole course. Nevertheless, the potential to introduce more families and younger people to the sport belongs in the discussion.

There is an unmistakable sense of Princes Parade, part two about this debate: another seafront proposal, another argument over views, heritage, housing and leisure provision.

The danger is that Hythe becomes trapped in a cycle in which every substantial proposal meets resistance, while the town’s need for homes, facilities and investment continues to grow.

People who have moved to the coast from London, or anywhere else, are entitled to value the surroundings that attracted them. Established residents are equally entitled to defend places they cherish.

But protecting a personal outlook cannot be the overriding test of what is best for an entire town.

As the old saying goes: when you buy a house, you do not buy the view.

That is a useful reminder that enjoying an outlook does not, by itself, settle the public interest. Planning decisions must weigh the needs of people seeking homes and work, as well as those already fortunate enough to have both.

Of course, the objections require proper answers.

Historic England’s concerns about the Royal Military Canal are significant. The loss of existing sports provision must be addressed. Traffic, drainage and pressure on healthcare need credible solutions.

The requested £326,224 contribution towards GP premises would not, on its own, recruit the doctors needed to serve additional patients. Residents deserve a practical explanation of how services would cope.

Likewise, promised public access to leisure facilities should be secured through clear arrangements, with meaningful opening hours and affordable charges.

These are reasons to scrutinise the application and negotiate improvements. They should also be weighed against the benefits of investment.

Hythe’s history is an asset. Its future needs to be one too.

The council should demand a scheme that protects the canal, addresses infrastructure pressures and delivers its promised community benefits. It should also recognise the value of much-needed employment and hundreds of potential new customers for local businesses.

A successful town preserves its character while making room for the next generation.

Imperial Gardens deserves to be judged against that ambition.

What do you think? Email info@thelooker.co.uk

Sense and Sensibility PG

Wednesday 7th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

Thursday 8th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

Verity 15

Friday 9th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

Saturday 10th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

Sunday 11th October 11:00am 2:30pm

Monday 12th October 11:00am 2:30pm

Tuesday 13th October 11:00am 2:30pm

Wednesday 14th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

Thursday 15th October 11:00am 2:30pm 7:15pm

The Uprising 15

Friday 16th October 2:30pm 7:15pm

Saturday 17th October 11:00am 7:15pm

Sunday 18th October 11:00am

Monday 19th October 2:30pm

Tuesday 20th October 2:30pm 7:15pm

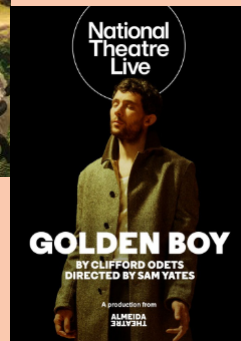
Wednesday 21st October 11:00am 7:15pm

Thursday 22nd October 2:30pm 7:15pm

Hadestown - The Musical PG

Tuesday 13th October 7:00am

Sunday 18th October 2:30pm



Meet the Romney Flock

Eight extraordinary sheep ready to make their mark!

A colourful new flock is coming to Romney Marsh and these sheep are sure to turn heads!

Eight wonderfully decorated sheep sculptures are ready to meet the public, celebrating the heritage, landscapes and wildlife of Romney Marsh and Hythe. Each has its own personality, with imaginative designs and details waiting to be discovered.

The Romney Flock marks the second part of the Tide Tales and Romney Flock project, bringing together artists, local schools, community groups and residents of all ages.

Led by Yolanda and John Houston with the Teach Me artist team, and co-produced by Didier Rochard, the project has turned community creativity into eight unforgettable artworks.

Before they head off to their new homes, there is one special chance to meet the whole flock together and make a little woolly sheep of your own!

Join us at The Hub, Rolfe Lane, New Romney, on Saturday 17 October, from 4pm to 5.30 pm, for an informal celebration. Come and admire the sheep, meet the artists and enjoy making wool sheep.

Thank-yous and announcements will take place at 4.30pm, with drinks and light refreshments available while supplies last. Parking is available at the venue.

After the celebration, the flock will take up residence at:

- Hub on the Beach, New Romney
- Scout Hall, Church Lane
- The Pilot Inn, Dungeness
- The Nest, New Romney
- The Ship Inn, Dymchurch
- The Old School, New Romney
- Hope All Saints, Old Ashford Road
- Hythe - Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway Station



Why not make it your mission to find all eight? Take a photograph, explore their surroundings and discover what makes each sheep special.

Meanwhile, at Oaklands Park in Hythe, another part of this creative story is already bringing colour and delight to visitors.

More than 500 mosaic bricks, made by members of the community, form the Tide Tales mosaic path around the bandstand, adding to the established mosaics that already decorate this much-loved landmark.

Each brick is a small artwork in its own right. Together, they create a wonderful patchwork of ideas, colour and imagination a lasting reminder of what people can achieve when they create together.

Look closely and there is something new to discover at every turn. For those who took part, there is also the pleasure of returning with family and friends and saying, “I made that!”

The project was made possible through Arts Council funding, with additional contributions from David Wimble and Briony Kapoor. Special thanks go to Hoffman Tiling for supplying materials for Tide Tales and to Romney Wools for their support. Our thanks also go to every participant, artist, volunteer and supporter who helped bring these ideas to life.

From a flock full of character to a path filled with community creativity, there is so much to celebrate. Come and be part of it!



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Editor's Word

David Wimble



Well, here we are, heading into the final stretch of the year after some spectacular weather. Spectacular, that is, unless you are a farmer or your business depends on a regular supply of free water from the heavens.

That's the trouble with the British weather: one person's glorious sunshine can be another person's failed crop. While some of us were dusting off the barbecue, others were looking at the sky and desperately hoping for rain.

Now, of course, attention turns to what comes next. I haven't studied the long-range forecasts yet, and a hot summer certainly doesn't guarantee a freezing winter. But it probably wouldn't hurt to have the waterproofs and warm coats ready. Cold, wet, or an unpleasant combination of the two — the British weather likes to keep its options open.

I don't know about you, but I always feel a little down when the nights start drawing in. There's something rather depressing about pulling the curtains before you've even decided what to have for dinner.

With the clocks going back at the end of the month, we can at least look forward to an extra hour in bed. Although, as someone who is usually up at 6am, when it's already dark, I doubt I'll notice much benefit. My body clock has never been particularly interested in an official announcement.

And if the darker evenings haven't unsettled you enough, here's another thought: Christmas really isn't that far away.

Before long, we'll be untangling fairy lights, wondering where we put the decorations and discovering that the person who says they "don't want anything" is still the hardest to buy for.

But the festive season also brings plenty to look forward to, especially the fairs, concerts, markets and community events that give us a reason to get out on a dark evening.

If you're organising something, let The Looker help spread the word. Send your event details to info@thelooker.co.uk, and get in touch about advertising opportunities too.

The nights may be drawing in, but there's still plenty happening on our doorstep. Let's give people something to put in the diary before Christmas shopping takes over!

David

Christmas fair to raise funds for hospice care

Pilgrims Hospices will hold its Christmas Fair at PGL Beyond, Grosvenor Hall, Kennington, Ashford, on Saturday, November 21, from 11am to 4pm.

The event will feature craft and gift stalls, refreshments, children's activities and festive games, with proceeds supporting the charity's end-of-life care for local people.

Children can meet Santa, decorate gingerbread and paint festive plates. A Frozen Princess character will also make an appearance, new for 2026.

The Christmas Grand Draw offers prizes including a luxury Christmas hamper, a two-night stay at Nook's Retreat and an air fryer with a cookbook. Tickets cost £1 and are available beforehand at Pilgrims Hospices in Ashford or on the day. Winners will be announced at the fair.

Lou Newman, community fundraising manager, said: "It's a chance for families to come together, celebrate the season and support hospice care at the same time."

Sponsored by Ultima Care, the fair costs £3 to enter for adults, with free admission for children under 16. Visits to Santa cost £5 per child, while visits to the Frozen Princess cost £3.

Free parking is available on site, although visitors are encouraged to walk or share cars where possible.

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Spotlight on Beaver Scouts

2026 - WOW WHAT A BIRTHDAY YEAR IT HAS BEEN

Adventure Assignment - Celebrate Beavers 40th Birthday - So



we did it in true Scouting Style - The Kent County Beaver team organised a Bumper Birthday Celebration @ Buckmore Park Scout Campsite - and boy - did we celebrate. Thirty excited Beavers from Romney Marsh Groups - 1st Lydd; 1st Dymchurch and 1st New Romney jumped into the coach - along with a few responsible adults - Their mission - to have a FUN, FUN, FUN exciting day celebrating, learning new skills and generally having the most amazing time.

So - here's a roundup of the Beaver Buckmore Birthday takeover. In total there were 300 Beavers and over 150 adult Leaders, the sun shone and the day certainly didn't disappoint! Beavers did a wide range of activities from African Drumming the Djembe! Archery, Circus Skills, Nature Crowns, Tomahawks, Bouncy Castles, Assault course, met Bertie Beaver and more. Bees and their importance as pollinators were on the agenda too - delivered in a fun way, our Beavers



just loved honey tasting. But honestly they preferred just wandering the forest at certain points. Playing team games in the woods and parachute games were extremely popular. Beavers attended a masterclass in circus skills and learnt how to spin plates; juggle - which was both amusing and amazing!! One or two mastered the mini bikes although it must be said success on the uni cycles evaded most!! That didn't stop them from trying though - in the true spirit of Scouting - They had a go and we are very proud of them for taking part - well done Beavers for seizing the opportunity. The Beavers Singing for



an S'more was popular - we sang Alice the Camel - must have been good as we were rewarded with S'mores!!

Along the way we were also fortified by ice cream - yum yum - and later an enormous Beaver Birthday Cake! All the Beavers



sang Happy Birthday - apparently some were so loud we could be heard in nearby Maidstone!! Celebrating a 40th Birthday is an absolute milestone and we were so pleased two Leaders from the original County Team - Kathy Blanc who set up the 1st New Romney Beaver Colony, the first in Kent - 44 years ago could be with us and Jenny, also instrumental in setting up Kent Beavers originally, plus former County Beaver Leaders Kathy S and Kathy M. What an awesome team and what a great legacy - Thank you Ladies and where did that 40 years go?



Huge shout out and thank you to The Kent County Beaver



Team - Debby and Jenn for organising the day; a great band of Scouters who delivered all the various activities - very patiently - and to the local Leaders who entered into the fun and supported the Beavers when they were excited, tired, frustrated, needed encouragement and confidence. All part of the great Scouting experience, they had a wonderful time. The Beavers were dying for lunch all day, but it was probably the only quiet point of the day barring the crash they all had on the coach on the way home. Several emerged from the coach - very sleepy, a little disorientated and not sure where they were!! But the verdict was they all had the most amazing FUNTASTIC day - All in all - another successful Scouting Adventure. Our next adventure is on the local Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway - which promises to be a another fantastic day - so if you have youngsters aged from 4 - 11 who would like to be part of our Scouting Adventure, as Squirrels, Beavers or Cubs please do come and join us. For details - meeting times, days and joining information please call 01797 363657

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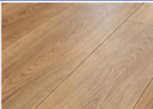
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Rye Shop Now Open!

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Urgent appeal launched to save New Romney gallery shop



A group of local artists and makers has launched an urgent fundraising appeal to save a popular New Romney High Street shop and establish a permanent, not-for-profit creative hub for the community.

Romney Creatives has already raised £5,257 towards its target of just under £12,000. However, organisers are now facing a race against time after the shop's closing date was unexpectedly brought forward by two months to October 24.

The group must raise more than £6,700 in the coming weeks to secure a permanent lease, pay the required deposit, refit the premises and cover the first two months of running costs.

Made on the Marsh originally opened late last year through the local Community Hub. Since then, it has become a vibrant addition to New Romney High Street, providing retail space and support for more than 30 local artists, makers and micro-businesses.

The shop has also developed a strong online following, attracting more than 1,100 followers on Facebook.

Following confirmation that the existing lease is coming to an end, those involved have officially registered Romney Creatives as a Community Interest Company, commonly known as a CIC.

The shop would be operated entirely by volunteers, with any surplus income reinvested into affordable community workshops, activities and events.

A spokesperson for Romney Creatives said: "We are devastated to be losing the shop in its current form, but the overwhelming support from the community has heartened us to fight for its future.

"By transitioning into a non-profit CIC, we aren't just saving a shop — we are creating a permanent creative hub run by artists, for the community.

"We have the plan and the passion, but we urgently need the community's help to get it off the ground before our October deadline."

Local community representatives have joined the board of the newly formed CIC to help ensure the organisation delivers wider social benefits for New Romney and the surrounding area.

If the fundraising campaign is successful, the new creative hub will continue to provide an important outlet for local artists and independent makers while offering new opportunities for people of all ages to become involved in creative, cultural and heritage projects.

Plans also include retail work-experience placements, support for the regional creative sector and a programme of affordable workshops and community activities.

Organisers hope the project will not only protect a valued High Street business but also help encourage greater footfall, support independent enterprise and give local people an accessible place to develop and share their creativity.

Members of the public and local businesses are being encouraged to support the campaign, with every pound raised going directly towards securing the premises and establishing the community-led creative hub.

To follow the campaign, search for @romneycreatives on Facebook. Donations can be made through the Romney Creatives Crowdfunder page.

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What Is the Point of Hythe Town Council If It Cannot Deliver Practical Solutions?

The rejection of plans to redevelop Hythe's abandoned former Aldi store raises a much bigger question than whether one particular building was attractive enough.

It forces residents to ask: what exactly is the purpose of Hythe Town Council and the councillors who claim to represent the town if ideology, endless objection and procedural hand-wringing continually take priority over finding practical solutions?

To be clear, Hythe Town Council does not determine major planning applications. It is merely a statutory consultee. The final decision rests with Folkestone and

Hythe District Council.

But that does not let the town council off the hook. Its job should be to represent residents, negotiate improvements and help shape workable proposals not simply tell everyone what it dislikes after developers have spent months drawing up plans.

The former Aldi has stood abandoned since the supermarket moved to the edge of town seven years ago. It is an eyesore in a prominent position, contributing nothing to the High Street, local employment or the wider economy.

Churchill Living proposed demolishing it and replacing it with 32 retirement flats, two cottages and two commercial units. The development would have brought older residents into the centre of Hythe, within walking distance of shops, buses, medical services and other facilities.

Planning officers acknowledged several public benefits. It would have redeveloped a brownfield site, provided specialist retirement housing and increased footfall in the town centre.

Yet the application was rejected because officers considered the design harmful to the historic character of Hythe. The principal building was described as one overly large block, with concerns about its length along Bank Street, its flat-roof elements, the proposed mansard structure and the possible impact on views towards St Leonard's Church.

Some of those criticisms may be justified. Few people want to see a badly designed building forced into an historic town centre.



However, rejecting the application is the easy part. The difficult part is producing an alternative.

Where is the practical plan for the site now?

Will it remain empty for another seven years? Will councillors congratulate themselves for protecting Hythe's character while residents continue looking at a deteriorating supermarket? Will another developer spend hundreds of thousands of pounds bringing forward proposals, only to discover that the council's requirements remain vague or impossible to satisfy?

There were also legitimate concerns about the proposed loss of almost half the spaces in Mount Street car park. The existing car park has 80 spaces, including four disabled bays, and parking is vital to the survival of Hythe's independent shops. Folkestone & Hythe District Council

But that should have led to negotiation rather than paralysis.

Why was there not a serious attempt to redesign the scheme, retain more parking, break up the appearance of the main block and protect the important view towards the church? Why could additional commercial space, underground parking or a smaller development not have been explored?

Good planning is not about saying yes to everything. Neither is it about saying no and walking away. It is about securing the best possible result for the community.

This latest controversy is not an isolated event.

Over the past decade, planning decisions across Hythe and the wider district have repeatedly attracted criticism.

Princes Parade dominated local politics for around 15 years. Planning permission was approved in 2018 by the narrowest of margins—five votes to four, with one abstention—despite sustained public opposition. Years of argument, professional fees, consultations and political conflict followed before the present district administration finally announced in August 2025 that there would be no further development on the council-owned land. saveprincesparade.co.uk

Whatever side people took, it became a textbook example of councils spending years arguing without delivering either the development or a lasting alternative. Hythe still needs modern leisure facilities, but the town endured years of division while the promised solution failed to materialise.

Then there is the former Foxwood School site in Seabrook Road. In June, district councillors approved proposals for up to 150 homes. The council's own policy would ordinarily have expected about 33 affordable homes, yet the development was approved with none guaranteed at the outset.

Hythe Town Council objected, raising concerns about the loss of mature trees and wildlife habitats, land stability, drainage, traffic, pressure on local services and the absence of affordable housing. Nevertheless, the district planning committee approved the application by eight votes to two, with one abstention. ShepwayVox Dissent is not a Crime

Residents could therefore be forgiven for finding the planning philosophy difficult to understand.

A major development of up to 150 market homes, with no affordable housing secured at the beginning, is approved on a difficult hillside. Meanwhile, the redevelopment of a long-abandoned supermarket in the middle of town is refused.

Where is the consistency?

There is also Martello Lakes...formerly Nickolls Quarry where permission was granted for hundreds of additional homes alongside employment, community, sport and leisure uses. Residents have heard repeated promises about leisure provision and community facilities, but years later debates continue about precisely what will be delivered and when. The 2021 approval covered up to 650 additional homes, with conditions and agreements relating to employment land and other facilities. folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk

This is the wider problem. Housing is approved, but infrastructure is delayed. Affordable housing disappears into viability assessments. Community facilities become subjects for later discussions. Meanwhile, a practical town-centre regeneration opportunity is rejected without an agreed replacement ready to go.

Hythe does not need councillors who treat planning as an ideological battlefield. It needs representatives prepared to sit down with developers, residents, traders and planning officers and hammer out acceptable solutions.

That means preserving sufficient parking. It means demanding high-quality architecture suitable for a conservation area. It means protecting important heritage views. But it also means recognising that an abandoned supermarket is not a heritage asset and that leaving it derelict is not a planning policy.

Hythe Town Council should now publish a clear vision for this site.

It should state how many homes it believes are appropriate, how much parking must be retained, what architectural principles should be followed and what mix of shops, community uses and housing it wants to see. It should then invite the landowner, developer and district planning authority into a public design process.

If councillors are not prepared to do that, residents are entitled to ask what constructive purpose the town council serves.

Opposition without an alternative is not leadership. Preserving an eyesore through indecision is not protecting Hythe. Celebrating the rejection of an imperfect proposal while offering nothing in its place is not a victory.

The Churchill Living scheme may not have been right in its submitted form. But Hythe desperately needs councillors who understand that the answer to a flawed proposal is an improved proposal not another seven years of an empty building, locked doors and political excuses.

Kent actress sets sights on London with her own production

Kent actress Marie Gearing is preparing to bring a play she has written, produced and will star in to Faversham with ambitions to take it to London theatres next year.

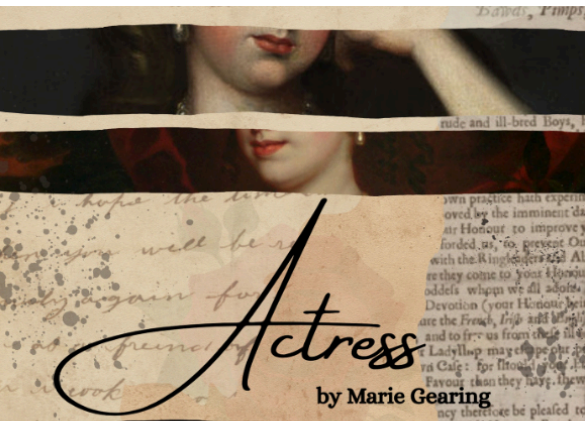
Actress runs at the Arden Theatre from Friday, October 23, to Sunday, October 25, 2026. Directed by Francesca Woods, it features a cast of local professional actors.

Set in London in 1668, the drama follows Alice Barrie, who finds refuge in a theatre and becomes the protégée of actress Mary Betterton. Against a backdrop of hostility towards women performers, the story explores their struggle for acceptance, equality and safety.

For Marie, bringing the production to the stage has been a personal journey. Writing on her crowdfunding page, she explained that ill health left her disabled and forced her to cut back on work. She turned to writing, drawing on her love of history before recognising parallels between the challenges facing women in the 17th century and those of today.

The play is the first production from Little White Bird Productions. Marie also hopes it will shine a spotlight on Kent's creative talent, giving local performers an opportunity to showcase their work.

With London in her sights for 2027, the Faversham performances offer audiences a chance to support an emerging playwright and actress as she takes her next step. For booking information, visit: ardentheatre.org.uk



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by Marie Gearing

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LOOKER LETTERS
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Dear David,

Here are a couple of pictures of our time at the Burstin. It will always be a Great Place to me, as I wouldn't have had 2 Children if it wasn't for the Burstin.

We did a Cabaret there at Christmas 1986. At that time it was run by Ivor & Peter Burstin, along with The Palace Hotel in Southend. Their old Mum was still keeping an eye on things (Motyl's Wife)

What a Character she was!!!! They asked me if I wanted a residency there, as daytime Entertainments Manager, and my 2nd wife Jane doing the Children's entertainments.

Which meant we could still do Evening Cabarets and Theatre dates all around including a 15 week season at Margate Winter Gardens at the same time.

Entertainment Galore



We also did a Show each week at the Burstin. This ran from 1997 to 2000. Therefore living in Folkestone... we had a chance to have our 2 Daughters.

It was never possible before... travelling round the the World, Theatres, Cabarets, Cruising, Circuses etc. etc.

The whole hotel was "Cash-in-Hand in those days. Most of the staff were on the dole. It was all very "Holiday Campy" make do and mend... But the Punters Loved it... It was very cheap, and they knew what to expect. I remember the Jobcentre Inspectors came... and the place emptied of staff in 5 minutes !They also had a strike, and all the Guests stepped in to help out.... Hilarious :-)

In 1987, it was taken over by "Land Leisure" and in 1998, by "Leisure Investments... who really smartened it up... but it didn't have the same fun and atmosphere. They did great holiday packages... with a weekend break, including a day trip Ferry to Boulogne for the Duty Freees. They saved MORE than the Holiday was costing!

I've worked there on many occasions since. They had a Resident Show with Guest Stars and Theme Weekends. etc.

It was so sad to hear of the Fire... Let's hope it soon gets back to Normal again. Most of the adverse comments on Facebook, are from People who have never stayed or worked there.

Another Great Looker this week.. Thanks.
Jon Anton.

Dear Editor,

The Looker Magazine Newspaper never looked away and became the heavy guns in a two year campaign to turn the disused Latrine into a Military Tribute to the fallen of WW1. Not half way through .. from the beginning!

Your readers will be pleased to know that planning permission has now been granted.

One concludes by saluting the Looker and its Editor Mr. David Wimble for his effort and faith.

The paper that gets it sorted !!

Regards
Bob Moulard

Dear Editor,

How have we reached a point where around one in five school pupils in England is identified as having special educational needs?

As a reader, I would like a clear explanation of what has changed over the past two decades. Are we recognising difficulties that previous generations overlooked? Have assessment criteria changed? Are schools struggling to meet children's needs within ordinary classrooms? Or are several factors involved?

In earlier generations, some children were dismissed as "problem children" or simply badly behaved. Some may have had difficulties that nobody understood. We should acknowledge that possibility, but it should not prevent an honest discussion about how children are assessed today.

I fully accept that children with special educational needs and disabilities have a right to a proper education. Where additional help is necessary, it should be provided. However, parents and taxpayers also deserve a clear explanation of the substantial differences in spending between mainstream education and specialist provision.

How much more is being spent, what does that money pay for, and is it producing better outcomes? How much reaches the classroom, and how much goes on transport, administration or expensive placements?

Fairness does not necessarily mean spending exactly the same amount on every child. Different needs can require different resources. But fairness must also include children without identified SEND, whose education matters just as much.

Are mainstream schools receiving enough funding to support every pupil? Could earlier help within those schools prevent some difficulties from escalating and reduce the need for costly specialist provision later?

These are reasonable questions about public spending and educational standards. Councils and government should answer them plainly.

Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. We need an education system that can explain how its resources are allocated, demonstrate that they work, and remain financially sustainable.

Kind regards

A concerned former Hythe teacher (retired)

Name and address withheld



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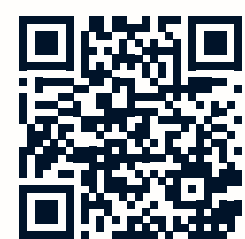
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Compass Festival puts Kent's emerging musicians centre stage

More than 40 independent acts will perform in Folkestone this November as Compass Festival returns for its third year.

Venues across the Creative Quarter will host two days of live music on Friday, November 27, and Saturday, November 28, with more than 25 Kent acts joining performers from elsewhere in Britain and France.

The independent, not-for-profit festival gives audiences a chance to discover emerging musicians in the town's grassroots venues, while offering artists an opportunity to reach new listeners.

Folkestone will have a strong presence, with Aimate, Colossal Squid, Freya McKenna, Libra Arte, Linnet, Machine Cartel, Malaki, Oscillate, Sugarburn and The Far Field among those appearing.

They will be joined by Canterbury acts Polo Lounge, Red Eye Rascals and Jasper Hodges, Ashford pop artist Amelie Roden, Dover punk band The Melbies, Margate's NO TV, Medway's Angered Kenneth and Tonbridge singer-songwriter Bryony Dunn.

Other performers will travel from London, Brighton, Hastings, Southampton and Leicester, as well as across the Channel.

Discovery is central to this year's programme. More than half the acts have never performed in Folkestone, while 15 will make their Kent debut. Six artists will play their first festival, and three acts will perform together as a band for the first time.

The programme was selected following a month-long open call which attracted 364 applications.

Festival founder and programmer Geraldine Zanaska said choosing the line-up had been difficult because of the wealth of talent applying. She described the resulting programme as diverse and gender-balanced, reflecting original music being made across the county.

Guest curators will also help shape the weekend, with special stage takeovers bringing distinct sounds to individual venues.

On Friday, feminist punk night Riot Gull will take over Speedway, presenting Angered Kenneth, Dogviolet and Bugeye.

BBC Introducing in Kent will host Saturday's programme at The Blind Pig, featuring Freya McKenna, Annia, Jasper Hodges, Daisy and Lotusbliss. Presenter Casey Dale will also perform a DJ set.

Dale said the partnership reflected the shared commitment of Compass and BBC Introducing to helping local musicians showcase their work.

Zanaska said collaborations with BBC Introducing in Kent



and Mumdad Records would give more people from the region a role in shaping the festival.

Organisers hope the weekend will encourage residents and visitors to explore Folkestone's smaller music venues and discover performers they may not otherwise have encountered.

The festival is open to people aged 14 and over. Under-18s must attend with an adult, and some smaller venues have restrictions on how late younger audience members can stay.

Tickets are available for either day or the full weekend, with discounted concessions for students, under-25s and people with no or very low incomes.

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Dates for your Diary

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Wednesday 14th October

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.
Romney Marsh Flower Arrangers, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m. (2nd Wed)
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Thursday 15th October

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

Friday 16th October

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 17th October

Open Morning, Old School Trust, New Romney, 10 a.m. (1st & 3rd Sat)
Autumn Fair, St. Mary's Bay Church, 10 a.m.

Monday 19th October

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 20th October

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.

Greatstone Meeting Point, St. Peter's Hall, 10 a.m. (1st & 3rd Tue)
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 10.30 a.m.
Dymchurch Art Society, Village Hall, 1 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m.
Romney Marsh Poetry Society, Old School, New Romney, 2.30 p.m. (3rd Tue)
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

Wednesday 21st October

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.
Woman's Wednesday Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.
Dymchurch Gardening Group, Village Hall, 2 p.m. (3rd Thurs)
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

Thursday 22nd October

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 23rd October

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 24th October

Jumble Sale, Dymchurch Village Hall, 1.30 p.m.
Invicta Wind Orchestra, St. Nicholas Church, New Romney, 7 p.m.
The Doffin Codgers + Fish & Chips, St. Mary's Bay Church, 7 p.m. (01303-873451)
Musical Evening, St. Mary-in-the-Marsh Church, 7.30 p.m.

Bob's memorial campaign gathers pace after appeal victory



Work on a memorial honouring soldiers who marched down Folkestone's Road of Remembrance is now moving at pace following campaigner Bob Moulard's successful planning appeal.

Bob has told The Looker that revised drawings for the tribute at a disused Victorian latrine include sandbags representing those typically used during the Great War, a revised bronze soldier statue and a slightly shorter flagstaff.

The memorial will commemorate the servicemen who passed down the historic road towards Folkestone Harbour on their journey to the Western Front.

His appeal was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate on September 17, overturning Folkestone & Hythe District Council's refusal of the application.

The decision followed a contentious planning committee debate in April, when councillors rejected the proposal by nine votes to two, despite planning officers recommending approval.

Published coverage of the meeting reported concerns that the soldier silhouette would create visual clutter, detract from nearby war memorials and harm the conservation area. Councillors also raised concerns about pedestrian safety because the former toilet block stands across the road from the pavement.

Labour councillor Adrian Lockwood proposed the refusal, while

Conservative councillor Clive Goddard spoke in support, suggesting the memorial could attract visitors interested in military history.

Folkestone Town Council's formal position was supportive. Its published planning records stated that the committee had no objection and was "whole heartedly in favour of this application".

A published summary of the appeal decision says the inspector found that the memorial's modest scale and form would complement the existing memorial setting without harming the conservation area or nearby listed buildings.

With the campaign moving forward, Bob thanked The Looker for supporting his efforts from the outset.

"The Looker backed this campaign from the very start and joined with myself in sending supporting letters to our MP, and for that I will be forever grateful," he said.

The revised design marks the next stage in his campaign to create a lasting tribute along the route taken by soldiers heading to war.



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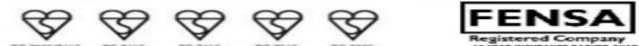
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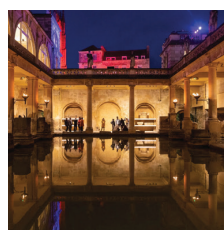
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James Martin's Pork Belly With Lemon Gnocchi And Butter Sauce

Slow-roasted pork belly with lemon gnocchi, sautéed ceps, and a rich split butter sauce. Crispy and comforting!

Method

Step One

Heat the oven to 200c. When hot, cook the pork belly for two hours, rest, and slice.

Step Two

Mix the potato, lemon, flour Manchego and egg yolks together and season. Then roll into sausages 2cm thick by 20cm long on a flour-dusted surface. Cut into 3cm pieces, plunge into boiling water and cook for one minute, then drain.

Step Three

Heat the butter add the gnocchi and mushrooms and cook for another two minutes. Finish with lemon juice and parsley.

Step Four

Heat a large frying pan until hot then add the stock reduce by half, then add the butter and lemon and split with the veal jus.

Step Five

To serve, place the gnocchi, ceps and sauce onto plates and top with the pork belly.



Ingredients

Serves 4

- 4x200g pork belly
- Salt and pepper
- Drizzle of olive oil

Gnocchi

- 50g butter
- 400g cooked baked potato, riced
- 125g plain flour
- 50g grated Manchego
- 1 lemon, zest only
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 small bunch parsley, chopped
- Salt and pepper

Sauce

- Salt and pepper
- 250ml veal stock
- 125g butter
- 1 tbs chopped parsley
- 1 lemon, segmented and juice

To serve

- Sautéed 150g fresh ceps (mushrooms), sliced.
- Manchego cheese, grated

More Than a Day Centre: Discovering the Romney Marsh Community Hub

Do you know what happens behind Prescott House in Rolfe Lane?

If not, you could be missing one of the Romney Marsh's best-kept community secrets.

Behind the doors of the Romney Marsh Community Hub is a charity dedicated to supporting local residents aged 50 and over. And while it may be easy to think of the Hub as simply a day centre, the reality is very different.

We are so much more than a 'day centre'!

From fitness and creative activities to practical advice, peer support, day services, transport and freshly cooked meals, the Hub is a busy and welcoming place where local people can find friendship, support and plenty to do.

Something for everyone

Keeping active is an important part of staying healthy and independent, and the Hub offers a fantastic range of fitness sessions suitable for different abilities and interests.

Activities include Dance Fit, seated exercise, yoga, Pilates, a walking group, tai chi, Legs, Bums and Tums and line dancing.

But exercise isn't the only way to keep the mind and body active. There are also games, Busy Hands, crafts, creative writing, art, Makaton workshops and a book club.

For those who enjoy meeting others with shared experiences, the Hub hosts a wide range of peer-to-peer support groups, including peer support groups for people



affected by: diabetes, dementia, stroke, arthritis, bereavement or cancer, as well as groups for ex-armed forces and blue-light personnel.

There are also Memory Cafés for people living with a diagnosis of dementia and their families, alongside a dedicated Dementia



Coordinator who provides support to people affected by dementia.

Practical help when you need it

Sometimes a little practical help can make a huge difference.

The Hub's Information and Advice Officers can help local residents with matters such as maximising their income and applying for Blue Badges, while home support is available to assist with shopping and housework.

Day support is available at the Hub four days a week, providing not only practical support but also companionship, activities and opportunities to get out and about.

And there's plenty of adventure involved!

Day support clients have enjoyed trips to all sorts of places – from a shopping trip to B&M followed by KFC, to a memorable day out at Leeds Castle.

The Hub has also facilitated a special trip to the Chelsea Pensioners for members of its ex-armed forces peer support group.

Good food and good company

Every day, the Hub serves hot, freshly cooked two-course meals – another opportunity to enjoy good food in good company.

Because sometimes it's the simple things that matter: sitting down together, having a chat, sharing a meal and knowing that there are people around who care.



Supporting the wider community

The Hub's work extends well beyond its own doors.

A community transport service, the Marsh Bee, helps Romney Marsh residents get to medical appointments, making an important difference for those who may otherwise struggle with transport.

The Hub also provides clinical waste bins for the safe disposal of needles, sponsored by the Marsh Rotary Club.

A range of visiting clinics and outside services use the Hub too, including Lloyds Bank, Hallett and Co Solicitors, Safe Haven, Specsavers hearing services, Hearing Care Partnership earwax removal and other NHS services.

And every Friday, the Hub is home to the Rainbow Centre Mobile Food Pantry, helping to provide another valuable service for local residents.

Keeping the charity going

Like many community charities, providing all these services comes at a cost.



To help fund the work of the Romney Marsh Community Hub, the charity runs the Café in Littlestone, The Hub on the Beach at 103 Coast Drive, and two Sunflower charity shops, one in Rye and one in New Romney.

Every purchase, coffee, meal, donation and visit helps support the charity's work in our community.

Come and discover us

So, what really happens behind Prescott House in Rolfe Lane?

Quite a lot!

It's a place where people can exercise, learn, create, eat, talk, laugh, find advice, meet others who understand what they're going through, get practical support and simply feel part of their community.

It is a place for people living with dementia and their families, for veterans, for people managing long-term conditions, for those who need a helping hand at home, and for anyone looking for friendship, activities and connection.

The Romney Marsh Community Hub is not just a day centre.

It is a place where people come together, where support is available when it's needed, and where being part of the community really matters.

So next time you pass Prescott House in Rolfe Lane, why not take a closer look? You might be surprised by just how much is happening at the end of the drive!

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Lost Girl

By Diane

I crunched across the stones, thinking how stupid I was to miss the last bus. The weekly bingo night was popular, and I'd chatted too long at the end instead of getting to the bus stop.

Apart from the nights drawing in, a sea fret shrouded everything in a damp mist. I knew my way well enough, but wished I'd had sturdy boots on instead of shoes.

I heard footsteps before I actually saw her. She looked so cold.

"Can you tell me how to get to the church, please?"

Her small voice matched her elf-like appearance. I pointed across to the spire, just visible through the gloomy evening. I was going that way myself, so suggested we walk together. It wasn't a long walk, and I welcomed the company.

I asked her if she'd missed the bus too, but she just looked puzzled and a bit tearful. I realised she actually looked quite young. Her dress was thin, almost sack-like.

Kids these days, eh! They never wore the right clothes.

I held my hand out. Her responding touch was freezing cold and light. I asked if she lived near the church.

"My mum's there, waiting for me," she mumbled.

I squeezed her hand and told her we'd be there soon. The track was well worn and easy to follow, and joined the lane up to the village.

She'd been silent, but suddenly said, "I need to go through here. My mum is meeting me at the Angel."

To be quite honest, it was a bit of a relief, really. I was cold now too, and just wanted to get home.

As she let go of my hand, I instantly felt warmer, which surprised me. I gave her a wave, and she hurried through the gate to the church field.

Over the next few days, the encounter played on my mind and, just out of interest, I thought I'd visit the church and look for the Angel.

Well, I searched and searched, but I couldn't find any angel! Lots of crosses, prayer books and cherubs — maybe she'd confused an angel with a cherub?

As I was about to leave, I noticed the vicar looking across at me. He smiled and raised a hand in greeting.

"Can I help you?" he called out.

I explained my quest, and he began to frown.

He told me I wasn't the first person to come searching for an angel. In fact, the former vicar had even told him to expect the occasional visitor looking for the same thing.

He'd done a bit of research and had found a very old news report about a family whose daughter had gone missing on a foggy night, many, many years ago. He'd also found a stonemason's order for a small angel in her memory.

It seemed that, in the end, the family couldn't pay, and the angel had never been carved.

I asked if the girl's body had ever been recovered. He told me that he really didn't know, but there was a small, interesting headstone dedicated to a family on the other side of the churchyard.

I asked him to show me.

The headstone was simple and plain:

"For Mary, John and their beloved angel daughter Lily. Although lost, our souls will be together in Heaven."

I walked home thinking. Was it Lily, still looking?

I felt an overwhelming compulsion to help.

The stone angel I found was small but beautiful. Not carved by a craftsman, but nevertheless, I hoped it might just help. I quietly placed her next to the headstone the vicar had directed me to.

If Lily came looking again, she might just find her Angel.

Sometimes I missed that last bus on purpose, but I never met the girl again.

The Angel is still in the churchyard, a bit obscured by grass and wildflowers, but I like to think Lily found her.



Finding Balance

For more than two decades, Holly Willoughby has been one of Britain's most recognisable television personalities. From children's television to primetime entertainment, she has navigated a rapidly evolving world of broadcasting.

As the year draws to a close, however, it's clear the 45-year-old is embracing a new chapter of her career, craving balance and stability away from the spotlight.



"I think your priorities naturally change as you get older," begins presenter and broadcaster Holly Willoughby. "When you're younger, it's very easy to think every opportunity has to be taken because you're worried another one won't come along. You spend a lot of time proving yourself.

"As I've got older, I've realised it's much more important to choose the things that genuinely excite me and allow space for the rest of life as well."

It's a philosophy that has developed the course of 25 years in the public eye. Beginning her television career as a teenager, Holly grew up in front of the cameras – across *This Morning*, *Dancing on Ice* and *Celebrity Juice* - rapidly building a reputation as one of Britain's most charismatic female presenters. "I've been incredibly lucky to do a job I love for so long, but television can move at an extraordinary pace.

You're always thinking about tomorrow's programme or the next project. Eventually you realise it's okay to pause occasionally. In fact, I'd say it's essential."

That ability to slow down has brought with it a new sense of perspective. "I don't chase perfection anymore because I've realised it doesn't exist. We can be incredibly hard on ourselves, especially as women.

"We think we have to be everything to everyone all the time, and that's exhausting. Sometimes good enough really is good enough, and there's something wonderfully freeing about accepting that."

Home has become an important anchor amid a busy career. Holly has often spoken about her love of interiors, cooking and creating spaces where friends and family naturally gather, believing the simplest moments are often the most memorable.

"I've always loved that feeling when everyone ends up around the kitchen table without really planning to. Someone makes a cup of tea, somebody else starts cooking, conversations drift from one subject to another and before you know it you've spent hours together. Those are the moments you remember years later."

As for the future, those times with husband Dan Baldwin and three children Harry, Chester and Belle are obviously important, albeit there are still plenty of ideas she hopes to pursue in the public eye – indeed, this year she launched new lifestyle project Together.

"Sometimes finding balance is simply giving yourself permission to enjoy where you are. Listen to yourself – consider what you want and what you need, and move forward on that basis only."



Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

New Romney Junior School

The original school in Church Lane was one of the first junior schools in Kent. It was built on land left by Mrs. Sarah Children in 1820 and was funded by public funds. The original building consisted of four classrooms and a two-storey house for the headmaster. Children attended the school from all over the Marsh with some travelling in every day by horse. In the early years, it was commonplace for pupils to be caned for relatively minor things and quite often, they would be made to stand on a chair afterwards with their head covered!

During the latter years of the 19th century, large numbers of children were kept away from school with fever and other diseases. There was no mains water supply, and the children drank out of wells. At the beginning of the 20th century, the school was very crowded, and some children had to stand as there were not enough desks.

The headmaster at this time was Mr. Williamson and he and his wife who was also a teacher, were very strict but they were kind to the poor children who lived at the nearby Union. A lot of work was done with slates and pencils. The sports field was the old churchyard, which is now St. Martin's Field and there was a large pond in the middle. Mr. Fletcher took over in 1922 and around this time, there were 25-30 children in each class. Opposite the school was a farmyard and the highlight of the year was the steam threshing machine that arrived each summer. A favourite lesson with the children was cross-country running and gardening was also very popular. Several sports were played including goal running, cricket, stoolball and netball and amongst those excelling for cricket were Frank Stevens, Jack Souten, Ron Jones and Sid Flisher.

By the start of the 1930s, over 250 pupils were at the school and teachers included Miss Massie, Mrs. Woodward, Mr. Wilcox, Mr. Wood and Mrs. James. The Managers included Rev. A. Macmichael, W. Finn-Kelcey, B. Prior, W. B. Smith and Major Teichman-Derville, OBE. The main room was normally

divided by folding screens to make three classrooms housing the top classes. On certain occasions, the screens were folded back and in the resulting large room the whole school assembled. Every year, the school was visited by Mr. Bailey, the Kent Education Committee Inspector and scholarships to Southlands Grammar School were awarded to Joan Blacklocks, Marguerite Ellis, Alfred Barman, Mollie Ealden and Betty Judge. If a pupil didn't get a scholarship to Southlands Grammar School, they stayed on until they left at the age of 14. In 1936, the school was closed for six weeks because of an outbreak of scarlet fever.

Following the outbreak of war, the children who weren't evacuated did not have to attend school unless their parents thought it was safe. During an air raid, the children would take cover under their desks or in one of the shelters in the playground and school dinners were served in the nearby Scouts Hut. In 1944, Mr. Hitchcock took over as headmaster and after the war, the numbers of pupils started to increase. By the end of the 1950s, the buildings were overcrowded and several huts were erected on a temporary basis to take the extra pupils. Plans were drawn up for a new school, but it wasn't until 1967 that the new building in Fairfield Road was used for the first time when some of the classes were transferred. The number of pupils kept growing and in 1973, Greatstone Primary School was built as was the new infant school in Fairfield Road. The opening of these schools relieved the pressure on the one at Church Lane and it finally closed a year later.

The photograph shows teachers and staff at the school, c.1950. With Mrs. Gillham, Mrs. Gudgeon, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Tuck Jnr, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Mullett, Mrs. Dray, Mr. Murkin, Miss Pankhurst, Mrs. Durban, Mrs. Foreman, Mr. Tuck Snr, Mr. Hitchcock, Mrs. Hitchcock, Mrs. Barnes & Mrs. Wilson.



Vandals wreck youth football pitches at The Rype

Children's football matches have been cancelled after vehicles were driven across pitches at The Rype in Lydd, causing significant damage.

Lydd Town Youth has appealed for witnesses following the vandalism, which left local youngsters unable to play their scheduled games this weekend.

The pitches are used by youth teams every week, with considerable time, effort and money invested in keeping the playing surfaces in good condition.

In a social media appeal, the club described the damage as "completely unnecessary vandalism" and said children were missing out on playing the sport they love.

The disruption affects both the young players and those who work to maintain the pitches and organise their matches. The extent of the repairs needed, their



cost and when games can resume have not been confirmed.

The club is asking anyone who saw vehicles on the pitches, witnessed the damage being caused or has information that could help identify those responsible to come forward.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Lydd Town Youth privately or report what they know to the relevant authorities.

Residents have also been asked to share the appeal to help reach potential witnesses.

The club's message is clear: look after local facilities so children can get back to playing football.



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Postcards From The Past



Above: Brenzett Church and Jubilee Path.
Below: Rose and Crown, Old Romney.



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Looks like our lovely spell of ‘Indian Summer’ is coming to a close, and the weather is cooling down and there is rain in the offing. For us gardeners the rain will be welcome. Despite the rain earlier in September, the ground is still very dry, and needing a good soak. We have bald patches of lawn to reseed, and are hoping for rain to moisten the ground. We could do it, and keep watering the patches, but there is nothing like real rain. Nothing stops the grass growing, so we'll have to organise our helper to do it soon.

We tried to sell our home 2 years ago, but only had a few silly offers, and took it off the market. But the size of the garden was our main problem, so we now have people to help. There comes a time, when good intentions aren't enough and you run out of energy! We also lawned over some of our beds to cut down on the work. But the job list still seems never ending. There is the eternal weeding! Nothing stops them growing! The roses and dahlias are still flowering valiantly, and can be dead headed to keep flowering as long as possible. Cosmos are keeping up their amazing display of flowers. They are genteel thugs though, they seed everywhere! We have them growing by the bins, in the hedge, and in the veg beds!

If you want to collect seeds from annuals, now is the ideal time. Collect dried brown seed heads on a dry day, in the middle of the day, when they aren't damp with dew. Place into a paper bag or envelope, and label straight away, with a year, and store in a dry place. I have several years of seeds saved, and will use them for about 3 years, but they do deteriorate. Some you can only rescue with the stalk, so take that as well, and just put them in a larger bag or envelope. After a month or two, they will have dried out, and fallen to the bottom of your bag, so you can throw away the stalks. Antirrhinums, nicotiana and foxgloves come into this category.

If you want to prepare indoor hyacinths, buy them now, there are lots in the shops. Plant them in small or medium pots of compost, with the neck of the bulb still showing. You can put 2 or 3 close together. The compost can be half peak free compost and half perlite/vermiculite. They don't need the compost for nourishment in the beginning. Most of us can remember growing hyacinths at school in a specially shaped vase, just in water. The bulb contains most of the nourishment it needs.

Water the bulb lightly, then place in a cool, dark dry place, for 10-11 weeks. I use the space under the bench in my potting shed, which, with things stored in front of it, makes it dark. You only need to water them about once a month. In about 10 weeks, there will be a white, chunky shoot, about an inch high. (2.5cms) You can now bring them out into the light, and the shoot will green up rapidly and start growing furiously! They may need some short sticks and string to hold them up. There is nothing like the smell of hyacinths on a bleak winters day to remind us that spring is coming.

AND NOW FOR THE VEG (and Pruning)

It's fairly quiet on the vegetable front as summer gives way to autumn. Less daylight and warmth slows everything down and by the end of the month the soil will be really too cold to sow or plant. What hasn't stopped growing are the weeds! It's amazing how resilient they are. Several weeks

ago we thoroughly weeded the raised beds and now there's a forest of weeds to deal with again. I suppose it's the price to pay for having a break for a couple of weeks.

Our leeks haven't really recovered from the heat and lack of rain during August and September. They are long and thin and don't show much sign of thickening out, but hopefully a good spell of rain will improve them. Leeks are a good crop to have as added to potatoes they make a very tasty soup as well as being good winter vegetables cooked on their own with a sauce.

Parsnips are a good winter vegetable and because they are slow-growing they won't have reached maturity yet. If you haven't thinned them out, carefully remove stems leaving four or five inches between each root. It used to be said that parsnips taste better once they've been frosted, so with milder winters this may not be so true!

Bring in any tomatoes still growing outside as they will no longer ripen in colder conditions.

One ongoing job which can be done now is pruning soft fruits. If you had summer fruiting raspberries the canes should be cut down to stimulate growth next spring. Take off the top third and remove any dead stalks. These will be obvious they will be dark in colour and easily snap away from the base. Autumn fruiting raspberries should be cut down to ground level. This sounds drastic but next spring you will see the beginning of new growth in the form of green coloured shoots which will develop into strong canes during early summer.

Gooseberries produce fruit from spurs on the old branches as well as on the previous year's shoots, particularly on the lower part of these shoots. Pruning bushes therefore consists of thinning out overcrowding laterals, particularly in the centre of the bush. This will allow air and sunlight to get to all parts of the bush. Reduce the branches by about a third to stimulate new growth in the spring.

More pruning in the next edition.

As always, happy gardening!

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Budgeting Tips

By June Gooch

Fuel

We are being clobbered from all sides with the fuel crisis. Both the household fuel we need and the fuel for our vehicles. What can we do about it? The number of people behind with their fuel accounts is at an all-time high. Martin Lewis always says that you should be on a fixed rate deal. So, if you aren't on one, do it straight away. At the moment, experts say, bills are only going up. If you are one of the few people who pay their bill as they come, it is always cheaper to do a direct debit, where the company takes out a calculated amount every month.

First of all, household fuel, whether it is gas, electricity or oil. While it may not take many noughts off our bills, there are small steps we can take.

Lights. Some families leave lights on all the time, everywhere! We tried to train ourselves and our family to put the light off, if you are not in a room. Simples, as Alexander would say! But young people especially, don't seem to bother! I've been in the homes of our grandchildren and there are lights on everywhere, even after going out to school. They couldn't be bothered to draw the curtains in daylight, or put lights out, in the rush to get out! When children are growing up, they are often in their rooms, so the house does look like Blackpool illuminations, as an exasperated dad used to say! Maybe you only save pence, especially with modern bulbs, but not wasting power is a mindset, making you aware of power use. Especially, now we have smart meters and can tell to the minute how much power we are using.

Boiling water/tea. The experts tell us that the greatest waste of electricity is boiling unnecessary water! When the first fuel crisis hit, I boiled exactly a litre of water in the electric kettle and on the gas hob. The gas hob was a bit cheaper. I also marked a plastic water jug with nail polish at 2 and 4 mugs level, and pour into the kettle, so you are never heating more water than you need. Talking of tea, it is much more economical to make it in a pot. The experts tell us it tastes better (we agree) and it uses about half as many tea bags. In a pot one tea bag will make 2 mugs of tea, rather than using one for each mug.

Coffee has become something of a racket! The pretentiousness that used to surround wine, has been transferred to coffee! The options for coffee are increasing every day, and households are expected to have mini versions of the barista machines in coffee shops. Don't feel you have to 'go there' if you are struggling. Just use a traditional coffee percolator machine if you like ground coffee, a good quality instant, and, as an occasional treat, those instant special coffees. Discount versions are just as good as Nescafe. All the posh version of coffee in coffee shops are full of calories, so beware if you are keeping an eye on your health or weight. I read that some have the equivalent of 13 spoons of sugar! The instant special coffee sachets are also very sweet and it is hard work to hunt out the unsweetened/low sugar ones, but worth it.

Standby. Apart from fridges, freezers and your computer, you can turn off all appliances at the wall. Leaving them on standby trickles away electricity.

Tumbler driers are the greatest gobblers of electricity. The weather is lovely at the moment, ideal for drying outside, so take advantage of the weather. The sunshine also has an antiseptic effect, cleansing your clothes, leaving them smelling fresh and wholesome. When the winter closes in, try finding a warm spot in your house for drying on a rack. I often used the landing. The warm air rising from below would dry everything in 24 hours, even towelling nappies. I have a tumbler drier now, and just finish off towels to fluff them up for 5 minutes, and odd items that are still a bit damp! When drying indoors I only did one wash at a time, so you weren't overwhelmed with wet washing! Over radiator racks are good for small things. Don't put clothes directly on radiators.

Washing. Modern people, to my mind do too much washing. There is a great drive to develop powders that wash at lower temperatures for the sake of the environment. I believe it would help the environment more to do far less washing. I also wonder what strong chemicals are in these modern agents to remove stains without heat? Are they doing harm to the environment? We taught our children to change their socks and pants every day, but with everything else, I made a conscious decision about. Is it dirty, grubby or sweaty? If not, it was folded or hung up for another day.

There is absolutely no hygiene or health reason why a garment has to be washed just because it has touched human skin for a few hours! So many people just sling everything in the wash, without thinking about it. It is almost too easy with automatics, seems like it is too much effort to sort washing, so they make a lot more work for themselves! Many of our clothes are manmade fabrics, so every time they are washed, it is adding to the plastic soup in the rivers and oceans.

Using the Oven. If you are using your oven, try and maximise its use. If you are making a dinner, think about cooking a cake or pie at the same time. If baking, do several batches, so you aren't using all that power for a small batch of buns.

Vehicle Fuel. If you need your car for work, may be there isn't much you can change. Could you catch a bus or train? If you are going less than ¾ of a mile, could you take the time to walk? Have you a bike in the garage that hasn't been used for ages? There was a wartime poster, that asked "Is your journey really necessary?" We could ask ourselves that every time we use the car. Perhaps cut down on shopping trips by being more organised. Create meal plans, write down shopping lists, so you only need to go once or twice a week.

There are probably other good ideas for saving on fuel consumption, hope I've offered a few.

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Labour's Conference of Promises
... but Who Picks up the Bill?

As promised, The Looker is covering all the party conferences, examining what our politicians are offering and asking whether their promises stand up outside a hall filled with applauding supporters.

This week, Labour gathered in Liverpool under the banner "Hope Again". Andy Burnham offered an ambitious programme covering housing, energy, water, social care and opportunities for young people.

Our verdict? Plenty to please the people in the room. Rather less to reassure the people who will have to pay for it.

The central problem was the distance between announcing a desirable outcome and explaining how to deliver it. Almost everyone wants affordable homes, reliable transport and decent care. The difficult part is finding the money, staff and infrastructure.

Burnham's speech repeatedly asked the public to believe that spending today would produce savings tomorrow. That can sometimes work. But taxpayers need figures they can examine, rather than confidence they are simply expected to share.

Take his proposed National Care Service. Burnham promised care free at the point of use, introduced in the next Parliament, with changes to the pension triple lock from April 2030 helping to fund it.

That is a significant political choice. Pensioners deserve to understand precisely what they would receive and what they would give up. Families struggling with care charges deserve a realistic timetable. Care workers deserve to know how the workforce will be recruited, trained and properly paid.

A promise of future pension savings does not, by itself, demonstrate that a national service can be financed. Where are the annual costs? What happens if demand exceeds forecasts? Who covers any shortfall?

Then came housing: more council homes, action on empty and poorly maintained properties, and removing Right

to Buy from newly built council housing.

There is nothing wrong with wanting people properly housed. But here in Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh, residents understand the consequences of promising development before delivering infrastructure.

Homes need water, sewage capacity, roads, schools and healthcare. Unused public land does not magically arrive with all those services attached. Councils need the financial capacity to build and maintain properties, not simply another instruction from Westminster.

Burnham also repeated his commitment to ending rough sleeping. Again, the ambition is welcome. The unanswered delivery questions concern accommodation, addiction treatment, mental health services and continuing support. Getting someone indoors is the beginning of the work.

On buses, the headline was a £2 fare cap for participating services in England outside London throughout 2027. The Government has identified £400 million of additional funding, including savings from switching some international climate finance from grants to loans.

That funding must be acknowledged. But so must the practical test: will passengers have a reliable service to catch?

A £2 ticket is little comfort to someone standing beside a bus stop whose evening service has disappeared. Rural and coastal communities need viable routes, suitable timetables and certainty beyond a single year. A headline fare cannot answer every transport problem.

Water and energy brought another round of promises. Burnham proposed stronger public control of water companies and a publicly owned Great British Grid.

People understandably want sewage stopped and bills reduced. But changing ownership or creating a public company does not automatically replace a pipe, strengthen the electricity network or lower a household bill.

The questions remain straightforward: what will it cost, who carries the financial risk, and when will customers notice the difference?

Elsewhere at the conference, Chancellor John Healey announced an extra £100 million for an expanded local apprenticeships service, funded through DWP savings.

Helping young people into skilled work is worthwhile. Our concern is the familiar political habit of presenting a funding announcement as if the result has already been achieved. Employers must offer places, training must meet genuine demand, and programmes must produce lasting employment. Publish the outcomes alongside the announcements.

The Home Secretary's speech supplied another uncomfortable contrast. Shabana Mahmood spoke about restoring border control while announcing new refugee sponsorship routes and reopening a resettlement route. She also acknowledged around 90,000 people in asylum accommodation.

Legal routes and illegal crossings are different issues. But communities deserve clear answers about capacity, costs and consultation before further commitments are made.

In Kent, border policy is a daily reality. Residents want to know how illegal crossings will be prevented, how decisions will be enforced and how local services will cope. They also expect a determined response to Islamist extremism and other security threats. Those concerns deserve practical answers.

Burnham's renewed discussion of Britain's relationship with Europe was another conference lowlight for those who want politicians to concentrate on delivery. After his speech, he said the options could include rejoining the EU, its single market or a customs union.

Whatever people think about Brexit, reopening that argument requires honesty about the terms, costs and democratic consent. It cannot become a convenient explanation for every failure of government.

Then there was electoral reform. Burnham announced a commission and a commitment for Labour's next manifesto. Voters might reasonably ask why changing Westminster's arrangements appears easier to discuss than fixing the services they use every day.

Our opinion is that this conference had the unmistakable feel of an election campaign taking shape.

Burnham has ruled out an early election. Nevertheless, our assessment is that Labour could seek a fresh mandate in spring 2027, or even as early as December 2026. That is our political judgement, not an announced timetable.

And if Labour wants a mandate for this programme, it should put the costs before the electorate and let people decide.

As for the promises stretching a decade into the future, we suspect they would promise everyone a new pet leprechaun in ten years' time if it secured another standing ovation ... knowing full well they might no longer be in power when delivery day arrived.

Perhaps it would come with a little pot of gold.

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Wildlife

By Kerry King

Chicken of the Woods: A Splash of Colour Along the Canal

Sometimes, the most extraordinary wildlife encounters are hiding in plain sight. Along the peaceful banks of the Royal Military Canal, where dog walkers stroll and the seasons quietly unfold, an unexpected splash of colour has been stopping people in their tracks. Clinging to the trunk of a tree is a magnificent Chicken of the Woods, its vivid layers of golden yellow and warm orange glowing against the weathered bark.



broadleaf trees. Its unusual name comes from its firm texture, which is said to resemble chicken when cooked. However, its name should not be taken as an invitation to forage or eat it. Wild fungi can be difficult to identify safely, and some poisonous species can look remarkably similar. Never eat a wild fungus unless it has been positively identified as safe by an expert.

This particular specimen has become something of a talking point along the canal. Local dog walkers and wildlife lovers have paused to photograph it, admire it and wonder how they could have walked past the same tree so many times without noticing this natural treasure. Fungi are often the quiet, unseen workers of the countryside. They help break down wood and return valuable nutrients to the ecosystem, playing an essential role in the endless cycle of life and decay.

For me, encounters like this are what make walking in our countryside so rewarding. You can follow a familiar path a hundred times, yet nature is always capable of revealing something new. And sometimes, tucked away on the trunk of an otherwise unremarkable tree, you find a little piece of woodland magic — a brilliant burst of colour that brings walkers together and reminds us to slow down, look closely and appreciate the extraordinary wildlife growing all around us.

Picture 1: Up close, the intricate layers of Chicken of the Woods reveal a surprising beauty — each delicate, rippling shelf resembling the curves and texture of a sea shell, with nature's artistry on full display. **Credit: Kerry King**

Picture 2: A spectacular burst of golden yellow and orange clings to the trunk of a tree beside the Royal Military Canal, transforming an otherwise ordinary woodland scene into a vivid natural masterpiece. **Credit: Kerry King**

At first glance, it almost looks as though someone has painted the tree. Look closer, however, and the intricate beauty of this remarkable fungus becomes apparent. Tier upon tier curves away from the trunk, creating delicate, overlapping shelves that resemble sea shells or the ripples of an underwater world.

Known scientifically as *Laetiporus sulphureus*, Chicken of the Woods is a spectacular bracket fungus found on

Welcome Lookerites to another batch of reviews. The recent school holidays meant I caught up on the best of streaming and while these reviews have been rattling around in my inbox I thought now was a good time to share them. This batch contains a collection of movies that can be found on streaming platforms. This Issue I've got an alien horror from Netflix, a suspense thriller in a hot-air balloon, a true story about American boxer Christy Moore an action thriller with Tim Roth and a shark movie from Amazon Prime.

Alien invasion films are a regular theme for the big screen and streaming. The standout ones like A Quiet Place, The Thing, Independence Day, Invasion of the Bodysnatchers, Cloverfield and Attack the Block were all good in different ways. The latest addition to the genre is **The Last House - Netflix**



When Jason spots an inbound storm while fishing, he makes for the home he shares with his wife Ann, their two children Graham and Ruth and their dog Cassidy. When they then try to leave the house, they discover that none of the doors or windows will open, Jason tries to smash the windows, but he is unable to break the windows. The family then learn that their neighbours are also trapped and they begin communicating by messaging each other with written signs.

Despite having electricity and water they are soon rationing food and trying to run a schedule to maintain normal life. The family create their own indoor vegetable garden and a water reclamation system and Ruth sees what she thinks is a monster in the garden which the others dismiss as imagination. But when the family later see creatures attack a neighbour, they realise that what Ruth saw was more than imagination. The family learn that the creatures only come out when it rains and they hide from view when it rains.

The family manage to survive for many years until they choose to escape the house meaning they must encounter the creatures.

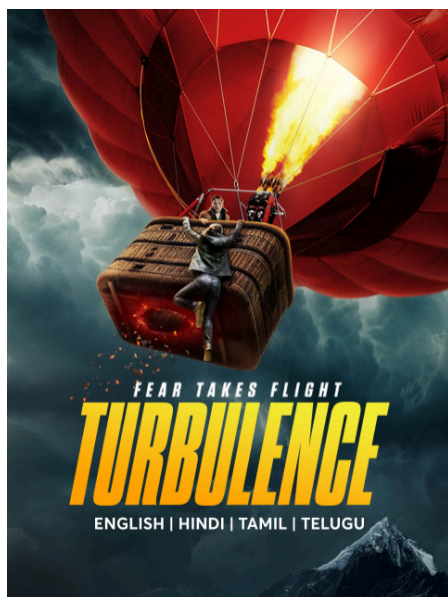
The Last House is a low-budget creature feature that manages to maintain the tension while providing a decent survival plot. While we only see the taking of the street, we assume that the creatures have taken over the world, but the story focuses on Jason and the families' efforts to survive. The family are certainly creative and manage to survive for 5 years within the four walls of their home. The Last House isn't a classic and the creatures look like

something out of Doctor Who and while it isn't A Quiet Place it's not the worst of the genre.

Kelsey Grammer will always be better known as playing Dr Fraser Crane in the self-titled Fraser but he has left the comfort of the couch to play Hot Air Balloon pilot Harry.

Turbulence - Amazon Prime

Zach is a successful business who has laid off a number of employees, when one of the sacked employees holds a gun at Zach during a staff celebration, before turning the gun on himself. Zach leaves the celebration and goes to a bar where he meets Julia. Zach tells Julia that he is married to Emmy and is taking her on a hot air balloon trip to the Dolomites tomorrow.



Once at the Dolomites we learn that Emmy has recently had a miscarriage and while Zach is trying to make reparation with Emmy he is also receiving messages from Julia demanding hush money after their encounter the previous evening. When Zach discovers that Julia is also on their flight he tries to cancel but pilot Harry (Grammar) persuades them to fly and the four take off.

Once at high altitude Julia announces to Emmy that her and Zach had a sexual encounter the previous night and then when Julia pulls a knife on Zach and threatens Harry not to land to the balloon things start to really heat up.

Turbulence is a high-altitude thriller, set mostly in an out-of-control hot air balloon, which adds to the tension and feeling of claustrophobia. The special effects are suspect at times, but the scenery is outstanding. There are some decent twists which aren't obvious and as the femme fatale storyline develops it keeps you gripped.

There's another decent boxing film out on streaming **Christy - Amazon Prime** is the true story of American boxer Christy Martin, who became one of America's most well known boxers.

Sydney Sweeney is superb as Christy Martin. After switching from Basketball to Boxing Christy is spotted by boxing coach James Martin who offers to coach Christy. Christy is reluctant at first but while her secret relationship with Rosie falls apart much to the delight of her homophobic mother Christy decides to pursue a career in boxing. When James and Christy move to Florida to train in

James' new gym their relationship changes and they marry. Once married James begins to display controlling behaviour over Christy.

Christy's career takes an upturn when she meets boxing promoter Don King who offers Christy a place on his upcoming bill. Christy ends up on the bill in Vegas and becomes the first female boxer to feature in a pay-per-view event. When James suggests Christy fight at a higher weight against Laila Ali she is beaten. James and Christy's relationship becomes abusive as the pair become co-dependent on cocaine.



When Christy learns that James is stealing money off her the relationship takes a turn for the worst as James stabs and shoots Christy leaving her for dead.

Christy is a truly amazing story of a fighter who fought many battles in and out the ring. Her incredible story is one that needs to be seen as she struggles in the ring and with her sexuality. The attack on her by husband James left her with multiple stab wounds a flayed calf and single gun wound bore testament to her strength and courage.

Sweeney is superb in the main role and Ben Foster as her husband James is evil personified.

Tim Roth is one of my favourite actors, Reservoir Dogs and Lie to Me were superb but then comes **Seven Snipers - Sky/Now TV**.

Kris Hendricks is a retired elite sniper who lives on a ranch in Australia with her daughter Anja but when she is tracked down by a ruthless warlord known as Dragon (Roth) she calls upon her former elite squad. While Kris and the other members of the squad hole up the ranch The Dragon sets about picking off the squad one by one.



Seven Snipers is a cat and mouse thriller. The storyline appears strong and Roth as always is superb on screen as the warlord with an ulterior motive. The elite squad Kris calls upon, well I use the term elite loosely, appear only too eager to give the dragon an easy target and The Dragon works his way through the team with ease. The plot could be good but it fell flat for me.

There's been a glut of shark movies recently. The latest is **The Devil's Mouth - Amazon Prime**

When Sara's father dies in Thailand Sara and her friends Adrienne, James, Max and Greg travel to Thailand to honour his memory and pay a visit to The Devils Mouth caves one of his favourite places.



While on a boat trip Sara goes swimming and the boat leaves her while in the water, she is stung by several jellyfish but is soon rescued by the returning boat. When back on shore the group discover a half-eaten turtle. The following day they visit the Devils mouth caves with their guide Wat. Sara had planned a safe pathway, but Max insists on taking the red route a more dangerous route. Despite Wat's recommendations Max insists on following the more dangerous route and going deeper into the caves. When Adrianna injures her leg Wat insists they go back but Max insists on carrying on.

The trip changes dramatically when they discover the body of a diver they had encountered earlier. The body displays a shark bite and with Adrianna's wound leaving a blood trail the group face a race to get back.

The Devil's Mouth is a run of the mill shark thriller with the customary stupid participants making stupid decisions. This isn't Jaws.

That's your lot for now Lookerites next issue I've got Brad Pitt and Saoirse Ronan's next movies and a couple of big-hitting dramas from Sky and Paramount but until then happy viewing.



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Bobby on the beat

Unknown Callers

Hello all

This isn't new news but I just wanted to keep the 'vigilance' momentum up with regards to a particular fraud/scam quite often executed over the phone.

Bank staff and Police Officers (regardless of their rank) will NOT ring you up and ask you to withdraw cash from your account and request that you send it to an 'address' via the postal system in order to keep it safe, this would be a MASSIVE RED FLAG that you are speaking with a fraudster and you should end the call immediately.

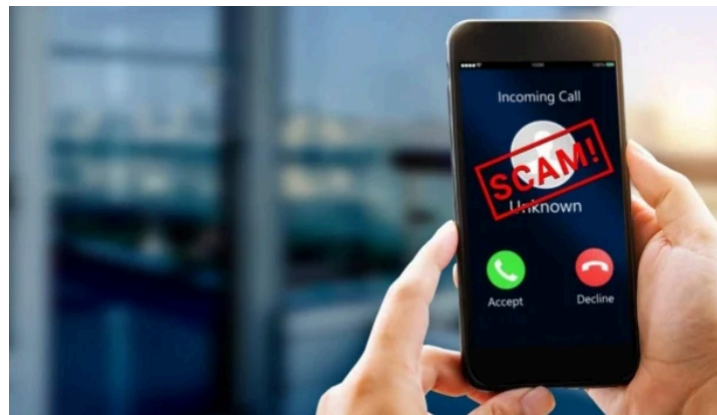
They will try to make you believe that there has been some sort of incident with regards to fraudulent activity on your account or that there's a dodgy member of staff at the branch you bank with and the only way to make safe your money is to withdraw it and send it to an address with the promise that you will get it back once the investigation is over or a police officer will ring you and say that they're DC Joe Bloggs from a particular police force and something has happened whereby the money in your bank account is compromised and you will need to withdraw it or transfer funds and send it to an address.

They will also NOT attend your home in person to collect any money.

The above examples are just a few that these fraudsters use to bamboozle their next victim into sending their money to criminals.

Even if there has been a genuine issue with your bank account, bank staff will NEVER ring you to withdraw or transfer any funds and the police will also absolutely NOT request this either.

There are not only victims of this type of scam/fraud nationally but also here on the Romney Marsh and it could potentially happen to anyone of us although many of the victims targeted are elderly ladies and gentlemen so please share this information amongst your elderly relatives and any local groups where the elderly attend.



Also, please don't judge those victims because they're already feeling silly for falling for the scam and it can be very upsetting for them when they realise what's happened but in reality they've felt pressured or have been 'caught on the hop' and one of the most common reactions to this type of crime from someone who hasn't been targeted is 'how stupid can someone be to send their money in the post to somebody they don't know!' This isn't helpful as the victims know this after it's too late.

So please look out for elderly relatives/friends especially those who live alone, there are 'call barring' services that you can speak to phone providers about so that calls are intercepted before you answer them and then it's up to you whether or not you want to speak to the caller.

If you or you know anyone who has been the victim of a scam or fraud please report it via the following website

www.reportfraud.police.uk

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Free singing sessions welcome over-50s in Greatstone

Singers aged over 50 are invited to join a free weekly group in Greatstone, led by former BBC Singer Rebecca Lodge Birkebaek.

The Sunflower Singers meet every Friday from 1.30pm to 2.30pm at Hub on the Beach. All abilities are welcome, with no booking required.

Participants have the opportunity to learn, sing and perform a varied repertoire, ranging from jazz and songs from the musicals to choral music. Anyone interested can come along and try a session.

A concert is also planned for later in the year, giving the public an opportunity to hear the group

perform. The date will be announced in due course.

The singing sessions and quarterly art projects form part of an ongoing collaboration between JAM on the Marsh and the Romney Marsh Community Hub. Together, they offer inclusive, free workshops and events encouraging creativity, enjoyment and social contact.

For information about the singing and art projects, visit www.jamconcert.org. To sign up for the Sunflower Singers, visit rmch.org.uk/whats-on, or simply attend a Friday session.



Martello Manor Awarded 5-Star Food Hygiene Rating



Martello Manor by Boutique Care Homes, situated in Hythe, Kent, has been awarded a 5-star Food Hygiene Rating, the highest score available, following its first inspection since opening its doors in June 2026.

The inspection took place on 24th September 2026, just three months after founding residents Margaret and Joan moved into the home on 22nd June. For a kitchen team that has spent its opening months building routines from scratch, the result carries particular weight: this was Martello Manor's first-ever food hygiene assessment, and it came back with a perfect score.

When the result came through, there was no mistaking how much it meant to the team. Home Manager Marlene Abreu said it capped off everything they had built together since June. *"From day one, we set out to make mealtimes something residents genuinely look forward to, not just something that happens."* She added that the achievement means something specific for families weighing up their choice of home. *"When someone is trusting us with a parent or grandparent, food hygiene isn't a detail. It's part of how we show we take that trust seriously."*

For Head Chef Bobby Pereira, the rating is proof of standards he has held from the first day the kitchen opened. *"Every dish that leaves this kitchen goes through the same checks, whether it's a resident's first meal here or their three hundredth."* Outside the home's entrance, Bobby and Marlene stopped to point out the certificate now displayed in the window, sharing a thumbs-up for the camera. *"Mealtimes are one of the best parts of the day for our residents,"* Bobby said. *"Knowing the standards behind them are the best they can be makes that mean even more."*

A 5-star Food Hygiene Rating is the top score awarded under the Food Standards Agency's national scheme, reserved for premises that meet the highest standards across hygienic food handling, cleanliness and management of food safety. Achieving it at the first attempt, within months of opening, reflects a kitchen team that got the fundamentals right from the outset rather than growing into them over time.

At Martello Manor, that's the standard residents and families can expect every day, not just on inspection day. It's part of a wider promise at Boutique Care Homes: not just care, but life, thriving, built on the kind of everyday standards that residents and families notice long before any certificate confirms them. Care so good, it's unexpected, until you've experienced it for yourself.

MARTELLO MANOR

BY BOUTIQUE CARE HOMES



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General Knowledge Crossword

#070

Across Clues:

- Almost, or in a sensible manner (11)
- Feathered symbols of happiness (9)
- Intense suffering or distress (5)
- Prefix meaning environmentally friendly (3)
- Put money on an outcome (5)
- Joints that bend when you bow (5)
- Mourn a loss deeply (6)
- Pass over or beyond (6)
- Archaic term for harm or damage (5)
- Large river-dwelling African mammal, briefly (5)
- Received or obtained (3)
- Figures and numbers, informally (5)
- Laughter and cheerful fun (9)
- What a thermometer measures (11)

Down Clues:

- Kitchen device for deep cooking (5)
- Sets in motion or switches on (9)
- 24-hour period (3)
- Graceful refinement and poise (8)
- Independent labels or filmmakers, informally (6)
- Power that lights your home (11)
- London's tube network, for example (11)
- Relating to big business culture (9)
- Gives the right or permission to (8)
- Arranged in a straight line (6)
- Self-satisfied little grin (5)
- Smartphone download (3)

Answers: Across: 5: Practically, 9: Bluebirds, 10: Agony, 11: Eco, 12: Waves, 13: Knees, 15: Grieve, 17: Overgo, 19: Scath, 20: Hippo, 21: Got, 23: Stats, 24: Meritment, 26: Temperature
Down: 1: Fryer, 2: Activates, 3: Day, 4: Elegance, 6: Indies, 7: Electricity, 8: Underground, 14: Corporate, 16: Entities, 18: Linear, 22: Smirk, 25: App

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

Sudoku Challenge

Hidden Message Wordsearch

Mythical Creatures

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

Banshee	Griffin	Pixie
Basilisk	Harpy	Roc
Centaur	Hydra	Sphinx
Chimera	Kelpie	Sprite
Cyclops	Kraken	Troll
Dragon	Mermaid	Unicorn
Elf	Minotaur	Vampire
Fairy	Ogre	Werewolf
Giant	Pegasus	Zombie
Goblin	Phoenix	

Write the hidden message here:

T H E M O N N S O G R E K S S

P T E R S O R F P T H R E R U

M H E I B M O Z I O A N U D S

X A O R E F C N N K L A A C A

R N W E O R I T E O T C H S G

K E I E N F N N R O G I Y T E

S W T H F I U A N O M A H C P

I A E I P N X I T E L H R O F

L S R R R S M G R E T L H D A

I G A C E P V A M P I R E T I

S A C O T W S C E N T A U R R

A Y P R A H O E L F U A L L Y

B G O B L I N L Y P I X I E E

D I A M R E M X F E I P L E K

I S T A R D Y H E E H S N A B

Spot the Difference!

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

THE RANT!!!

The Ministry of Mirth Has Decided You're Not Laughing Correctly

I have a question for the BBC: when exactly did “inform, educate and entertain” become “lecture, patronise and confiscate”?

Those famous words came from Lord Reith, the BBC’s first director-general. He believed broadcasting should enrich the nation. I doubt he imagined that, one day, an unofficial Ministry of Mirth would sit inside Broadcasting House deciding which jokes grown adults could safely watch without suffering an emotional emergency.

Lord Reith would not merely be turning in his grave. He would be spinning so quickly that, if somebody connected him to the National Grid, he could probably power Salford.

The BBC is funded by us—the licence-fee payers. We pay the wages, finance the programmes and fund the enormous archive. Yet a mysterious collection of executives, compliance officers and guardians of approved laughter increasingly decides what we may watch.

Apparently, we cannot be trusted. We might hear an outdated joke and spontaneously combust. We might encounter a character expressing views that are clearly ridiculous and fail to understand that the programme is mocking them. Worst of all, we might laugh at something without completing a BBC-approved risk assessment first.

Take Fawlty Towers and the famous episode “The Germans”. It was temporarily removed from the BBC-owned UKTV streaming service in 2020 before being reinstated with a warning. The episode is built around Basil Fawlty—an ignorant, pompous, concussed hotelier—making a complete fool of himself.

The joke is not that Germans are stupid. The joke is that Basil is stupid.

Most people understand this because they possess something broadcasters now appear to regard as a dangerous and outdated faculty: common sense.

Of course, we must be protected from the emotional trauma of hearing “Don’t mention the war”. Never mind that the Second World War generation endured bombs, rationing, evacuation and bereavement. They also used humour to survive the darkest days imaginable. British people laughed in air-raid shelters while the Luftwaffe was overhead, but decades later the BBC seems nervous that we

might need counselling after 30 minutes of Basil Fawlty waving a finger under his nose.

That same British sense of humour helped us through wars, economic crises, strikes, political chaos and Eurovision. If we can survive Britain receiving nil points, we can survive an old sitcom.

Little Britain disappeared from iPlayer in 2020 before returning in edited form with certain characters removed. Come Fly With Me was also withdrawn. Other programmes, including The Mighty Boosh and The League of Gentlemen, have faced removals or restrictions on various streaming services. Older comedies such as Till Death Us Do Part and It Ain’t Half Hot Mum are now treated less like television programmes and more like unexploded wartime bombs.

Approach carefully. Do not touch. Call the compliance department.

Let me be clear: some old programmes contain language and portrayals that would not be acceptable in a newly commissioned programme today. Society changes. Standards change. That does not mean history should be quietly edited until everyone in the past behaves like a diversity seminar held last Tuesday.

Context matters. Intent matters. Satire matters. Alf Garnett was not created as a role model. He was a warning. The audience was supposed to recognise his ignorance, prejudice and pomposity. But modern commissioners sometimes seem unable to distinguish between depicting a bigot and endorsing bigotry.

By that logic, the BBC should remove every murder mystery because it might encourage viewers to kill someone in a picturesque village. EastEnders should be banned for promoting shouting in pubs. The Apprentice



should carry a warning that prolonged exposure may cause an uncontrollable desire to describe yourself as a “disruptive business visionary”.

Nobody is demanding that these programmes be shown at four o’clock in the afternoon between Blue Peter and the weather. Put them in the archive. Add a short notice explaining that they reflect attitudes and language of their time. Then allow adults to make their own decisions.

That is what the television remote control was invented for. If something offends you, press a button. Change the channel. Turn it off. Write a furious letter in green ink. But why should your dislike of a programme prevent everybody else from seeing it?

The deeper problem is the breathtaking arrogance of a relatively small broadcasting class deciding what millions of people may watch. One imagines a committee of extremely young executives sitting around a table covered in oat-milk lattes, assessing comedy made before many of them were born.

“Does this joke align with our current values?”
“Could somebody misunderstand it?”
“Has the character completed unconscious-bias training?”
“No? Delete the episode.”

Some of these decision-makers probably think VHS is a sexually transmitted infection. They were not alive when these programmes were broadcast, have no understanding of the social atmosphere in which they were written, yet feel qualified to stand in judgement over the millions who watched and loved them.

It is cultural vandalism carried out with a concerned expression and a reusable water bottle.

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Comedy is not supposed to be safe. It pokes, prods and exaggerates. It exposes stupidity by making stupidity ridiculous. Sometimes it goes too far. Sometimes it falls flat. Occasionally it is in dreadful taste. That is the nature of comedy.

A joke that has been approved by every committee, checked by six lawyers and polished until nobody could possibly object to it is no longer a joke. It is a council press release.

The BBC should preserve our broadcasting history, not rewrite it. Its archive is a record of who we were: the good, the bad, the brilliant and the occasionally embarrassing. We cannot understand how society changed if every uncomfortable reminder of the past is placed behind a curtain.

And please spare us the claim that programmes are being removed “for our protection”. I am a grown adult. I can watch Basil Fawlty goose-stepping across a dining room without requiring a support worker.

We pay the licence fee. We funded these programmes. We funded the archive. We even fund the executives deciding that we are insufficiently sophisticated to understand them.

So, BBC, by all means inform us. Educate us. Entertain us. Add context and warnings where genuinely necessary.

But stop treating viewers like toddlers who have discovered the remote control.

We are perfectly capable of deciding what is funny for ourselves—and we do not need permission from the Ministry of Mirth to laugh.

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Church Update

By June Gooch

Food Bank. The main food bank for the area, continues in Romney Marsh Community Church in North Street, New Romney 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. Many of the local churches are using their harvest festivities, to collect for the foodbank.

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 con’s ditions 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.

A friend asked me why I don’t put down the times of all services. With 14 different churches in the benefice, and 14 different regimes of worships, I’d have to monopolise the Looker more than I do now!! If you would like to know the times of all services, there are always spare copies of the Marsh Message in St Nick’s church, and it is usually open during the day. The schedule of services is on the 1st 3 pages.

The harvest suppers will all have taken place by now, and we trust they were all successful both in terms of happy fellowship and fund raising. For those who relied on volunteer effort, thanks to all the cooks and organisers.

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 November 14th 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.

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. Please do consider the reading rota, the church is really short of volunteers. It isn’t onerous at all, and you have the reading beforehand, so you can practice. Don’t worry about strange names. Your version is as good as anyone else’s!

There will be an early Christmas coffee morning on November 7th, from 10am to 1pm. The Seaside Singers will be taking part.

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, October 17th, 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. With Christmas creeping up on us, an opportunity to buy some unique gifts.

The next fundraiser is a Christmas themed breakfast on Saturday 14th November, from 9am-11.30am. All very warmly welcomed, both old and new customers, if you can resist the smell of bacon! The October afternoon with the seaside singers had to be cancelled, unfortunately.

Ivychurch, St George.The recent production of The Great Gatsby was a well- received success to a packed church. The 4 actors dad 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 date to put it your diary is December 10th. Tickets are now available for this on the website, this is my theatre.

Quiz on Friday, November 6th in the village hall, raising money for the children’s Christmas party organised by the Ivychurch Amenity Society. For tickets at £5 per person ring Jools on 01797 344144 or email milwaite@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, will be collecting soon. Pick up a leaflet in church, and you can pack a shoebox for either a boy or girl, in 3 age categories. It is important to pick up a leaflet, because for various cultural, political and practical reasons there are a number of things that cannot be packed. Some of which have only be specified in recent years. If you cannot do a whole box, any contribution will be welcome, and the organisers can put them together.

When full, cover your box with Christmas paper, with the lid separate, so that the contents can be checked. We are all a bit disgusted at how early all the Christmas tosh is arriving in the shops, but the boxes have to be packed and collected before the 2nd week of November, so worth thinking about what you can do now!

The next coffee morning is on Saturday, October 17th from 10am to noon. All welcome, cakes for sale. Books, CDs and DVDs available at knock down prices.

On Friday, November 6th, there will be a concert by the Shepway U3A Swing Band at 11am and the proceeds will go to the Alzheimer’s Society and the church funds. No tickets but a retiring offering. Please give generously. Refreshments will be served.

Newchurch. St Peter and Paul The recent events, Harvest service, coffee morning and harvest supper, were all successful. The next fund raiser will be the Coffee morning and Christmas Fair on December 5th from 10.30am-12.30pm. The Christmas tree festival is being revived this year, and will be decorating the church until the New Year.

Several members of the church have been investigating local families, and there are posters and information around the church, if anyone would like to see the results.

Snargate, St Dunstans.The Holy Communion services on the 2nd and 4th Sundays continue, so the next one will be on Sunday, October 11th 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.

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 717408.7pm.

Autumn Fair will be taking place on Saturday, October 17th from 10am. Lots of interesting stall and delicious refreshments.

On Saturday, October 24th there will be an evening with the Doffin Codgers from 7pm, and a fish and chip supper. Tickets are £12.50 and can be obtained from Len Dignan on 01303 873451. Lots of singing and dancing at this jolly evening.

St Mary in theMarshThe 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 chatting to a group of children he had called to the front at harvest festival. He asked them to identify a big arrangement of vegetables. “Carrots, parsnips, onions, potatoes” chirped the children. “Can you think of a word that covers them all?” he asked. “Gravy, sir” replied a bright little spark at the front.

Wit and Wisdom.From a country song by Jackson R. “The people you love are the best things you have. Tell them you love them while they are still here.”

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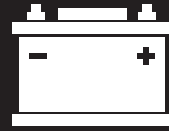
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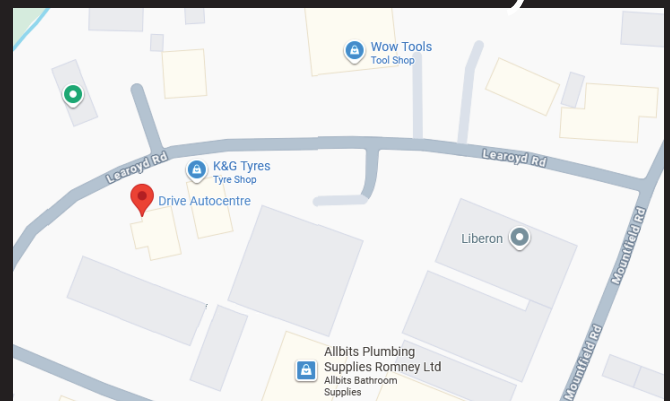
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