

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RESIDENTS OF RAINHAM AND WIGMORE ■

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1975
NUMBER 66

Charles Dickens

continued

It was not until 1855 that Dickens acquired **Gads Hill** which still stands near Higham between Rochester and Gravesend. "This is Falstaff's own Gads Hill, and I live on the top of it...my house...is one I was extraordinarily fond of when a child," he wrote in 1860. Charles had always admired this house which he would pass on walks with his father who told him that "if you were to be very persevering and were to work hard you might someday come to live in it."

Eventually he sold his house in Tavistock Square and lived mainly at Gads Hill. These later years were clouded by domestic unhappiness resulting in the separation from his wife in 1858.

John Forster refers to Dickens's resumed walks in the countryside of his childhood "I have discovered that the seven miles between Maidstone and Rochester is one of the most beautiful walks in England."

Round Cobham, skirting the park and village, and passing the **Leather Bottle** famous in the pages of *Pickwick* was a favourite walk. By Rochester and the Medway to **Chatham Lines**, was another. He would turn out of Rochester **High Street** through the **Vines**...would pass round by **Fort Pitt**, and coming back by Frindsbury would bring himself by some crossfields again into the high road.

Great Expectations was written in 1860-61 and revealed more directly to Rochester than any novel since *Pickwick Papers* published in 1836.

On 9th June 1865, exactly five years before his death, while he was writing *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens was involved in a railway accident between Headcorn and Staplehurst. Although he escaped injury he was "shaken..by the work afterwards of getting out the dying and dead" and three years later mentioned "sudden vague rushes of terror, even when riding in a hansom cab".

In 1865 a miniature Swiss Chalet presented to Dickens arrived at Higham Station in 58 boxes and was



erected in the garden at Gads Hill: later it was removed to Cobham Park and can now be seen at **Eastgate Museum, Rochester**. In the upper storey of this building the last pages of *Edwin Drood* were written.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood is the novel in which **Rochester**, so beloved by Dickens, is depicted as "Cloisterham". During the writing of the chapters he completed, Dickens was often seen in Rochester and his last visit was on Monday 6th June, 1870 when he walked over from Gads Hill accompanied by his dogs. On this occasion he was seen leaning on the fence in front of **Restoration House** and apparently examining the old mansion with great care.

Continued on Page 2.

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Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens died on 9th June, 1870 following a stroke the previous evening, after he had spent the morning and afternoon working on *Edwin Drood*. He had always hoped to be buried in the graveyard in Rochester Castle Moat but it was found that it was closed to further burials as were the churchyards of Cobham and Shorne and although a grave had been prepared in St. Mary's Chapel at Rochester Cathedral the family agreed to his burial in Westminster Abbey.

WORKS MENTIONED IN TEXT

Sketches by Boz, 1835-36, Pickwick Papers, 1836-37, Nicholas Nickleby 1838-39, Old Curiosity Shop, 1841, Dombey & Son, 1846-48, David Copperfield, 1849-50, Holly Tree, 1858, Uncommercial Traveller, 1861, Great Expectations 1861, Mystery of Edwin Drood, 1870.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens, 1872.
 Robert Langton, Charles Dickens and Rochester, 1889.
 The Childhood and Youth of Charles Dickens, 1891.
 Edwin Pugh, The Dickens Originals, 1912.
 James Presnail, Chatham, 1952.
 Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens—His Tragedy and Triumph, 1953.
 Christopher Hibbert, The Making of Charles Dickens, 1967.

Action Forum wish to thank the City of Rochester Society for allowing us to reproduce these articles on Charles Dickens and Rochester.

Correspondence

HISTORY OF RAINHAM

Dear Editor,

As I am interested in the history of Rainham, I am in the process of compiling a little book and would be grateful to your readers if they would be so kind as to give or loan me newspapers, press-cuttings, pamphlets, prints, photographs, anecdotes and any other material which record the history of this area, with particular reference to life in Rainham in the last century.

I do appreciate your picture of the Rainham church and lock-up, 1834 in the December issue, and wish AF every success in the New Year.

Yours sincerely,
 C. Castellino,
 4 Craddock Way,
 Parkwood, Rainham, Kent.

COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

Dear Editor,

Could I be permitted the privilege of space in Action Forum to tell your readers about the Community Health Councils.

These Councils are independent organisations, officially constituted, charged with representing the health service consumer and seeing that the best standards of health care services are provided.

Whilst representing the consumer the councils also have a duty to assist the Area Health Authorities in obtaining the resources with which to achieve the standards demanded of them.

Kent has six District Health Authorities and our particular one is the Medway District Health Authority. This covers an area which includes the Medway Towns, Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey. The Community Health Council for this area is the Medway District Community Health Council.

This is your Council; it is there to see that the standards of health service available to you are the best possible to meet your needs. It is yours to use whenever you have a problem concerning the provision of health service afforded to you.

If you have any worries or anxieties arising from the health services provided, either through the family practitioner, the hospital or the community health service, the C.H.C. will be glad to hear about them. Additionally, should you have any ideas or suggestions for improving the health service in this area then your C.H.C. will be glad to hear about that too.

Do not let your anxieties become great burdens nor your constructive ideas be still-born, write to:-

The Secretary,
 Medway Community Health Council,
 c/o Preston Hall Hospital, Maidstone,
 Kent ME20 7NR

Or perhaps you might prefer to avail yourself of the services of the writer who is a member of your Community Health Council with special responsibility for Rainham and Gillingham.

Yours sincerely,
 Cllr. Arthur T. Jarrett,
 107 Castlemaine Avenue,
 Gillingham, Kent.

Editor

Many of our readers will remember the country walks regularly supplied to Action Forum by Mr. Howard. Unfortunately for Action Forum, as Mr. Howard was also one of our Main Distributors, he moved a few months ago to Lancashire. Alan Parmenter has recently received this letter from Mr. Howard and we felt that it would be of interest to many people.

Dear Mr. Parmenter,

A short note to thank you for sending me 'Action Forum' since I removed to the North. News from the district in which we spent many happy years has been very welcome.

Our new abode is in a Pennine valley on the Yorks - Lancs border, with rain, rolling moors, sparse population and an occasional mill discharging in a direct line from the horrors of the Industrial Revolution, and still playing its part manfully in polluting air and water alike.

Life is a little more leisurely in these regions than in the crowded and bustling South-East. People are friendly and helpful, shops are a pleasure to visit, and there is milk, bread and meat of quality almost unknown in Medway. The quality and variety of the food available has indeed, struck us more forcibly than any other aspect of this pleasant area.

Many Rainham residents of mature years will doubtless remember similar conditions in former years, but our valley still retains many of the graces which were probably once universal.

Wind and rain are frequent visitors, but we are already becoming accustomed to wet raincoats and have rapidly acquired the habit of leaving slippers just inside the door and doffing our wet footwear as we enter. The sun is doubly welcome if only for its rarity value.

There is of course no local community magazine like Action Forum, and this we miss. We would like to take this opportunity of wishing Editors, distributors, and helpers of Action Forum health and contentment in 1975.

Yours sincerely,
 Geoff & Elsie Howard,
 18 Strines Street,
 Walsden, Todmorden, Lancs.

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Diary '75

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No charge is made for Diary entries.

MEDWAY LITTLE THEATRE
Present

THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP
by

Terence Frisby
Produced by Tony Martin
January 24th - February 1st

Curtain up: 7.30 p.m. Tickets from
Mrs. Paul Med: 41559

January 15th - Wigmore Evening Townswomens
Guild. Pantomime 'Jack & the Beanstalk'.

January 27th - Young Wives Group. Film even-
ing, Station Rd., Methodist Church 8.00 p.m.

January 29th - Berengrave Ladies Social Club,
visit to Medway Little Theatre 'There's a girl
in my Soup'

February 1st - Concert Season Central Hall
Chatham 'New Philharmonia Orchestra' Box
Office 43930

February 3rd - Young Wives Group. Games even-
ing, Station Rd., Methodist Church 8.00 p.m.

February 5th - Berengrave Ladies Club - Country
Dancing.

February 7th - Wigmore Evening Townswomens
Guild. Social Studies. Howards Hall 8.00 p.m.
A talk on South East Asia by Mrs. Attwood.

February 8th - St. Margaret's Social Committee
are holding a BARN DANCE with hot supper
8.00p.m. St. Margaret's Hall, Orchard St.,
Mer Mr. Ernie Jessup. Admission 50p.

Tickets at the door.
February 10th - Young Wives Group. Bob Bean -
A talk on Marriage Guidance. Station Rd.,
Methodist Church 8.00 p.m.

February 11th - Medway Winemakers Circle.
Ladies v Gents competitions. Monthly meeting
held at St. George Hotel. 7-8 New Rd. Ave,
Chatham at 8.00 p.m.

February 12th - Berengrave Ladies Club Film
Show.

February 13th - Rainham Evening Townswomens
Guild. British Bacon Curer Federation. Mrs.
Sinclair 7.15.p.m. at Station Rd., Methodist
Church.

February 15th - St. Matthew's Mothers Union,
'JUMBLE SALE' 10.30 a.m. at the St. Mar-
garet's Hall, Orchard St. Rainham.

February 17th - Young Wives Group. Discussion
Evening. Station Rd., Methodist Church 8.00p.m.

February 19th - Wigmore Evening Townswomens
Guild. Meeting 8.00p.m. Smallholders Hall.
Mrs. Gross - Soroptomist.

February 19th - Berengrave Ladies Club - Tumble
Craft Jewellery and Stone Polishing.

February 19th,20th,21st,22nd.
The MADS present:
ITS A MADS MAD WORLD
Variety Show 8.00p.m.
Community Centre, Drewery Drive,
Wigmore. Tickets from Mrs. McNay
Tel: 32231

February 24th - Young Wives Group. Ruth
Banham - R.A.T.S. Station Road,
Methodist Church. 8.00pm.

February 26th - Berengrave Ladies Club Annual
Dinner 'The Old House' Restaurant.

March 1st - Central Hall, Chatham 'London
Mozart Players' Box Office 43930

March 4th - Wigmore Evening Townswomens's
Guild Social Studies 8.00p.m. Howards Hall
Mr. C. Evernden will give a talk illustrated
with slides on a Rhine Cruise.

March 5th - Berengrave Ladies Club Country
Dancing.

March 11th - Medway Winemakers Circle. Cooking
with Wine Demonstration. Monthly meeting
held at St. George Hotel, 7-8 New Rd. Ave,
Chatham. 8.00 p.m.

March 12th - Berengrave Ladies Club - Suki Ware
Kitchen gadgets etc.

March 13th - Rainham Evening Townswomens's
Guild. Miss Grey, Radio Personality, Talk
on Corsica in Spring. 7.15p.m. Station Rd.,
Methodist Church.

March 15th - 7.30 - 11.00 p.m. Dance and
Tramps Supper. St. Margaret's Hall in aid
of Liberal Association Funds. Tickets from
10 Farnham Close Rainham. Tel: 35391.

March 19th - Wigmore Evening Townswomens's
Guild Meeting 8.00p.m. Smallholders Hall.
Mr. Harpham - Diamonds are a Girl's Best
friend.

March 19th - Berengrave Ladies Club An even-
ing with Mrs. Heywood.

March 26th - Berengrave Ladies Club Film Show.

March 29th - Central Hall, Chatham 'Royal
Philharmonic Orchestra' Box Office:43930

Berengrave Ladies Social Club. Meetings every
Wednesday 8.00p.m. at the Methodist Church
Hall, Rainham. Admission 15p including
refreshments.

Medway Towns 18 Plus Group meet every Tuesday
evening 8.15 pm at the Arora Hotel, Brompton,
Gillingham.

Day Centre

As you are all aware with inflation affecting our lives in every way – fund raising to keep our Day Centre going is even more necessary in our struggle to keep up with rising prices. On February 14th 1975 we are holding a social evening at the Day Centre, Woodlands Road, Gillingham 8–10 pm. During the evening we will be holding the final draw for the £500 prize in Age Concern's 200 Club. Our young local celebrity Helen Foster, (discovered on Opportunity Knocks), has generously agreed to come along on this occasion. Admission, by ticket only, is 50p which includes light refreshments, but members of the 200 Club will have free admission. If you would like to join the 200 Club for a monthly flutter, which also provides a steady income for the Day Centre, I will be pleased to provide further details.

Another interesting date worth mentioning is Friday, February 28th 1975 when we present 'Going for a Song' at the Day Centre. We have a panel of experts and a panel of enthusiastic amateurs, so if you have an item of interest, why not come along? 7.30 for 8 pm. Tickets at 75p available from:— 1. Day Centre, 2. Mr. Robin McComb, Medway 50114 (daytime) or 94, 23909 (evenings), 3. Mrs. M. Williams, 12 Kingsway Chatham S2065.

Registration of antiques *before* the 28th Feb. with Mr. McComb, at the telephone numbers mentioned above. Registration of Antiques *on* the 28th Feb, at the Day Centre 6.45–7.15 pm. Tickets for this evening are limited and we would like definite numbers by Feb. 24th. An advance notice for your diary is June 20th 1975 when we will be holding our Annual Ball. Further details later.

Please support your Day Centre and enjoy yourself at the same time.

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This Month in the Garden

FLOWER GARDEN

1. Prune flowering shrubs which flower on new wood.
2. The planting of Roses and other flower shrubs should be completed this month,
3. If you have moss problems with your lawn now is the time to apply a moss killer.

VEGETABLE PLOT

1. Lime one-third of the Vegetable plot every year at the rate of 4 ozs per square yard. However, do not plant potatoes in freshly limed soil.
2. It is worthwhile growing a few rows of early potatoes, and the seed potatoes should now be stood in shallow boxes, rose end uppermost, to sprout in a light, frostproof temperature. Varieties I would suggest are Home Guard and Arran Pilot.
3. As soon as weather and ground conditions permit – shallots should be planted out.
4. A further sowing of early peas protected by cloches is advisable. Suggested varieties are Feltham First and Meteor.
5. A couple of rows of parsnips may now be sown. The variety I suggest here is Tender and True.

ADAM.

New Police Station

Well – it looks as though from Monday 20th January we will all have to be on our best behaviour, as the Police join us once again! Yes, Rainham Police Station will be re-opened on the 20th. We look forward to seeing the building alive and full of the Force again. Welcome back.

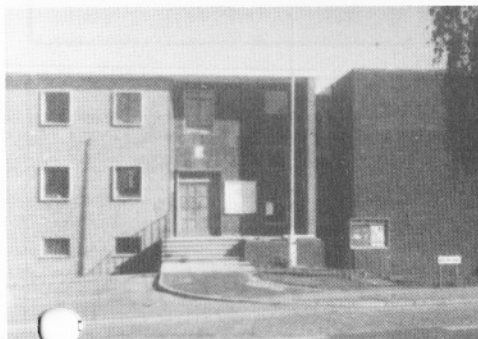
The official opening of the New Police Station will not be until early March and consequently the Public Open Day will be delayed until after this date. More details later.

Scouts!

17th Gillingham (St. Margaret's Rainham) Scout Group.

The above Scout Group was formed two years ago to meet the needs of boys in Rainham who wished to join Cubs or Scouts but could not get in the existing Groups, which were bursting at the seams. Since the Group was started both the Cub Pack and Scout Troop have had waiting lists. However, we are now facing a shortage of Leaders and Instructors. Our aim is obviously to expand the Group to try and meet the demand, but to do this we must get some more volunteers to assist as Leaders or Instructors.

It is not necessary to have had any previous Scouting experience as full training is available. So whether you be male or female, and would like more details, please contact Peter Hagger, 6 Twyford Close, Rainham – Medway 35056.



RAINHAM POLICE STATION

RSPCA Goldfish

Questions

1. Are Goldfish gregarious by nature?
2. Why is it cruel to keep Goldfish in a bowl?
3. What is the rule for ascertaining the number of fish that can be kept in an aquarium?
4. When you have bought an aquarium, put in the water weeds and filled with water, what is the next thing to do?
5. If the balance is correct between fish and oxygenating plants should the water stay clear indefinitely?
6. Other than topping up with water to make up for evaporation what attention does the aquarium need?
7. How often should your Goldfish be fed?
8. How much food should you give to Goldfish and why?

Answers

1. Yes – it is therefore kinder to keep more than one.
2. a) In their natural state they live in streams and the light only comes from above whereas in a bowl it also comes from the sides and b) the fish cannot be comfortable and healthy in a bowl as they do not get as much oxygen as they would in their natural state.
3. 24 square inches of surface per inch of fish or inch of fish per gallon of water.
4. Leave the aquarium for some time; the water will go dirty and opaque and then clear by itself. Then introduce the fish.
5. Yes.
6. Remove the layer of excreta weekly with a pipette.
7. Once a day.
8. Just enough for them to eat, if you put in too much the uneaten food will turn the water cloudy.

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Just a minute...

CAR PARKING CHARGES. — It was reported that owing to the statutory procedures it would not be possible to implement the revised charges approved previously until about 1/2/75 at the earliest. As it had been intended to review these charges from 1/4/75 in any case it was suggested that it would be appropriate to carry out the review now, in order that the revised charges could be implemented on 1/4/75.

Details of suggested new charges to take effect after 1/4/75 were submitted as follows:

| | Present charge | charge authorised previously | suggested charges 1/4/75 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Balmoral Grds. (for 2 hrs) | 3p | 4p | 6p |
| Croneens - private cars - all day | 5p | 6p | 10p |
| per week | 25p | 30p | 50p |
| comm. veh. all day | 10p | 12p | 20p |
| per week | 50p | 60p | £1.00 |
| Sta. Road Rainham - all day | 10p | 10p | 10p |
| per quarter | £3.00 | £3.50 | - |
| Cricketers, Rainham (for 2 hrs) | 3p | 4p | 6p |
| Britton Frm Street for 2 hrs | 4p | 4p | 6p |
| : 5 hrs. | 10p | 10p | 10p |

The charges for lockable spaces would be increased to £15 per quarter at Balmoral Grds, and £16 per quarter at Cricketers.

RECOMMENDED — (a) the suggested new charges be approved and with a view to amending the Borough of Gillingham (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 1970, to provide for their implementation as soon as possible and also the implementation of the following recommendations, the Chief Executive and Town Clerk be authorised to publish the statutory notices and carry out the preliminary consultations;

(b) the issue of quarterly season tickets for the Station Road Car Park be discontinued.

(c) weekly and quarterly tickets be made available at non-concessionary rates on the understanding that there will be no specially reserved sections in car parks for the holders of such tickets;

PLATTERS FARM — It was reported that a meeting with the residents of Marshall Road was held on 4th November. A Committee of residents was set up to consider the proposal of a rear access road, for some days later they notified the Borough Architect and Planner that it was the almost unanimous opinion of residents that they would not want such a road constructed. The residents had asked for a 6ft. closeboard fence between the new housing area and the properties in Lyndhurst Road, and Marshall Road.

It was also reported that two residents, representing the residents of Highfield Road, had met the Chief Executive and Town Clerk and the Borough Architect and Planner. The residents expressed their concern at the considerable build up of traffic in this area during school in and out muster. The new estate would increase traffic dangers.

RECOMMENDED — (a) The Council include the erection of a 6ft close-board fence between the housing estate and the properties in Marshall Road in the application for planning permission to be considered by the Kent County Council; and

(b) the Works Committee be asked to conduct an official traffic census in the vicinity of Highfield Road and consider any necessary measures.

The Chairman gave permission for Councillor Sayer to speak on the following item.

(b) Outline Planning Application. — Cllr. Sayer stated that the residents had made an objection to the Minister to the re-definition of the land as residential from its previously approved designation for educational purposes.

RECOMMENDED — (a) Outline planning application (after service of the necessary notices upon persons owning parts of the land in question) be submitted for the development of two storey housing and three storey flats at an overall density of 70 persons per acre with provision for public open space to meet the local needs, together with a primary school of approximately 6½ acres.

OTTERHAM QUAY LANE. — Following notification of damage to the wall of 87 Otterham Quay Lane as a result of a car getting out of control and leaving the road, a site meeting had been held and various recommendations were submitted.

RECOMMENDED — (a) The existing terminal point of the 30 m.p.h. speed limit be extended from the railway bridge to Wakeley Road;

(b) improvement be made to the sight line at the farm entrance on the east side of Otterham Quay Lane; and

(c) the length of barrier to be provided along the top of the embankment on the west side of Otterham Quay Lane be extended.



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You & the Health Service

The interests of the public in the National Health Service are represented by a Community Health Council which is now established in your area.

It is an independent group of men and women drawn from local authorities, voluntary organisations and other sections of the community. It is concerned with the general quality of service provided by the NHS in the district. Similar organisations have been set up in other health authority districts throughout England.

The main management and administrative bodies for the health service are the Regional and Area Health Authorities, with District Management Teams having responsibility for local planning and day-to-day role of services.

These bodies consult Community Health Councils about their plans and intentions.

But CHCs do not have to wait to be asked. They can use their own initiative to put forward their views and advice on all plans affecting the consumer. These may range from the siting of a new health centre to the closure of a hospital department. They look at how local services measure up to recommended standards. Are there enough day hospital places for old people? Are maternity and child care facilities adequate? Is the community doing its share for the

physically and mentally handicapped?

The CHCs can have a fundamental and constructive influence on the shaping and direction of health service planning and policy.

They can focus attention on other more specific matters. These could include the quality of food for patients waiting times in outpatient departments or transport links to a clinic.

They can act as "patients' friends", help them to make complaints or suggestions to the right people.

They do not investigate complaints but they can give guidance on how to lodge them. They will help to ensure that they are followed up.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for improving the health service in your area, whether in hospital, family practitioner or community health services, the CHC will be glad to hear about them. If you have any worries or anxieties arising from the services provided, the Council can advise you on the best people to speak to in the health authorities.

Meetings of the Community Health Council are open to the public.

From information issued by Medway Community Health Council.

Just a minute...

PEST CONTROL - The Committee considered a full report on the services provided for pest control and the needs disclosed in the Borough. It was estimated that an improved comprehensive pest control service could be introduced at a cost in the region of £2,000.

RECOMMENDED - (a) The Council agree in principle to provide pest control service, and (b) detailed estimates be submitted to a future meeting.

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