

# ACTION FORUM

DECEMBER  
2020

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AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■



## Christmas is coming. Santa is loading his sleigh.

Gillingham Lions will be hosting him around large parts of our area between Thursday 10th and Wednesday 23rd December. See page 13 for details of how to follow him on their Santa Tracker, when he will be near you and how you can donate (covid safe) to the charities they support.

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 Diary@actionforum.co.uk  
 Distribution@actionforum.co.uk  
 Adverts@actionforum.co.uk  
 Postal address: 5 Meresborough Farm Cottages Meresborough, Gillingham, Kent. ME8 8PP

## Editorial

A very different Christmas for us all this year! The restrictions are particularly hard on those in our community who live on their own and those who have lost their incomes so they cannot feed themselves and their families adequately. St Margaret's Church members are providing support where they can, including food, and guiding people to other support available. See the information they have provided on page 7.

I am aware there many other organizations who provide support but I do not have their details. If you are running a local group, or want to start one, please email a short article about what you do and your contact details. We will publish all we have space for.

There is real hope that Covid will be far less of a threat by next Christmas. Climate change however poses a much larger threat in the long term and needs to be tackled on a global level. We in Rainham are part of the globe and need to do our bit. There are many ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprint. One that is not talked about as much as some is helping to bring back wildlife into our gardens. A garden where no pesticides or weedkillers are used can still be very attractive. The article on page 9 is the first of a monthly series on gardening for wildlife.

On a personal note many of you have asked about my wife Barbara who edited Action Forum from 1971 until she was diagnosed with Hodgkin Lymphoma in May. Unfortunately her first course of chemo did not clear it so she has just begun a second. Hamish Mackay Miller. Acting editor. Email Hamish@actionforum.co.uk 07835 859 846

## The End of an era in Edwin Road

Tucked behind two houses in Edwin Road stands the last evidence of a piece of local



history. Between the two World Wars, people from the east end of London and elsewhere came to the area and built their own weekend retreats in the undeveloped woodland. For some it became a permanent home. Few of these structures survive now. The one pictured is built of timber, with a brick chimney. One or two other dwellings were more substantial brick structures, and two or three of these small single storey bungalows still stand in Edwin and Marshall Roads.

The road has long since become a desirable location in estate agents' terms. The weekend retreats and their surrounding woodland were gradually removed, and bungalows and houses built. More recently, bungalows have been converted into houses and houses into mansions. The sequence of house numbers and varied shape and size of properties reveal the process of infilling and expansion.

In her book "On the marshes", Carol Donaldson, describes vividly and with feeling how the same process happened in Cliffe Woods. "Plotlanders" there were gradually ejected from their self-built refuges in the woods, being regarded as undesirable squatters, an eyesore in a natural setting. Developers were then able to turn the woods into housing estates.

The last visible example in Edwin Road is worth recording, as it is probably soon to disappear from woodland behind the back gardens of two more recent houses. It looks ripe for development, and is likely to be sold off, for a new house, or houses, to be built in its place.

Ron Norwood

## Letters

### Harvest Teas

Dear Friends  
 Sadly, due to the situation we have all been in this year, we were unable to organise the Harvest Teas for the first time in twenty years. We were looking forward to inviting you to celebrate this milestone with us. Hopefully life will be more normal next year and you will be able to join us at Harvest time to celebrate our 21st.  
 Keep well and keep safe.

Beryl Brenton (on behalf of the partners and friends of the Lions Club of Gillingham)

## St Matthew's Wigmore

**St. Matthew's Wigmore – Thursday Club:** This club for anyone over the age of 50 has been suspended since the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions in March. In more usual times we meet almost every Thursday afternoon between 2.00 and 4.00 p.m. throughout the year (we take a break during August). Club members are able to enjoy a wide range of speakers and entertainers, followed by tea and chat. In addition we run a full programme of outings and theatre trips. Although how things will develop with pandemic are still uncertain we very much hope that we may be able to resume meetings at some point in the New Year. In the meantime the club would like to say how good it is to see Action Forum back and to wish everyone as Happy a Christmas as current circumstances allow.

**St. Matthew's Film Club:** This is something of a spin off from the Thursday Club but is actually quite distinct from it. Established early in 2019 the Film Club meets monthly in the afternoon. The day of the week varies from month to month. We show a range of films from up to the minute releases to some of the classics. The

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show is followed by tea and chat, giving opportunity for those attending to enjoy some company. As with the Thursday Club we have had to suspend meetings during the pandemic but hope to resume again as soon as circumstances permit. We will make an announcement on this when we are able to.

Geoff Hufton

## Memories of National Service

I refer to the article in the recent Action Forum edition by the Secretary of the local National Service Association and I would like to convey my experiences.

I was 'called up' to commence my national service on the 1st March 1951 (age 18 years & 2 months). I did my initial training - 6 weeks - at the army barracks at Aldershot, then transferred to R.A.S.C. Barracks at Yeovil, Somerset to complete the full training.

One good thing come out of this experience was I obtained a driving licence. The army engaged local driving instructors to assist.

On completing the 13 week course, I was posted to the R.A.S.C. Barracks near Swindon, Wiltshire.

As I held a junior clerk position in civil street, I was given a position in the Company's office, where I remained until discharged on 28th February 1953.

In March 1952 the entire company were posted to Germany - where we were based near Munster. I would add that I thoroughly enjoyed the remaining years of my service times, obtaining the rank of Corporal.

However, despite pressure from my senior officers, I had no wish to continue as a regular soldier.

To summarise I believe National Service was a good scheme to assist in training young men to become good citizens.

Vic Wickenden

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### **Anchorians Christmas Truce Matches 26 December 2014**

My daughter had been part of the Anchorians football club for four years by 2014 when I got the idea that I wanted to commemorate the WWI Christmas truce. It had been an idea that I initially thought would be unlikely to be accepted, but I thought I would suggest it. The committee at the club weren't sure people would give up their Boxing Day morning to come along. However, Leigh Willis, the Anchorians Chairman, promised to support me if I could come up with a full proposal, so I went away and worked on the details. Once the committee approved the event it was up to me with help, advice and feedback from Leigh and Daniel Marsden to get it off the ground. After a slow start the enthusiasm for the event gathered pace and it was clear it was going to be very special.

So, on a cold and bright Boxing Day morning 69 players, together with a large number of

family and friends, came to the Anchorians ground to play football but also to pay tribute to the troops who had enacted the original Christmas Truce 100 years earlier. Leigh and his intrepid band of helpers went outside to set up the pitches, which, in an inspired decision, were set up with coats and jumpers for goalposts as they were a century earlier on the battlefields.

I decided to get commemorative shirts made up in red and white with players randomly assigned to each colour. Once players had signed in they collected their shirts, and something amazing happened. The players in each game in the same colour shirts seemed to instantly form themselves into close knit teams, even if they'd never played together before. They went outside to warm up and practice as if they'd been teammates for ages. It was quite something to witness and it confirmed that the spirit of the day was going to be absolutely right. My only personal regret from the day was that I never got one of the shirts myself because I wasn't playing!

I gave the players and their families a brief introduction to the history of the original Christmas Truce putting it in its historical context and emphasising the way in which football had brought the two warring sides together in no man's land along the whole length of the trenches. It seemed possible at the time that the two sides might stop fighting, but the generals were determined that the fighting must continue so millions more young lives were lost. All the players seemed to be quite taken aback when I told them that.

After that, everyone headed outside ready for the games to start. I blew a trench whistle three times and all the matches kicked off. The spirit the games were played in was fantastic and they seemed to be based on the concept of all-out attack as the final scores showed with eight goals in 30 minutes of football being the lowest figure and two games averaging a goal every two minutes. The U7-U9 game was a joy to watch with defenders literally throwing themselves in front of goal-bound shots and the players taking part playing with big smiles on their faces! It was certainly competitive, but even the backchat to the referee of the girls' game was delivered and received with a smile befitting the atmosphere of goodwill. It's not hard to imagine an official in the original Christmas Truce games being on the receiving end of similar banter!

After half an hour of committed play the games ended with handshakes all round and all that was left to do was to come together

for a minute's silence to pay a final well-deserved tribute to the rank and file troops of both sides who briefly came together as friends in No-man's land, but whose truce was ended by the officers who could not understand or accept this spontaneous gesture of humanity. The red and white shirts were mixed together in remembrance very fittingly. Our chosen charity, the Royal British Legion benefitted from the financial generosity of these spectators, which matched their generosity of spirit, to the tune of £90 as a result of a touchline collection.

I know that everyone involved took their own special memories away from the day, and some of those who took part still mention it from time to time, but for me the abiding memory will always be the warmth and passion that few games can engender like football.

**David Pearce**

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All of our services can be found on our facebook page and website (www.rainhamchurch.co.uk). For details on our services and activities over Christmas, please see our website and social media channels.

**Daily Hope phone line**

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

A Church of England initiative in partnership with CONNECTIONS at Holy Trinity Claygate, and Faith in Later Life

The line - which is available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044 - has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

Archbishop Justin Welby said "With many in our country on lockdown, it's important that we support those who are feeling lonely and isolated, whatever age they are."

**Befriending**

Medway Voluntary Action (MVA) and Carers First befriending's volunteers offer supportive, reliable relationships to people who would otherwise be socially isolated. Around the UK, there are befriending projects which organise effective support for young people, families, people with mental ill-health, people with a learning disability and older people, and many others.

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The results of befriending can be significant. Befriending often provides people with a new direction in life, opens up a range of activities and leads to increased self-esteem and self-confidence. This service is funded by Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). If you're aware of someone who is on their own, and self-isolating, you (or they) can get in touch and the team will do their best to help. Email befriending@mva.org.uk or phone 01634 564 939.

**Coronavirus Medway support**

Medway Council are supporting residents who have been advised to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace team and residents who are clinically extremely vulnerable. There are also a range of support services available to residents in the community and via the NHS Volunteer Responders service. If you, or someone you know, or someone you care for would like to register for support from the volunteers or have any questions about the NHS Volunteer Responder programme please call 0800 196 3646 (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week). If you still need support with food, shopping, medicines or prescriptions, call us on 01634 333 103 or email covid.support@medway.gov.uk.

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# Nature Notes

## NATURE NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

Once the exertions of the breeding season are over, birds and mammals can take advantage, in the summer and autumn, of the abundance of fruit, berries, nuts, or insects and other invertebrates. Birds build up their reserves of fat before migrating, in the case of those that are summer visitors or, before the onset of winter, in the case of our native birds and our mammals. Of our native mammals, only bats, hedgehogs and dormice are deemed to enter into true hibernation. The latter is probably triggered by a combination of a growing shortage of food, fewer daylight hours and falling temperatures, all of which normally occur together in late autumn. Squirrels and badgers, for example, do not hibernate. They can be less active but still have to leave their dreys and setts respectively, throughout the winter, in order to feed. By November, dependent upon the weather, most bats, hedgehogs and dormice will be in hibernation. In this latter state, the bodies of these three species become cold and torpid and just tick over. They will be in a state of suspended animation and so can be vulnerable to predators and violent changes in temperature. They therefore need to choose their winter quarters carefully. Bats in general require a refuge with a relatively constant temperature and high humidity. Large roof spaces in barns or attics may be ideal. Bats may still be active as late as December, but they gradually become more torpid for longer periods and then go into hibernation proper. Hedgehogs make a nest, typically under brushwood or brambles, of tightly packed leaves from broadleaved trees.

Dormice may have a nest of leaves in the bottom of a hedge or at the base of a coppiced hazel tree. Despite the deep sleep into which they enter, it is not unknown for mammals in hibernation to temporarily wake up. Bats may sometimes be seen searching for insects in winter and hedgehogs do not necessarily stay in the same nest for the whole winter, especially if they are disturbed. Reptiles (snakes and lizards) and amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) are cold blooded. This does not mean that they are immune to the cold, but that their internal temperature fluctuates considerably. They need the sunshine to warm them up each day before they can become active. Outside of the winter, they alternate between basking in the sunshine and searching for food. Once our wintery suns no longer provide enough heat for them to bask in, they typically seek refuge, from the cold, underground. They become increasingly sluggish and then eventually go into a dormant state. Strictly speaking, reptiles and amphibians do not hibernate. Only warm-blooded creatures can change from a constant body temperature to one that fluctuates with the surrounding air. Reptiles and amphibians generally seek refuge from the cold in disused burrows, other dry holes in a bank, or under rocks, logs or tree roots, among other places. Amphibians such as toads will occasionally shelter in cellars, in garden sheds or greenhouses. Sometimes the different species come together in what is known as a hibernaculum. Curled up adders have been found together with both slow worms and common lizards. The more the merrier or, more accurately, the more the warmer. Common lizards are the main prey of adders but, in deepest winter, there is a happy coexistence between the species.

Some frogs will spend the winter at the bottom of a pond, absorbing oxygen from the water. By November, depending upon weather conditions, most reptiles and amphibians will have taken refuge from the forthcoming winter.

In late summer and early autumn, butterflies, bees and other insects are attracted to plants of a typical English cottage garden such as buddleia, Michaelmas daisy, valerian, hebe, aster and ice-plant. The large butterfly species that can be attracted to these plants, on any hot, sunny days, are painted lady, red admiral, comma, brimstone, tortoiseshell and peacock. The painted lady and red admiral are summer visitors and those that do not migrate back across the Channel are likely to die. The comma (the one with ragged wing edges) takes refuge in woods and the brimstone hides away among the leaves of holly and ivy bushes. That leaves us with the small tortoiseshell and peacock that may be found sheltering in sheds and other outbuildings and even in houses and conservatories. Once these two species have settled down and folded up their wings, householders may fail to notice them. That is because the underwings of both species are camouflaged. The small tortoiseshell (a most attractive butterfly and many people's favourite) has blue markings around the edges of its underwings. Those of the peacock are very dark, almost black.

## Welcome to Wilder Gardens!

Would you like to make your outdoor space more diverse, to provide homes for our stunning local wildlife? Over the coming months, Wilder Gardens Volunteer Advisors will share tips with you that have worked in

our gardens, to help make Rainham even more blooming lovely.

You will have seen and heard that we are facing population crashes in species and numbers of animals and plants. Do not despair! Wildlife needs food, water and shelter and gardens are often an untapped potential, providing thousands of hectares of soils with millions of soil improving organisms, miles of ribbons of flowers for pollinating insects and thousands of nooks and crannies for homes where insects, birds, mammals and reptiles could thrive.

This year, because of the Covid lockdowns, we have seen our gardens in a new light, a blessing that aids our mental health. Now it is colder and wetter, but the good news is that we are not sugar mice who dissolve in rain. With dry heads and feet we can continue our life-giving hobby.

**Plant of the month.** Winter honeysuckle. Ask for this at Christmas as it smells fabulous and provides nectar and pollen for early bumblebees. It is bought as a small shrub, so needs soaking before planting, then teasing the roots a bit. Dig a hole twice the size of the plant and backfill with the soil mixed with garden compost or farmyard manure. Keep watering through the first year. Plant against a fence/wall near your bird feeders.

**Job of the month.** Medway Council's recycling centres will accept all your unwanted garden chemicals. Make 2021 the year you go chemical-free.

Happy Gardening,  
Victoria Golding, Kent Wildlife Trust  
Volunteer Advisor

*For more information and ideas to help make your garden more wildlife friendly see [www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/wild-about-gardens](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/wild-about-gardens)*

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## Memories of Rainham

I was born in Gillingham, but my connection with Rainham began early. One of my friends at Byron Road Primary School was Brian Jobber, who lived in Pump Lane, and when I cycled to his house we often went to the centre of Rainham. As a teenager I joined the church youth club, held in the church school at the top of Station Road, and run by Captain Ambrose of the Church Army. He was a very friendly and approachable man, who got on well with teenagers, and when he married, the youth club members made a collection for a wedding present for him and his bride. Friends I met at the club included Dave Turner, Bob Wicks, Johnnie Wood and Tom Stonehouse. In the early 1950s Reverend Jordan was the vicar at St Margaret's Church. He was later promoted to the post of Canon at Rochester Cathedral and replaced at Rainham by Reverend Clifford.

My family had a connection with Rainham from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of my great-grandfathers, Thomas Wakefield (1846-1928), was the publican at the Three Mariners in Lower Rainham and his daughter, Eva, my grandmother (1876-1970), was a pupil at the church school in the 1880s.

My days at the youth club were interrupted by National Service in the Royal Navy, but soon after my return and back at the club in 1957 I met the girl who became my wife, Pat Swallow, who lived in Solomon Road. We were married at the church in 1960 and the reception was held at the Green Lion. So this year we have celebrated our diamond anniversary.

Some of my outstanding memories of the 1950s are the cinema, The Royal, in the High Street often known as the 'bug hutch', which had the innovation of double seats, which appealed to young cinema goers. The cinema was demolished in 1966 and is now the site of Lukehurst's Furnishings. The Coop was a dominant feature of Rainham life, with the grocery shop near the top of Station Road and a larger store in the High

Street, with furniture, kitchen equipment, clothes and a branch of the bank. Much of this area is now the site of the Health Centre. Across the road stood grocers Vye and Sons, now a car showroom, next to the Green Lion. Two other venues, now demolished, attracted teenagers for dances, parties and other functions, the hall above the Coop shop in the High Street and the Church Hall in Orchard Street, on the site of what is now the entrance to Tudor Grove.

Buses were a frequent sight in the 1950s, run by Maidstone and District Motor Company and Chatham and District Traction Company. The latter company had five routes in the Medway Towns and number 2 terminated in the Webster Road cul-de-sac. The A2 became quite busy during the 1950s and early 1960s before the M2 opened in 1967. Trains were less frequent before 1959. Before then electrification went only as far as Gillingham and the old Victorian station at Rainham relied on steam trains to Victoria, or a change at Gillingham for the Charing Cross line.

To conclude with a later memory. In the summer of 1967 a 30 mile night walk to raise money for St. Margaret's Church began at the church at 10p.m. and the route led to Key Street, then the A249 towards Maidstone, turning right through the villages of Burham and Wouldham, on to Strood and along the A2 back to Macklands in Station Road, the home of the Mackay-Miller family. Mr and Mrs Mackay-Miller, looked after the walkers very well by driving round the route and serving hot soup.

I welcome any comments, including possible corrections in the next issue.

Arthur Kimber  
22 Asquith Road  
Wigmore

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bringing Santa round the streets this year  
as we have done for over 25 years. We  
may not be able to knock on your door  
this year due to social distancing, so  
please listen for us coming and follow our  
progress on our Santa Tracker on the  
Gillingham Lions Club Facebook page.  
If you wish to donate, as people do very  
generously every year, we will have  
collection buckets, but you can also  
donate electronically Please see below.  
We hope to see you on one of the routes.  
**Thursday 10th, Hempstead:-** Barncroft,  
Almond, Magdalen, Lavenda, Birch,  
Plumtree, Medlar, Cedar, Kingsdown +  
**Friday 11th, Hempstead:-** Coppergate,  
Evergreen, Shepherdsgate, Honey,  
Lamplighters, Cobblestone, Horseshoe,  
Old Barn, Greenfiches +  
**Monday 14th, Parkwood:-** Campleshon,  
Wood, Queendown, Lineacre, Idenwood,  
Hallwood, Donet, Dixwell, Long Catlis,  
Fairfax, Foxburrow, Readsroft, Beke  
**Tuesday 15th Parkwood:-** Capel, Gunnis,  
Gladwyn, Culpepper, Conrad, Chipstead,  
Long Catlis, Hawbeck, Roper, Sedley,  
Deanwood +  
**Wednesday 16th, Kenilworth:-**  
Kenilworth, Windermere, Sandown,  
Bransgore, Sunningdale, Wimbourne,  
Tanker, Gayhurst +  
**Thursday 17th, Fairview:-** Fairview,  
Foulds, Primrose, Magnolia, Clematis,  
Norman, Wigmore, The Hazels,  
Woodside, Bredhurst  
**Friday 18th, Lower Beechings:-**  
Eastcourt, Littlebourne, Bishopsbourne,  
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## The Brain Tumour Charity

[www.braintumourcharity.org](http://www.braintumourcharity.org)

The Brain Tumour Charity like all charities has  
suffered from reduced fund raising during 2020.  
This will affect the work it undertakes in  
research, supporting carers and patients who have  
been diagnosed with a Brain Tumour.  
I have fund raised since 2008 but this year I have  
only managed to raise £45.00. Hopefully 2021  
will change and fundraising can start again.  
During the fund raising over the past years I used  
the Kingfisher singers and held concerts at St  
Margaret's Parish Church, a very dear friend  
Sylvia Smith who has an exceptional contralto  
voice used her god given talent to sing "Danny  
Boy" and other songs, everybody enjoyed her  
beautiful voice. Recently Sylvia was diagnosed  
with a brain tumour and is being cared for by her  
family. Brain tumours are extremely cruel,  
destroying the person's personality and mind and  
eventually body. Yet music can be an excellent  
way for the patient to communicate even if they  
have lost their speech. My son who died from a  
brain tumour could sing in French i.e. nursery  
rhymes and remembered words from his  
favourite musicals such as Oliver and Fiddler on  
the Roof. Music can be very important during the  
final journey of the sufferer.  
I am the contact for the Brain Tumour Charity in  
the local area and my number is 01634 263622.  
Olwen O'dowd (Mrs)

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