

# ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

AUGUST 2003

NUMBER 381

## *Memories of Rainham*



Joe Ennis will present a slide show 'Rainham Then and Now' in St Margaret's Church, Rainham, at 7.30pm on Thursday 25th September.

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Next Issue: September 6th 2003  
Copy Date: Aug 19 Sm Ads Aug 22nd

Editorial: Mrs Barbara Mackay Miller,  
5 Meresborough Cotts, Tel: 231307.

Advertising: Hamish Mackay Miller,  
5 Meresborough Cotts, Tel: 231307.

## Editorial

I see from my Spring and Summer Events leaflet that Medway Council now has a green space team to look after our parks, trees and countryside. I wonder how their duties differ from the wardens we used to know? Fortunately, it appears that the job description still requires provision of some holiday activities for local children at both Riverside and Capstone Country Parks. These are listed in our Diary but the highlight seems to be a 'Kites over Capstone' day on Sunday 17th August when the whole family, for the modest charge of £2, can enjoy building and flying their own kite. Experts will give kite flying demonstrations and a tethered hot air balloon will be available for rides. This promises to be a fun event even if you do not wish to take part but just enjoy the activities as a spectator. It is also good to see that we are being encouraged to help in the care of our open spaces; several day events have been organised where the rangers are specifically requesting our labour to complete annual tasks. The Hay Day in September is a wonderful opportunity to discover just how it feels to go haymaking. We all watch nostalgically the idealised TV version of making hay in the sunshine, now is your chance to find out what it is really like, all assistance gratefully received by the green space team at Capstone on 28th September.

Thinking of autumn, once again the Lions Club of Gillingham are organising a free Harvest Tea for our Senior Citizens. They are particularly keen to include people who live alone or do not have the opportunity to get out very often, transport can be arranged. If you would like an invitation or you know of someone who would do ring either 362851 or 387991 or write to 53 South Avenue, Gillingham, ME8 6EF. The afternoon tea and entertainment will be held at The Millennium Centre in Rainham, this new purpose built facility is ideal for such an occasion and is now available should you wish to book for some special event or a regular weekly meeting. The booking secretary, Mrs Lynn Porter, will be happy to send you full details or discuss the various options available. Just ring 305690, e-mail: porter.lynn@talk21.com or write to 18 Century Road, Rainham, ME8 0BG.

If you have ever wondered why Rainham has both a Parsonage and a Vicarage, and why until 1962 these were next door to each other in the High Street,

Freddie Cooper this month supplies the answer. I am sure those of you who are interested in the history of this area will be pleased to note that Joe Ennis is preparing a third slide show of 'Rainham Then and Now' for 25th September. I am sure Freddie Cooper will join in the evening and some informative discussion will evolve.

Before then we have the holiday month with plenty of outdoor activities to enjoy, do have a very good time, be vigilant and a good neighbour whilst people are away and we will see you again in September.

## Correspondence

### HARVEST TEA

Dear Editor,

The Lions Club of Gillingham and their partners are arranging another Harvest Tea on Sundays 12th and 19th October.

We would like to invite Senior Citizens of the Gillingham and Rainham area to join us for tea and entertainment.

FREE tickets are available by post from Mrs Brenda Woodrow, 53 South Avenue, Gillingham, ME8 6EF, or by telephoning Medway 362851 or Mrs Melanie Banks on Medway 387991.

Transport can be arranged and we would particularly like to see people who live alone or do not have the opportunity to get out too often. Please encourage family, friends and neighbours to attend.

Arrival time is 3.15pm for 3.30pm and we hope many of you will take the opportunity to join us and enjoy the afternoon at The Millennium Centre.

Yours sincerely,  
Kaye Lyons  
on behalf of The Lions  
Club of Gillingham

### WINE & WISDOM

Dear Editor,

A Wine & Wisdom evening will be held in St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore, on September 6th starting at 7.30pm. Tickets are available from Bill Trees (370722) at a cost of £6 (concessions £5). Supper will be provided but please bring your own drinks and glasses.

Yours sincerely,  
David Lewis  
Chairman, Dortmund  
Exchange Group

### MEREDALE INFANT SCHOOL

Dear Editor,

I write to thank you for your recent editorial and publication of our letters advertising our Reunion Day which was held at the school on 8th July. We were delighted that so many past pupils, parents and members of staff visited us and met old acquaintances, made new friends and shared many

happy memories. It was so pleasing to know that the Rainham Council Schools/Meredale Infant School meant so much to so many people.

Thank you, once again, for your support.  
Yours faithfully,  
Eileen James  
Headteacher

### MEREDALE INFANT SCHOOL

Dear Editor,

On Tuesday 8th July Meredale School, Solomon Road, Rainham, held a Reunion Day for all present and past pupils from 3pm to 8pm.

My wife and I, being at the school during the 1932 period to 1936, met up with a number of people from those years, which also included my first year class mistress now in her nineties, that I thought was marvellous.

My wife and I wish to thank all staff for giving us all such a nice time along with such wonderful memories.

Yours sincerely,  
B.J. Partridge  
01632 231046

### WIGMORE MADS

Dear Editor,

Wigmore MADS present the riotous farce CASH ON DELIVERY by Michael Cooney. Eric Swann has been defrauding the DSS for years; helped by his Uncle George and hidden from his wife Linda. Norman Bassett, a lodger, opens the door to Mr Jenkins, a DSS inspector - deceptive mayhem follows. Come and enjoy a rib-tickling play on 25th/26th/27th September at 8pm in St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. Tickets £5/£4.50 concessions. Box Office:

Sue Burrows - Medway 370639.

If you are interested in joining us why not come along on Thursday 28th August as we rehearse for our next production 'Britannia's War'. It is a new 1940s musical about life on the home front during World War II. For more details ring the above box office number.

Yours sincerely,  
Mrs Sue Burrows

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'THANK YOU' TO RAINHAM BOOKSHOP  
Dear Editor,

May I, through your columns, thank the management and staff of Rainham Bookshop for the enormous help they have given to St Peter's Church, Bredhurst, in our efforts to raise funds for the preservation of this most attractive and thriving 11th century church.

The sales of the book 'The Ancient Village of Bredhurst and the Medieval Church of St Peter', which was written to raise funds for our preservation fund, have now brought in some £2,700. Rainham Bookshop has so far contributed an impressive £600 towards the funds, making this unique bookshop by far the best outlet for sales, for which they took no commission whatsoever.

After production costs of around £2,000 the church has now received the total profit so far of £700.

We would also like to thank all those who have purchased the book. We hope they will gain much knowledge and pleasure from it and we look forward to welcoming them to Bredhurst.

Yours sincerely,  
Suresh Khanna, CBE  
Church Warden and  
Treasurer

### RIVERSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY CLASS

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### MEDWAY ADULT LEARNING

Enrolment is now underway for classes starting in the autumn. The choice on offer this year is bigger than ever, so have a browse through their directory and see what interests you. The directory is available in printed format from the Rainham, Wigmore and Hempstead libraries and Rainham Bookshop or by telephoning 01634 845359, on CD ROM by telephoning that same number, or on Medway Council's website [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk).

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# Diary 2003

Keeper: Mrs Christine Smith  
275 Wigmore Road  
Wigmore  
Tel: 233098

No charge is made for Diary entries  
Diary Copy Date: 19th August 2003

August 2nd - Instep Dancing. Social/Dance, Rainham School for Girls. Ballroom/Latin/Sequence, 8.00 to 11.00pm. Details 363738.

August 2nd - Care Hand in Hand stall at Knowlers' Nursery, 143 Berengrave Lane, 10am to 4pm. All welcome. Ring 387621 for details.

August 2nd - Every Saturday Introductory Classes for Marshal Arts. Teaching Life Skills for Children and Adults. Free. 1.00 to 2.00pm, Millennium Centre. Bookings only, telephone 0800 0937824.

August 2nd - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.30am, Rainham Station. Dry packed lunch. 5 mile walk.

August 3rd - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 10.30am, Cranbrook public car park (near toilets). 10 mile walk.

August 5th - Countryside Event. Birdwatching Cruise. £13 pay in advance, 378987.

August 5th - Musical Playtime for Toddlers. 10.00am, Millennium Centre, Rainham. For further details telephone 01622 734440.

August 5th - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 7.00pm, Luton Rec car park, Ash Tree Lane. Evening walk. 4½ miles.

August 6th - Countryside Event. Children's Fishing Workshop. Capstone, 10.00am to 3.00pm. £6. Book 812196.

August 6th - Medway Camcorder Club. Bring your equipment for us to try out. 7.30pm, Medway Motor Yacht Club, Medway Bridge Marina, Moor Lane, Borstal, Rochester.

August 7th - Friendship Club. 2.00 to 4.00pm in Rainham Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road. Meeting place for a chat, to meet people, play board games, enjoy a cuppa. Everyone will receive a warm welcome.

August 7th - Countryside Event. Ladies' Walk in Lordswood. 10 to 12 noon, £1.60. Book 812196.

August 9th - Maizie Bunch Trust Fund FUN DAY. 11.00am to 3.00pm in the Field, Solomon Road, Rainham. Admission £1 Children free. Contact No. 235383.

August 9th - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.15am, West Malling long stay car park. Packed lunch. PH available. 6/7 mile walk.

August 10th - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 2.30pm, Church on Southborough Common, Tunbridge Wells. 6 mile walk. No dogs.

August 11th - Medway Spinners, Dyers & Weavers Association. Spinning. 7.30 to 9.30pm at the Annexe (Urchins Playgroup) building in Marlborough Road, Gillingham.

August 12th - Rainham Evening Machine Knitting Club. 8.00 to 10.00pm, Red Cross Centre, Balmoral Road, Gillingham. Contact No. 862673.

August 12th - Gillingham & District Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society. Les Hodgkis giving a Post Show Talk. 7.30pm, Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way.

August 12th - Medway Antique & Collectors Club. Open the Box. Victorian Boxes - Mrs Jean Surrey. 8.00pm, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham. Tel: 365861 for details.

August 12th - Countryside Event Kids (5-12) Workshop in Maidstone Road, Chatham Sports Ground, 10 to 12 noon & 1.30 to 3pm. £1.60. Book 378987.

August 13th - Bredhurst WI. Elaine Scott. The Work of Victim Support. Competition: Miles from Bredhurst. 7.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall.

August 13th - Rainham Flower Club (Kent). Outing.

August 13th - Countryside Event. Children's (4-8 must be accompanied) nature day at Riverside, 10.30 to 12 noon & 1.30 to 3pm. £1.60. Book 378987.

August 13th - Medway Camcorder Club. Social Evening and Filming at Yalding, 7.30pm.

August 13th - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.00am, Meopham Green. 7.5 mile walk.

August 16th - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 10.30am, Margate Station. 10 mile walk.

August 17th - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.30am, Headcorn Station Forecourt. Ramble and visit to Lashenden Air Museum at Headcorn Airrome.

August 17th - Countryside Event Kites over Capstone. 12 to 5.00pm. 50p per person or £2 per family. Ring 812196 for details.

August 18th - Rainham Evening WI. Decorating with Flowers - Mrs G. Flaxman. Competition: One stem flower. 7.30pm, Platters Farm Lodge, Highfield Road, Rainham.

August 19th - Musical Playtime for children aged 8 months plus. Summer specials at the Millennium Centre, Rainham. 10.00am. To book telephone 01622 734440.

August 20th - Wigmore Afternoon Townswomen's Guild. Social Afternoon. Competition: Pretty Photo Frame. 1.45 to 4.15pm. Howard Hall, Woodside, Wigmore.

August 20th - Bredhurst Garden Club. Mr Peter Dawson, Illustrated Talk 'Chatham Dockyard'. Fuchsia Show. 8.00pm Bredhurst Village Hall.

August 20th - Medway Camcorder Club. Make a 30 sec commercial: bring camcorders, props, ideas. (see Aug 6th)

August 20th - Countryside Event, Children's Nature Day, Capstone Park. 10 to 12 noon. £1.60 aged 5-12 (under 8 must be accompanied). Book 812196.

August 23rd - Instep Dancing. (see Aug 2nd)

August 23rd to 30th - Mid-Kent Astronomical Society National Astronomy Week will be holding observing evenings at Canterbury Observatory, Canterbury High School. Contact No. 01634 308035.

August 24th - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 2.30pm, Kingswood car park, Challock. 6 mile walk.

August 26th - Rainham Evening Machine Knitting Club. (see Aug 12th)

August 27th - Countryside Event, Fishing Workshop, Capstone. 10 to 3.00pm, aged 8-16 years. Tickets £6. Book 812196.

August 28th - Rainham & District Dollhouse and

Miniaturist Group. 7.30pm at St Thomas of Canterbury Church Hall, London Road, Rainham. Details: Mrs Sylvia Wildridge on 01634 312038.

August 29th - Countryside Event, Children's Nature Day, Riverside, 10.30 to 12 noon & 1.30 to 3.00pm. £1.60 per child aged 5-12 years (under 8 must be accompanied). Book 378987.

August 30th - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.30am, Watlingtonbury Station. 6/7 mile walk.

August 30th - Inner Wheel Club Coffee Morning, 7 Houghton Avenue, Hempstead, in aid of Breast Care and other charities. 10.30am. £1.50, all welcome.

August 31st - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 10.00am car park in Suffolk Way, Sevenoaks. 5½ mile walk. No dogs.

September 3rd - Rainham (Kent) Horticultural Society. Mrs J. Bryant - Winter Flowers. 7.15 for 7.30pm, Berengrave Cricket Club Clubhouse, Berengrave Lane, Rainham.

September 3rd - Medway Camcorder Club. Social evening and films (see Aug 6th)

September 4th - Wigmore Thursday Club. Barbara Ackers - Hand Painting on China. 2.00pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. For people over the age of 50.

For further information telephone 235507.

September 6th - Instep Dancing. (see Aug 2nd)

September 6th - Bredhurst Village Show.

September 6th - Wine and Wisdom Competition: 7.30pm in St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore. Tickets are available from Bill Trees 370722 at a cost of £6 (concessions £5). Supper will be provided but please bring your own drinks and glasses.

September 7th - Medway Towns Footpath Group. Meet 10.00am, Bluebell Hill Picnic Site. 6 mile walk.

September 8th - Medway Spinners, Dyers & Weavers Association. Spinning.

September 8th - Countryside Event, Evening Talk, Smuggling by Robert Black, Riverside Country Park, 7.30pm. £1.70 per person. Book 378987.


September 9th - Rainham Evening Machine Knitting Club.

Continued on page 11


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## Correspondence

RAINHAM SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Dear Editor,

It was in 1932 that the children who were eleven years and over learned that we would be going to a new school, then being built in Orchard Street. So would all the children of the same age from Upchurch, Lower Halstow, Hartlip, Bredhurst, Hempstead and of course those from the C of E at the top of Station Road.

I well remember the sadness that I felt as we who were being transferred to the new school were being shuffled around so that the classrooms we were leaving could be re-arranged for the new term after the hop-picking holiday.

I was thirteen years old and had reached standard seven. It was the Solomon Road school that I attended from five years of age. I still remember the coloured beads on wooden frames that we learned to count on, small boards and chalk for writing and large varnished posters hung over the blackboard for reading instruction, starting with 'The cat sat on the mat', and progressing to 'The fish is on the dish'. The alphabet was learned phonetically. The teacher was Mrs Springate who wore a long black skirt. Up in standard three was a Miss Springate who also wore a long skirt which she whacked with a cane to maintain discipline.

Two of the staff from Solomon Road were moving on to the new school, Mrs Smith (known as Titch), and Miss Lott, teacher of standards six and seven and X seven. X seven consisted of the few girls who had reached the end of the existing system but not yet attained the age of fourteen, and so could not leave.

At some time our parents had received letters informing them and us as to which form we would be in on arrival at the new school. Also a list of the uniform they hoped that we would be wearing, navy

gymslips, navy knickers and soft soled plimsolls. Thus we said goodbye to our old schools, many of us to spend the next three or four weeks in the hop fields to earn money for new shoes etc for the coming winter.

At last came the start of everything new. I walked past the Otterham brickfields, through the allotments, past the old school, the length of the High Street, turned into Orchard Street and soon came to the gate of the new school. Buses were bringing in children from the villages, but I don't remember much confusion, somehow we found our form rooms. Mine was three A, the top form, Miss Austin being the mistress.

Everything was so new and shiny, even the books. The first shock was that when the lesson ended we had to change rooms and teacher for the next one to begin. We had, of course, been used to one teacher and one room for all subjects. The next and greater shock was going into the gym hall and being told by a very short-skirted mistress to remove our gymslips and parade in our knickers. Girls did not show their knickers in those days! but we soon got used to it, though I never did manage to conquer the vaulting horse.

The next great discovery was the science laboratory. Imagine girls coming from homes with no gas or electricity suddenly being confronted with Bunsen burners on their desks in front of them. The domestic science rooms with what was then the latest equipment. The art room with a special teacher, quite young, blonde and in our eyes very glamorous, Miss Jones.

We soon settled down, and sadly I came to the end of my first and only year. I was fourteen and had to go out into the world of work.

I considered that I was privileged to have had that final year of education at such a good school, and I am sure that girls from the villages must have gained a lot of experience that their tiny village schools were not able to supply.

At eighty-two years I am still thankful to the school and staff for the wonderful year that I spent there. (My next two years in domestic service were not so happy, but that's another story.)

Joan Wiles (Mrs)  
(née Baker)  
11 Holly Road  
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# Nature Notes

## NATURE NOTES FOR JULY

July's Nature Notes are based on a boat trip on the River Rother from Newenden to Bodiam Castle and a return journey by steam train of the Kent and East Sussex Railway.

Newenden is a small village on the border between Kent and East Sussex. It has the usual village institutions of church, public house, village hall and cricket pitch. The wooden hall is home to a number of swallows which have built their mud nests on a ledge running the length of the hall just under the eaves. They hawk for flies on the nearby cricket field.

During the summer the mv *Dannie Lee* sails between Newenden Bridge and Bodiam Castle. Teas can be had, before or after sailing, at Riverside Cottage alongside the bridge. The River Rother has fairly high banks on the stretch in question and the view from the boat is therefore somewhat limited. But the trip is a relaxing and pleasant one and there is plenty to see, from a natural history point of view, on and alongside the river.

Water plants to be seen in July include meadow sweet, yellow loosestrife, amphibious bistort, Himalayan balsam, purple loosestrife and yellow water lilies. Birds such as sedge warblers nest in the vegetation alongside the river. Nest boxes have been set up by the Environment Agency to encourage barn owls but we were told by the boat owner that they are used only by kestrels.

We saw many dragonflies and damselflies, including the banded damoiselle, one of our largest damselflies. The male has a metallic blue abdomen and a broad blue-black band to its wings. The banded damoiselle has a butterfly-like flight. It can often be abundant on slow moving rivers with tall vegetation, such as the River Rother.

We alighted from the boat just before Bodiam Bridge and entered the grounds of the castle which was built in the 14th century and is surrounded by a moat. The castle buildings are the home to three species of bat, Daubenton's, Natterer's and Pipistrelle. The first two are medium sized bats and the third is Britain's smallest and commonest bat.

Droppings litter the floors of the towers in which the bats roost or breed. The droppings are small, dark, oval shaped and crumbly. The colonies of bats at Bodiam are often quite active and noisy during hot summer days.

After visiting the castle and the restaurant we returned to our starting point by steam train from Bodiam to Northiam. For the information of railway enthusiasts our engine was one of the Terrier class of the former LB and SC Railway. Out of the left hand window of the carriage we had a view of the valley of the River Rother which, being a flood plain, has remained largely as grazing land. We passed a series of interconnected man-made ponds fed by the River Rother in which crayfish were once bred commercially.

Out of the right hand window of the carriage we passed fields and woods typical of the Sussex Weald. Foxgloves, teasels, rosebay willow herb and great willow herb grew in profusion alongside the track.

We got off the train at Northiam Station. There was time for one last cup of tea at the station refreshment room before the short walk back into Kent and Newenden where we had left our car.

Joe Ennis

## Vicarage & Parsonage

I recently started to give talks again on the history and development of Rainham and part of my preparation was to endeavour to answer a question that used to be posed before 1962 as to why we had a Vicarage next door to the Parsonage. Having done a considerable amount of investigation I found that Mr Stuart Jelly had actually reported the reason in the Rainham Church magazine of July 1946, so I hope between us the definitive reason may again be reported.

The Doomsday Book records that the manor of Renham was given by William the Conqueror to Robert de Crevequer and in 1137 he in due course gave the churches on his estates, and in Rainham's case 18 acres of land, to the Canons of Leeds Abbey. The Canon or Abbot of Leeds built the Parsonage as the abode of the Vicar who was appointed by him to

look after the spiritual needs of the people of Rainham, but in 1536 Henry VIII suppressed the monasteries and confiscated all the properties belonging to them, so the 18 acres with the church at Rainham became the property of the Crown.

Unfortunately the Parsonage and the 18 acres of land were not returned to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Queen Mary in 1558 when the churches were conveyed and eventually 10 years later, Queen Elizabeth leased the area to Dorothy Stafford for £16 per annum for a term of 30 years. Later the lease was granted to Captain Robert Moyle who died in 1659 and his grandson, John Moyle of Buckwell, carried it in marriage to Robert Bretton of Elms, near Dover. Robert Bretton died in 1708 and in due course disposed of it to Sir Edward Dering. The Dering family, although residents for many generations at Pluckley, are recorded in the church records. The Derings eventually sold it to 'Squire' Walters of Berengrove House, presumably in the latter part of the 19th century and then in subsequent years Mr Edwin Jelly and his son Stuart also became owners. Older residents will remember Dr Irby Webster living and having his surgery at the Parsonage, and it would seem that he must have been leasing the property although he was there for many years and was patron of various societies as well as reading the lesson regularly at the church.

There have been a number of owners in recent years and the Parsonage is now the Fitness Club. The older part of the building is thought to be around 300 years and it is hoped that this may be preserved as so many of our older properties have been demolished.

Obviously the Vicar had no official residence after the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, so in the early part of the next century the parishioners provided finance for a new Vicarage next door to the Parsonage which remained in use until 1962 when it was sold for the development of the Post Office sorting building and a new Vicarage was built in Broadview Avenue.

The 17th century building was immediately adjacent to the path of the High Street and had an oriel window on the first floor from which movements in the High Street could be viewed. It has a large attractive garden with many well-established

trees and fine lawns on which various village fetes were held. There was a coach house and stable on the eastern side, presumably used by the Vicar for his pony and trap by which he would visit parishioners.

I understand that plans have been agreed for 43 flats to be erected on this site which may provide a modern necessity but Rainham lost part of its history when the Vicarage was demolished in 1962.

Freddie Cooper

## Millennium Centre

### ST MARGARET'S MILLENNIUM CENTRE

The new purpose built facility of St Margaret's Millennium Centre is situated to the rear of our ancient Parish Church and may be reached from either the Cricketers car park via the pathway through the top of the churchyard or from Gatekeeper Chase. The centre has offices, halls and meeting rooms all available for hire at competitive rates. Among the groups that already have regular meetings in the centre are Orchard Pre-School, Brownies, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers, Self Defence, Women's Group, Hands, Belly Dancing, and our MP's surgery one evening a month. More groups could find accommodation at the cost of from £7 per hour for a meeting room or £12 per hour for one of the larger halls. Private receptions, parties, weddings and other one off events are welcomed. The Orchard Room (downstairs) has a capacity of 150 guests for a buffet meal and dancing (100 for a seated meal) or the first floor Calloway Room is available for a maximum of 80 guests. Both halls have modern large fully fitted kitchens and a bar area, the hire of tables and chairs is included in the fee and hirers may either provide their own food or engage caterers. The sound amplification and hearing loop systems are available and the hall has full facilities for the disabled including a lift to the first floor. For events arranged by registered charity organisations a discount on the normal rental prices can be arranged.

Mrs Lynn Porter, 01634 305690, will be delighted to answer any queries you may have and arrange new bookings, she may also be contacted by e-mail: porter.lynn@talk21.com

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## Diary 2003

September 9th - Gillingham & District Fuchsia & Pelargonium Society. Paul Heavers with a talk about Fuchsias.  
September 9th - Gillingham Horticultural Society Floral Art Group. 'S is for September', an Hogarth Curve arrangement plus 'Show Talk'. 7.30 to 9.00pm, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham.  
September 9th - Medway Antique and Collectors Club. 8.00pm, St George's Hotel, New Road Avenue, Chatham. 'Rationed Fashion 1939-1952' - Mrs Lee Ault. Ring 365861 for details.  
September 10th - Rainham Flower Club (Kent). 'Christina Curtiss Fiction, Fun & Fantasy'. 7.30 to 9.30pm, Upchurch Village Hall.  
September 10th - Bredhurst WI. Linda Steward Appearing on Masterchef. Competition: Miles from Bredhurst.  
September 11th - Wigmore Thursday Club. Graham Johnson - Kent an Unusual View with slides.  
September 13th - Gillingham Horticultural Society Floral Art Group. GHS AUTUMN SHOW. 2.30 to 4.30pm.  
September 13th - Medway & District Group of HF Holidays. Meet 10.15am, west end of Doddington by garage. 5/6 mile walk.  
September 19th - Charity Golf Day, Boughton Golf Club, in aid of SSAFA. Details from 01227 830490.

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September 20th - Countryside Event. Birdwatching Cruise. Tickets £17.50 payable in advance 378987.  
September 25th-27th - Wigmore MADS 'Cash on Delivery', tickets £5 (con £4.50) 370639.  
September 28th - Countryside Event, Hay Day, 10 to 3.00pm. Help make the hay at Capstone Park. Warm clothes and stout boots. Details from 812196.  
October 12th & 19th - Harvest Tea for Senior Citizens. Ring 362851 or 387991 or write to 53 South Avenue, Gillingham, ME8 6EF for free tickets.  
Rainham & District Dollhouse and Miniaturist Group meet on the last Thursday of each month (except December) from 7.30pm at the St Thomas of Canterbury Church Hall, London Road, Rainham. More details from Mrs Sylvia Wildridge 01634 312038.

## INNER WHEEL CLUB OF GILLINGHAM

The ladies of the Inner Wheel Club are once again holding a Coffee Morning and Bring & Buy Sale at the home of Rosemarie and Graham Barnes, Papillon, 7 Houghon Avenue, Hempstead.

President Jill Howland has chosen Breast Care as her main charity this year along with other local charities.

So we hope you will come along at 10.30am on Saturday 30th August and enjoy a cup of coffee and biscuits with old friends and make new ones, as well as supporting us once again.

The cost just £1.50. See you all on 30th August.

## LADIES, DO YOU ENJOY SINGING?

Then why not come and join us on a Friday afternoon from September to May at 2.00pm to 4.00pm at the Methodist Church Hall, Station Road, Rainham. We were the Townswomen's Guild Choir but are now known as the Phoenix Singers. We are a small group of mature ladies who like to sing (light music songs from the shows etc), have a chat and a laugh and a joke, all very friendly. No audition required.

If interested, please ring Margaret on Medway 231532 for further information.

Thanking you in anticipation.

M.J. Springett (Mrs)

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The Charles Dickens Centre set in the heart of the historic City of Rochester-upon-Medway, is housed in an Elizabethan building that Dickens knew well, Eastgate House. This house is mentioned as Miss Twinkleton's Seminary for Young Ladies, 'The Nun's House' in The Mystery of Edwin Drood and as Westgate House Seminary for Young Ladies in Pickwick Papers. The names Rochester and Dickens are synonymous. Connections with this famous author's works and this area abound.

The Charles Dickens Centre excitingly recreates scenes from some of his most well known books. From Mr Pickwick to Oliver Twist, many of Dickens' most loved and infamous characters are here for your appreciation.

The Centre is not only entertaining, but educational and informative. A 'Time Line' equates the important world events that were taking place during Dickens' lifetime. How many realise that the Napoleonic war raging in Europe saw the birth of Charles Dickens? Also, that the year of his birth is marked by what is possibly one of the most famous overtures of all time, Tchaikovsky's '1812'.

Charles Dickens wrote on many topics from 'Dickens grim', exposing social evils, to 'Dickens jolly' featuring the feasting and pleasurable things of Victorian life. Both aspects of Victorian life are here for you to see, excitingly recreated. Marley's ghost

will come and go, Miss Havesham maintains her lonely vigil and Squeers whacks the school desk to jolt his nervous class into continuing their spelling tests.

Dickens' Dream is an atmospheric audio-visual interpretation of the painting of the same name by R.W. Buss. The author is seen musing in his chair, before the desk at which he wrote many of his novels. The scene is thus set for some of the delightful characters whose stories flowed from his pen, to relate in their own special way, how they might have felt about the author himself and the tales he wrote about them.

Standing in the gardens of Eastgate House is the Charles Dickens' Chalet. Dickens' Chalet was a present from Charles Fechter, who was an actor friend. It arrived at Higham Station in 58 packing cases, and it was in this very chalet, at that time located at his home, Gads Hill Place, he wrote his last words. For, in June 1870 Dickens' passed away leaving his novel 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' unfinished.

The Centre uses the latest technology to bring to life much loved characters and scenes from Dickens' novels, and also depicting much of the grim reality of Victorian England.

The Charles Dickens Centre opens every day (except for a few days at Christmas) from 10am to 5.30pm (last admission 4.45pm).

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