

ACTION FORUM

MAY 2013
NUMBER 487

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■



A Rainham Church of England School class celebrating May Day in 1955 with garlands and flowers. Twins Kathleen and Susan Luxton are in the picture. Can you name any other children? Locally Bredhurst School still celebrates in the traditional way with a Fete, this year on May 11th from 2.00 – 4.00pm, at the school. Bredhurst Street will be closed between 1.50 and 2.00pm for the parade lead by the new May King and Queen. There will also be performances of traditional dancing around the May Pole. And all the usual fun of the fair. See the article on May Day Celebrations on page 9.

Robert J. Kitney

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Next Issue June 1st 2013
Copy Date: May 14th Sm Ads May 22nd
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Editorial

I have been told that the articles we have carried recently about a new Active Retirement Club and U3age attracted a lot of interest - so much so that more such clubs are being considered locally. The 'silver surfers' brigade are certainly very prominent in this area and a great many of our churches, clubs and organisations would be lost without their help. However, just like the early years of life (childhood lasts only fifteen years or so) retirees begin to feel their years after a similar period. Many are fortunate and can continue with their chosen activities well into their eighties and beyond but gradually, even for the most energetic, age begins to tell and it is time to hand over to the next generation. The Evacuees Reunion Group held in the Millennium Centre, Rainham are recognising this stage. After all the infant school pupil evacuated in August 1940 is fast approaching their eightieth birthday celebrations. For this reason the club is now open to all families and friends and anyone interested in this period of our history. They hope to attract new members so that those who have served their time can continue to enjoy, as long as possible, the company of others who experienced a similar childhood. Just as importantly they can also pass on their tales and memories so that this extraordinary period of our history is recognised and not forgotten. If you are interested and would like to know more do contact Sharon Evans the secretary on 01634 372189.

Apparently according to an email I received from the RSPB it is International Dawn Chorus Day on 5th May. The RSPB recognise that we're not all early birds but at this time of year they recommend that those among us who prefer a few extra hours of duvet-snuggling make an exception to hear the extraordinary early morning chorus. They say you don't need to be an expert as the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk is packed full of information. If it does not answer your question, they ask that you use the 'Make a Comment' facility online so the site can be improved. I'm not convinced that even this will tempt me to get up and listen but I am sure some of you will enjoy the experience!

The recent short spell of warm, sunny, spring days has wetted our appetite for more of the same please. At last there was some incentive to get out in the garden and belatedly start the new season's planting. Hopefully given some reasonably seasonal weather

everything will catch up and we will be able to enjoy the usual crops.

We have plenty for you to enjoy in our pages this month, organised walks to interesting places or concerts and amateur productions if you prefer the indoor life and of course a sprinkling of Quiz Nights, Coffee Mornings, Horticultural Shows and all the regular club nights ready with a big welcome to new members so do please read on and see what you would like to do in May. Have a good month until we see you again in June.

Correspondence

GRAND CRAFT FAIR

Dear Editor

The Friends of Bredhurst Cats Protection Adoption Centre are holding their annual Grand Craft Fair in the lovely grounds of the Bredhurst Kent Adoption Centre (Matts Hill Road, ME9 7XA) on Sunday May 19th from 11am - 4pm. We have a limited number of tables for hire to local craftspeople to sell their wares. We are particularly interested if anyone wants to sell plants/veg/fruit, our usual stallholder cannot come this year and this is always popular with our many visitors. Please contact Linda 01634 377267 or email lindaligarten@hotmail.co.uk for more details. Please come along for a grand day out with lots of craft stalls, games for the children, raffles and tombolas, CP goods, bric-a-brac, lovely refreshments, and the chance to see some of the cats waiting for loving new homes. Free parking nearby, only 50p entrance.

Yours faithfully,

Linda Ligarten, Co-ordinator, Friends of Bredhurst Cat Adoption Centre.

CALENDAR GIRLS

Dear Editor,

Wigmore MADS are proud to present 'Calendar Girls' by Tim Firth.

Book your tickets early to enjoy this funny, sentimental and captivating true story of WI members persuaded to pose nude for an alternative calendar in aid of charity.

Performances on 6th - 8th June at 8.00pm in the Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Wigmore
Tickets £7.50/£6.50 cons from Sue 01634 370639

Regards
Sue Burrows

BARN DANCE

Dear Editor

I would like to thank all who supported the Kent Air Ambulance Barn Dance in March. We raised £650 for the charity (after expenses). Special thanks to the caller, Ralph Little for a great job well done, and to all who helped and the businesses who donated prizes. Please watch for the next event!

Best wishes
Mary Robson
01634 362415

THE MEDWAY EVACUEES CLUB

Dear Editor,

The Medway Towns have had a WWII Evacuees club in being since 1998, which has proved to be a great success. Originally formed as the "Medway Evacuee Reunion Group (MERG)", it reformed just over two years ago under a new name, "Families and Associates of Medway Evacuees (FAME)", with the new name reflecting a widening of its membership simply because of the clubs popularity.

The club meets on the second Wednesday of the months of March, May, July, September and November. The venue is St Margaret's Millennium Centre, Rainham, with doors opening at 1.30 for a 2.00pm start. An entry fee of £1.50 covers the cost of the afternoon meeting, which includes refreshments and entertainment. There is also a raffle with money prizes. Prior to each meeting members are sent a Club Newsletter to keep them up-to-date with events. Entertainment booked for this year includes: 8th May - A talk by Dr Ann Kneif on the Woman's Land Army; 10th July - Talk by Gillian Ellen the Medway Queen; 11th September - A performance by Irish singer/entertainer Steve Erickson and 13th November - A performance by keyboard player Keith Pilbrow. The committee is also arranging additional social events (days out) and a special Christmas Lunch. The good news is that the committee is now able to open the club to new members and, therefore, extends a friendly invitation to anyone who would like to enjoy a new experience, make new friends and join a unique group of people, the evacuees of WWII. For further information please contact Sharon Evans (FAME Secretary) on 01634 372189.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Davis
FAME Committee

WIGMORE AND PARKWOOD PARISH

We would be grateful for your help.

We are conducting a census of our Parish in order to determine the Catholic population (practising and lapsed) for future planning purposes. If there are any Catholics in your house please call 01634 364134 and leave your house number and street and if you wish your name. The information collected will only be used for this census purpose and to ensure the church's records are up to date.

Thank you from St Augustine's Catholic Church

CHARITY TO SHOWCASE TALENTED WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Kent Wildlife Trust has launched its 6th annual Wildlife Photography Competition to encourage local residents to venture out this spring and summer to capture images of the natural assets of the 'Garden of England'.

The four broad categories cover *Fauna* (mammals, insects, birds etc.), *Flora* (plants, trees, lichens, fungi etc.), *Landscape, Coastline & People* and *Junior* (aged 17 and under). Photographs can be taken at nature reserves, parks, schools, gardens, seaside etc., but must be in Kent.

The competition is free to enter and open to all (Except Trust staff and professional photographers) with super prizes to be won and the winning entries showcased in *Wild Kent* magazine and the Trust's website and at its five visitor centres. An awards evening will be held for the winners at the sponsor's premises - The Barnyard Restaurant at Upchurch near Sittingbourne - in the autumn.

The expert judging panel will be chaired by a representative of the Natural History Museum Photographic Unit.

Closing date for entries is 31st July 2013.

For conditions of entry and an entry form, go to www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk or call 01622 662012 or email info@kentwildlife.org.uk

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Diary 2013

No charge is made for Diary entries
Copy should be in writing either by email to
af@thenet.uk.net or 5 Meresborough Cottages,
Meresborough, Gillingham, Kent ME8 8PP

Diary Copy Date: 14th May

- May 5th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Allan Buchan
10.00am for 5 mile walk Lapwing Drive (Creek end),
Lower Halstow Brief coffee stop midway. Pub at end.
- May 5th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
meet Gill Smith 01622 710569 or 07999 858981
Ickham, (The Duke of William Inn) for a 5 mile gentle
walk along the Little Stour Valley, 16 stiles, no dogs
- May 7th - Dementia Café, St Paul's Church, Long Catlis
Road, 1.00 - 3.00pm, friendly and supportive meeting
place for people with Dementia and their carers. All
welcome, free refreshments details Sylvia Wolfson
07557 111060 sylvia.wolfson@alzheimers.org.uk
- May 7th - Rainham Horticultural Society, Talk The Four
Gardens of the RHS - Graham Usher, 7.30 pm
Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Rainham.
New members welcome, ring 366276 for details.
- May 7th - GHS Floral Art Group, 7.30pm United
Reformed Church, Balmoral Road, Gillingham,
Wendy's Pew Ends, ring 232998 for details.
- May 8th - Medway Evacuees Club, 2.00pm Millennium
Centre, Rainham, A talk by Dr Ann Kneif on the
Woman's Land Army, all welcome £1.50 per person,
ring 01634 372189 for details.
- May 8th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Hempstead
Village Hall, 8.00pm, AGM. New members always
welcome, contact 07951 629444
- May 8th - Rainham Flower Club, Upchurch Village Hall,
7.30pm Demonstration by Janet Hayton Membership
£25, Senior Citizens £20, Member's £3 Demonstration
Evenings Visitor's £6 Demonstration Evenings, £5
Workshop Evenings, Details 01634 863034
- May 8th - Bredhurst WI, 7.30pm Village Hall, Annual
Meeting, No Speaker, ring 01634 389966 for details.
- May 9th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Tools with a
Mission, Trevor Cox, St Matthew's Community Centre,
2.00pm, for over 50s, ring 01634 235507 for details
- May 9th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Village Hall, behind
All Saints Church, Tea and chat, 2-4 p.m. New
members welcome. Phone 01634 366907
- May 9th - Donn Barcott's Five 5 Live, 8.30pm 44Two

- Club Featherby Road, Elaine Diane (Vocals) with
special guest, songs from Great American Song Book
raffle, bar, admission £6 all welcome, 01634 405037
- May 9.10.11.16.17.18 - A great selection of entertainment
at the Oasthouse Theatre to celebrate our Golden
anniversary. Murdered to Death, A comedy by Peter
Gordon Box Office on 0844 8793224 or on-line
www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
- May 10th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets every Friday
9.45am - 12noon for people who have lost a loved one,
join us for a cuppa and chat ring Julie 01634 364309
- May 10th - Quiz Night, send Katie to Russia with the
Guides, 7.30pm Millennium Centre, Rainham. Bring
your own drink, nibbles, glasses and plates. 6-8 per
table, advance booking essential, Tickets £5 per head,
Phone Ann 01634 372680 or Chris 01634 234561.
- May 10th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, United Reformed Church, Balmoral Road,
Gillingham, 7.15pm, AGM & Film, Further
information from Ron Baker 01634 854982
- May 11th - 'May Day' School Fayre, 2.00 - 4.00pm.,
Bredhurst C E P School, May Pole, Ice cream Bouncy
Castle, BBQ, Cake Stall, Coconut Shy, Face Painting,
- May 11th - Christian Aid Coffee Morning, Gillingham
Methodist Church, Third Avenue, Gillingham, 10.00am
- 12noon, Bring & Buy, Cakes, Plants and more
Admission 50p includes refreshments
- May 11th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
meet Stephen Manning 07598 330622 Wallking the
North Downs Way (2) contact Stephen for details
- May 11th - Money Management Course, 10.00am -
1.00pm, St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive,
Admission Free, Refreshments, Contact Sarah Cross for
information sarah@the139club.co.uk or 07731 786 333.
- May 11th - City of Rochester Symphony
Orchestra, Concert of Spanish Music, 7.30pm, Tickets
£9-15 from Central Theatre Box Office 01634/338338.

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- May 11th - RAMASES, An illustrated talk by Jan Picton
'Secrets of the Harem Palace: recent work at Gurob',
Newington Village Hall, 2.30pm, Members £6.00,
Guests £8.00, Tickets at the door. Contact John Dewey
01795 472316 or ramasesnk@hotmail.com
- May 11th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United Reformed
Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gill 7.30 - 10.00pm. New
and experienced dancers welcome with or without a
partner, information ring 01634 366189 or 388546
- May 12th - Volunteer Task Day, Riverside Country Park
10.00am - 2.00pm, register interest 01634 337432
- May 12th, Medway Towns Footpaths Group 10.00am,
meet John Williams 01622 764821 or 07977 614033 at
Shipbourne opposite Church & 'Chaser' pub in Upper
Green Road, for a 5.5 mile walk via Ightham Mote and
Fairlawne Estate, dogs allowed.
- May 12th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Mike Collins
07855 929404 10.00am for 8 mile walk at London -
Richmond Tube Station TQ17947 TW9 1DN Possible
Pub lunch bookable at start or bring a picnic.
- May 13th - Parkwood Leisure Club, Bingo, St Paul's
Church, 2.00 - 4.00pm, new members welcome ring
01634 366056 or 373594 for details.
- May 13th - Monday Hub, St Pauls Church, Parkwood,
10.00am - 12.30pm, light refreshments, conversation,
games etc, all welcome ring 01634 230780 for details.
- May 13th - Medway Scrabble Club, St Stephens Church
Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham alternate Mondays
2.00 - 4.00pm details 01634 230500
- May 13th - Medway Organ Club Concert, 2nd Monday of
each month, Parkwood Community Centre. 7.00pm for
7.30 - 10.00pm, ring Brian Leonard 01634 234694
- May 13th - Rainham Wives, 8.00pm, Methodist Church
Hall, Wakeley Road, Bottle Tombola, in aid of charity,
New members of all ages welcome, subs £1.50 per
meeting, details 01634 230639.
- May 13th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets 2nd Monday
evening each month for people in employment who
have lost a loved one, ring Julie 01634 364309
- May 14th - Medway Antique and Collectors' Club,
Valuations, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham, 7.30
for 8.00 pm all visitors are made most welcome.
Enquiries Miss E Boyes 0147 482 3606
- May 15th - Bredhurst Garden Club, 7.30pm, Village Hall,
Bea Auger - Audio Visual Sequences 'Galapagos
Islands', new members welcome ring 01634 233554

- May 16th - Hempstead Leisure Club, 'Edinburgh Woollen
Mill Show' (see 9th May).
- May 16th - Wigmore Thursday Club, London is Stranger
than Fiction, George Wildridge, (see 9th May).
- May 16th - Rainham Women's Institute 1.45 -
4.00pm, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road,
Annual Meeting and Resolutions, Visitors welcome for
small entry charge per visit. Ring 01634 366276
- May 17th - Jazz Gig, Anchorians Club, Darland Avenue,
Gillingham, 8.30pm Admission £10 Concessions for
Anchorian's club members Enquiries: 01634 365352
- May 17th - Pamper Evening, 6.30 - 9.30pm, Parkwood
Community Centre, Entrance £2, Treatments from £5.
All proceeds to Demelza Hospice for Children, To book
tables £10.00, contact Margaret Lewis 01634 362898 /
07930213718 email febl636@sky.com
- May 17th - BWAG, 7.00pm AGM, Bredhurst Village
Hall, Hurstwood Road, and 'Birds of Bredhurst' by
Owen Sweeney and Larry Brooks, call Vanessa Jones
on 07813 785940 or bwag@vanessajones.plus.com
- May 18th - Bredhurst Information Day, 11.00am -
1.00pm, Bredhurst School, 20 stands, Refreshments,
Free, ring 07813 785940 or clerk@bredhurstpc.co.uk
- May 18th - Rainham South Councillors surgery Parkwood
Community Centre 9.30am - 12 noon. No appointments
- May 18th - Barnardo's Quiz Night, 7.30pm, Twydall
Church Hall, Teams up to 8, £5 pp, Bring own drinks
and nibbles, Fun Raffle and prizes, Free Tea and Coffee
Book 01634 233405 or 375486, Plenty of free parking
- May 18th - Wilsonian Sailing Club Open Day, 10.00am.
Enjoy a day on the water for the family, all free! Email
info@wilsonianse.org.uk or www.wilsonianse.org.uk
- May 18th - Put On a Happy Face, Spring Concert
Wigmore MADS, Community Centre, Drewery Drive,
8.00pm, Tickets £6 (£5 cons) Sue 01634 370639
- May 18th - From Major to Minor in May, concert in aid
of Medway Neighbourhood Watch Association, 7.30pm
Royal Dockyard Church, Chatham, Tickets £8 01634
792131 or on the door Refreshments, Free Parking
- May 18th - Instep Dancing, Rainham School for Girls,
Derwent Way, 8.00 - 11.00pm, Ballroom - Latin -
Sequence dancing, Enquiries 01634 363738 email
s.colins02@btinternet.com
- May 19th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
meet Roger Danks 01634 317993 at Cranbrook Church
free park next to Co-op, 5.5 mile walk, dogs allowed.

Continued on Page 11

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www.rainhamladieschoir.org.uk. We rehearse every
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chair@rainhamladieschoir.uk/. Give us a try.

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May 31st & 1st June
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Friday 17th May, 6.30 – 9.30pm
Parkwood Community Centre Entrance £2,
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To book tables, £10, contact Margaret Lewis 01634
362898 or 07930 213718 email feb1636@sky.com

BREDHURST INFORMATION DAY
Hosted by Bredhurst Parish Council
Saturday 18th May, 11.00am – 1.00pm
Bredhurst School, Hurstwood Rd
Discover the Bredhurst clubs from archaeology and
astronomy to woodland management
Entrance Free, Refreshments for details please email
clerk@bredhurstpc.co.uk or call 07813 785940

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PUT ON A HAPPY FACE
On Saturday 18th May WIGMORE MADs present a
Spring concert 'Put on a Happy Face', full of songs
to make you smile at St Matthews Community
centre, Brewery Drive, Wigmore at 8.00pm.
Tickets £6/£5 concessions from Sue 01634 370639.

BARNARDO'S QUIZ NIGHT
Saturday 18th May, 7.00 for 7.30pm
Twydall Church Hall, Gillingham, Teams of up to 8,
£5 per person. Bring your own drinks and nibbles
Fun Raffle and prizes Free Tea and Coffee provided
Plenty of free parking available

HEMPSTEAD VILLAGE FAYRE
Sunday, 19th May, 11.30am - 4.30pm
Hempstead playing fields in Harrow Road (behind
the Flying Saucer Pub) Packed programme of events.
Great variety of goods on sale from 50+ stalls.
Our main charity this year is BLESMA (British
Limbless ex-Serviceman's Association).
Something for all ages so come for an enjoyable day.

REPTILE RAMBLE
Sunday 26th May, 9.00 – 11.00am
BWAG and the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group
(KRAG) reptile ramble at Bredhurst Wood as part of
the North Kent Walking Festival. Places Must be
reserved in advance - please contact Mike Phillips of
KRAG at treasurer@kentarg.org or 07540 250320

CHARITY QUIZ NIGHT The Multiple Sclerosis
Society. Saturday 8th June, 7 for a 7.30pm start
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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR APRIL

In early April I wrapped up warmly against a bitterly cold wind and headed for the east bank of the River Medway at Burham. Here there are extensive tidal reed beds managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. In winter, reed buntings, bearded tits, snipe, water rail, redshank and bittern can sometimes be found there. The grazing marshes on the landward side of the river bank attract geese, duck and waders which are over-wintering in this country.

I parked my car next to the medieval church of St Mary the Virgin, which overlooks the river and which is a typical Kentish church with a rag stone tower. A carpet of sweet violets growing near the church door were the only noticeable sign of spring. The building is in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust, the centre of population of Burham having shifted in the 19th century towards the North Downs, as a result of the opening of chalk pits for the cement industry. One writer has described St Mary's Church, whose graveyard contains a number of ancient yew trees, as having "a certain sad charm about it".

On my way to the riverside embankment, I passed by a farmyard consisting of an old, clapboarded barn and some more modern, larger barns housing the beef cattle that graze on Burham Marshes in the summer time. A flock of jackdaws were flying around the buildings and calling to each other. As I stood on the embankment, I could see how the river doubles back on itself in the shape of a horseshoe. In the heyday of the Thames sailing barge it was possible to see, from a distance, the red ochre sails of two barges which were going in the opposite direction to each other, but both of which were both heading either downstream to Rochester or upstream to Maidstone.

I myself went upstream, keeping my ears open for the "ping" calls made by bearded tits as they feed in reed beds on seed heads. I neither saw nor heard a tit, but I did flush three snipe, which zigzagged away in a panicky fashion. When the reed beds came to an end, I retraced my steps to the farmyard, alongside a tidal habitat that, at the time of my own visit, appeared to be almost lifeless. Adjacent to the yard was a small

field containing ewes and lambs. Among them was a flock of twelve magpies. In winter, the species can be seen foraging in small groups and the birds I saw may have been feeding on any afterbirth that had been left behind. These magpies were bad news for any birds such as skylarks and lapwing that will be nesting on Burham Marshes in spring.

As it so happened, the very next birds that I saw, as I continued along the embankment, were lapwings, feeding in the waterlogged fields alongside the Medway. In order to lessen the impact of the wind, I sat below the level of the footpath, in the middle of a large stretch of the young, green leaves of cow parsley. It was difficult to imagine that, in a matter of weeks, the embankment would be awash with the delicate white flowers of the plant that has been given the name of "Queen Anne's Lace." Once I had got my binoculars into focus, I could see that the lapwings were accompanied by a couple of redshank and flocks of redwing, fieldfare and starling. All of these birds were searching for worms and grubs such as leatherjackets. Mercifully, I could see no black headed gulls which are apt to ambush any birds, particularly lapwings, seen to be tugging at the end of a worm. Starlings, redwings and fieldfares also eat berries and fruit but, by early April, very few of the holly, hawthorn and ivy berries of autumn were left and the fallen apples and pears in Kent's orchards had either been eaten or had rotted away.

Later on in my walk I noted pairs of shelduck, Canada geese and greylag geese feeding on the grasses of the fields. All of these wildfowl would be residents. A grey heron flew by; it is a familiar bird, readily recognisable by its broad wings and a rather slow and laboured flight. The bird has a diet, in the main, of fish, eels and small mammals such as water voles. Holborough Marshes, on the opposite bank of the Medway, are a Kentish stronghold of the water vole. Our grey heron may well have just left there! When I reached a point on the river bank opposite the rag stone tower of All Saints' Church, Snodland, on the west bank of the Medway, I decided to call it a day. Where I stood was once a little, wooden hut in which local people and ramblers along Pilgrims Way could sit out of the wind and the rain, whilst waiting for the

ferryman to row over from Snodland. As for me, it was a case of a quick walk back to the car, for home, a cup of tea and a hot cross bun.

Joe Ennis

CELEBRATING MAY DAY

May Day is celebrated on the first day of May when warmer weather can be expected and flowers and trees start to blossom. It is said to be a time of love and romance when people look forward to summer. Celebrations have taken place in England for over 2000 years and lots of different customs that are expressions of joy and hope that have evolved after a long winter. The Romans celebrated the festival of Flora, goddess of fruit and flowers, which marked the beginning of summer. Morris dancing, crowning a May Queen and dancing around a Maypole are some of our local traditions. Once it was the custom for every one to go a-Maying early on May Day. Herrick, a 17th century English poet wrote: There's not a budding boy, or girl, this day, But is got up, and gone to bring in May. May Day began early in the morning. People would go out before sunrise in order to gather flowers and greenery to decorate their houses and villages to bring good fortune. Girls would make a special point of washing their faces in the dew of the early morning to make them beautiful for the following year. Then the festivities began, dancing, archery and the highlight crowning the May Queen, the human representative of Flora, who took no part in the games but sat like a queen in a flower-decked chair to watch her 'subjects'. Young girls would make May Garlands. They covered two hoops, one at right angles inside the other, with leaves and flowers, and put a doll inside to represent the goddess of Spring. In the first half of the 20th century this tradition sometimes continued. My mother recalls before she was school age making a garland with her brother and being sent by her mother to next door neighbours to welcome May Day. When teaching in Rainham and Upchurch she continued this with her Infant Class pupils. At Upchurch she asked the children to bring flowers to make the garland - they duly obliged but unfortunately some had found their offerings in other peoples front gardens so this was not well received by the village! However the flowers were put to good use, two pupils were decorated with them, a garland with a doll in the centre was made then paraded around the school whilst the class recited the traditional May Day verse:

"Good Morning Lords and Ladies

It is the first of May

We hope you like our garland

It is so sweet and gay.

The cuckoo comes in April

He sings his song in May

In the middle of June he changes his tune

And in July he flies away.

The cuckoo drinks cold water

To make him sing so clear

And then he sings cuckoo, cuckoo

For three months of the year".

Bredhurst School continues the Mayday celebrations (May 11th this year) with Maypole dancing, the crowning of the May Queen, the pageant of Saint George and the dragon, a procession, and many stalls at their annual Fayre, but I doubt that they include the above verse!

On May Day, people used to cut down young trees and stick them in the ground in the village to mark the arrival of summer. People danced around the tree poles in celebration of the end of winter and the start of the fine weather that would allow planting to begin. Maypoles were once common all over England and were kept from one year to the next. Schools would practice skipping round the pole for weeks before the final show on the village greens. The end results would be either a beautiful plaited pattern of ribbons round the pole or a tangled cat's cradle, depending on the amount of rehearsing.

Morris Dancing, an English form of folk dance, has been performed for hundreds of years. The dancing is very lively usually six or eight dancers arranged in two lines or in a circle, accompanied by an accordion player. They are dressed in colourful costumes with bell-pads tied at their knees possibly carrying white handkerchiefs to shake, or short sticks to bang together as they dance.

May Day (Wednesday, 1st May) is also famous for Jack-in-the-Green awakening ceremonies, as part of the heralding of Spring fertility. It is traditional for dance teams and sweeps to bring Jack to life at the crack of dawn at the picnic area on Bluebell Hill.

Rochester's annual Sweeps Festival celebrates the traditional holiday that chimney sweeps used to enjoy on the first day of May. It was the one time of the year when they could put away their tools and have some fun. The Sweeps Festival is a colourful mix of music, dancing and entertainment. An opportunity to see traditional dances and hear songs which have been passed down through the generations. This year on Monday 6th May, Rochester Sweeps Parade, featuring Jack, will take place at 2.45pm, from the Star Hill end of the High Street and process to the castle grounds. During the three day event there will be a food and drink festival, folk and maypole dancing, a record fair, folk-art stalls, a traditional fun fair and many catering stalls. There will also be a Real Ale Bar.

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Diary 2013

May 19th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Peter/Ann Green 01634 718895 10.00am for 5.8 mile walk and Afternoon Tea Hadlow College, Tonbridge Road, Hadlow TQ635498 TN11 0AL via Lavender farm
May 19th - Hempstead Village Fayre, 11.30am to 4.30pm, Hempstead playing fields, Harrow Road, Packed programme, 50+ stalls. Something for all ages
May 19th - Grand Craft Fair Friends of Bredhurst Cats Centre Matts Hill Road, 11.00am – 4.00pm, tables 01634 377267 lindaligarten@hotmail.co.uk for details. All welcome, free parking, 50p entrance.
May 20th - Parkwood Leisure Club, Alzheimer's Society, (see 13th May).
May 20th - Monday Hub, (see 13th May).
May 20th - Rainham Wives, 'Send a Cow' talk by April Grady (see 13th May).
May 20th - Wigmore WI, Annual Meeting St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, 7.30pm, Visitors welcome, Ring 01634 263405 for details.
May 20th - Rainham Evening WI 7.30pm, Millennium Centre, Resolutions and AGM, competition - Things made from or including Ribbons, ring 01634 262577.
May 21st - Dementia Café (see 7th May).
May 21st - GHS Floral Art Group, Decorated Straw Hat, (see 7th May).
May 21st - RSPB Talk, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30 - 9.45pm £3.00, Silent Spring Revisited – Conor Jameson. www.medway-rspb.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk.
May 23rd - Wigmore Thursday Club, Blytheswood Care, June Tottman, (see 9th May).
May 23rd - Hempstead Leisure Club, (see 9th May)
May 23rd - GHS, Springtime Competition, Star Meadow Sports Club, Darland Avenue, 7.30pm, home grown or owned for three months, www.gillinghamhs.org.uk or email@gillinghamhs.org.uk
May 24th - Indoor Boot Fair, Upchurch Village Hall, 9.00 – 11.00am, Tables (Provided) £5, Refreshments call Lisa 01795 428006, 20p entry for Kent Air Ambulance

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May 24th - Medway Geographical Society, Byron Primary School, Gillingham 7.30 – 9.00pm, AGM followed by members presentations, Everyone welcome, Details Pat Meredith 01634 362683
May 25th - Applause Rural Touring Theatre, Bredhurst Village Hall, 7.30pm 'In Praise of Elephants,' by Kevin Dyer, tickets £8 from 01634 361263
May 25th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 11th May).
May 26th - Reptile Ramble, 9.00 – 11.00am, BWAG and the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group, Book - contact Mike Phillips treasurer@kentarg.org or 07540 250320
May 26th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, meet Michael Dale 01634 374923 or 07847 828249 at Grain car park (free) end B 2001 beyond village for 4 mile flat walk around country park, No dogs.
May 26th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Geoff Ettridge 07525 161766 10.00am car park of Challock Memorial Hall, Blind Lane TR010505 TN25 4AU for 7 mile walk. Pub at end with lunches available.
May 27th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 13th May).
May 29th - Creative Oatmeal Clay Creatures, 10.00am – 12noon Riverside Country Park, accompanied children aged 4 – 12 years. £2 per person, book 01634 337432
May 30th - Beginners Fishing, 9.00 – 11.00am or 1.00 – 3.00pm, Capstone Farm Country Park for beginners and those wanting to improve. All equipment and bait supplied, book early, Suitable for accompanied children aged 8 – 12 years. £10 per person, book 01634 338191
May 30th - Mini-Beast Hunt, 10.00am – 12noon or 1.00 – 3.00pm, Riverside Country Park, accompanied children aged 5 – 12 years. £2 per person, book 01634 337432
May 30th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Talk 'Seaside Piers' (see 9th May).
May 30th - Rainham & District Dolls' House and Miniaturist Group, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside, 7.30pm, Sylvia Wildridge 01634 312038 for details.
May 31st & June 1st - Oasthouse Theatre, Old Tyme Music Hall, Sing along to your favourite songs! Box Office 0844 8793224 or www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
June 1st - Paediatric First Aid Course, 9.30am – 4.00pm St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive. Cost £20 per person. Free refreshments see www.thel39club.co.uk

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June 1st - Beginners Bird Watching (summer), 11.00am - 12noon (classroom) 1.00 - 3.00pm (field based), Riverside Country Park. Not suitable for children under 12 years old. £3 per person, book 01634 337432
June 1st - Jumble Sale, St Augustine's Shaw Memorial Hall, Rock Avenue Gill, 2.00 pm Admission 20p
June 1st - Summer Concert: 'Musical Encores', Detling Singers and Harmony, 7.30pm, Detling Village Hall, supporting local charities, Tickets £7 per person, call Wendy 07816 159668 or Lynne 07811 703154
June 2nd - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Bob and Kath Dyson, 10.00am for 6 mile walk at Loose Hill, near Chequers Pub. Circular walk through Nature Reserve to Boughton Church, pub at end with meals available.
June 2nd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, meet Roger Danks 01634 317993 at Cranbrook Church free car park next to tCo-op, 8 mile walk, dogs allowed.
June 3rd - Monday Hub, (see 13th May).
June 3rd - Parkwood Leisure Club, Ghosts (some local) - Mr Arnold, (see 13th May).
June 3rd - Rainham Wives, 'Macmillan Nurses', our charity talk by Joy Saunders (see 13th May).
June 3rd - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, (see 13th May).
June 4th - Dementia Café, (see 7th May).
June 4th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Imposed arrangement (£4.50 budget)', (see 7th May).
June 4th - Rainham Horticultural Society, Talk The Greenhouse Story - Roland Stevens, (see 7th May).

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June 6th - Wigmore Thursday Club, The UK's Youngest Classical Baritone, Matthew Crane, (see 9th May).
June 6th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Annual General Meeting (see 9th May).
June 6th - 8th - Wigmore MADS 'Calendar Girls' by Tim Firth, 8.00pm, Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Tickets £7.50 (£6.50 cons) from Sue 01634 370639
June 8th - Charity Quiz Night (Multiple Sclerosis Society) St Margaret's Millennium Centre, 7.30pm, Teams of up to 8, £5 per person, Bring own drinks and nibbles, To book ring 01634 238502, 01634 374938 or email JaneMSMedway@gmail.com
June 8th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 11th May).
June 9th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Pete and Kate Ware, 10.00am for 6 mile walk at car park behind Birling Church. Pub at end
June 9th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, meet Roger Norman 01634 232404 07941 965272 at Cobtree car park, Forstal Lane, Aylesford, 5 mile walk Kits City and Elephant House, sloping terrain, no dogs.
June 9th - Volunteer Task Day, (see 12th May).
June 10th - Diabetes Support Evening, 7.00 - 9.00pm, St Pauls Church, Parkwood, presentation Tesco community worker a member of Diabetes UK, ring 07725 238464 medwaydiabetesupport@hotmail.co.uk
June 10th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 13th May).
June 10th - Parkwood Leisure Club, Bingo, (13th May).
June 10th - Rainham Wives, 'Coronation Day Memories' members evening, (see 13th May).
June 10th - Medway Organ Club Concert, (see 13th May).
June 11th - Medway Antique and Collectors' Club, Ordnance Survey Maps, (see 14th May).



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