

ACTION FORUM

DECEMBER 2014

NUMBER 505

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■



We Wish You a Happy Christmas



Rainham High Street about 1906 soon after the trams came from Chatham. Gas lighting had arrived in the village some 35 years earlier in 1870. The centre was transformed by the lights which stretched from High Dewar Road in the east to just west of Orchard Street. One of the early gas lamps can be seen in the centre of the picture illuminating the hub of the village where a policeman could always be found on point duty and available to help sort any problems. See 'Gas Comes to Rainham' on page 9.

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Editorial

'Bounce, buckram, velvets dear;
Christmas comes but once a year:
When it comes, it brings good cheer
But when it's gone, it's never the near.'
Whilst browsing, seeking inspiration for this editorial, I came across this seemingly bit of nonsense under December in Edith Holden's 'A Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady'. Intrigued, as I did not understand the first line at all, I tried the internet for more information. This apparently gave my computer indigestion but after throwing me out a couple of times I managed to glean the information 'author Thomas Miller'. However his long poem about this time of year proved to be a red herring as it merely ends each verse with 'Old Christmas comes but once a year'. Eventually I did find the quote in full with an explanation (you need an awful lot of time to spare once you embark upon these internet searches). Apparently it comes from a Collection of Proverbs published in 1882 and was the conclusion to a mummings play 'Alexander and the King of Egypt' described as a 'bombastic mock play'. These plays were popularly performed at this time of year providing entertainment over the festive season - I suppose television now fills that roll. Bounce Buckram etc seemed to intimate an inability on the part of the mummings to afford velvet and so their adoption of the cheaper material buckram, the rest of the rhyme is self explanatory and the 'Christmas comes but once a year' line often quoted.
Even though Christmas only comes once a year we seem to spend a disproportional amount of time shopping and preparing for the one day and paying for it afterwards! As you would expect our pages include events for the festive period. Carol Concerts, Christingle and Crib Services, traditional Midnight Mass and Christmas Day Services at various churches - you will be made welcome at any of these and so really get into the Christmas spirit.
If you wish to prolong the holiday feeling into January the Oast House Theatre in Rainham are again presenting their popular pantomime (perhaps this is the modern mummings play). This year it is 'Beauty and the Beast'. A fun outing for all the family in an auditorium where you almost become part of the cast. Whatever your plans for the next month whether it is one long round of family get togethers, staying away

with friends or simply enjoying the comfort of your own home do have a Very Happy Christmas and we will see you again in January with our usual combined winter edition.

Correspondence

SPEKES ROAD

Dear Editor,

I have lived in Spekes Road since 1992 and during that time I have repeatedly been asked the same three questions: Have I seen the Brown Lady ghost? Is my garden the one with the lorry buried in it? Is my house built over the Hempstead cave? and I wonder if your readers could provide me with any information about these, either to my e-mail: dave@villatatra.plus.com or through your pages. I have seen the Brown Lady ghost: I was walking home and saw her go round the side of my house (where the "front" door is) and I assumed she was someone dressed in Dickensian costume collecting for charity, but when I turned the corner there was no-one there. From that point there are only three ways she could have gone without passing me, over the top of the house, over a 2 metre high fence or over the locked 2 metre high side gate, not possible in one of those dresses. She was dressed in a bonnet and dress, with a cape over her shoulders, all in brown, hence the name of Brown Lady, but who was she?
The story of the lorry is that at some point between the end of the Second World War and 1992 someone had an ex-army Bedford lorry that broke down, and as at that time scrap had no value they used a JCB to dig a hole, pushed the lorry in and buried it. But if this isn't an urban myth, whereabouts in Spekes Road is it? The Hempstead Cave seems the most well known of the three, but reports vary as to whether it was a den-hole with a short cave off from the bottom, to a cave that went right across Hempstead valley, reappearing in the Capstone valley. Given that the Royal Engineers had a practice area here I wonder if it was some sort of training tunnel? I have been told that one of the garages to a house on the east side of Spekes Road may have been built over the entrance, but other than the fact of its existence, nothing seems very clear.

Yours sincerely,

David Girling,

Villa Tatra, Spekes Road, ME7 3RT

THOUGHTLESS VANDALISM

Dear Editor

I feel I must put pen to paper. Trying to deal with the loss of my husband after almost 60 years in May, I found comfort in having a 'Memorial Bench' put in Wigmore Park.

Now it has been vandalised by three individuals who scratched their names with a sharp instrument either side of the plaque and even scratched that as well. I expect they thought it clever, but to me it has spoilt my walks in the Park with my dog, because I wonder what I shall find next. They no doubt will have a 'Happy Festive Season', but they certainly haven't

helped mine. People who have lost their loved ones will understand how I feel, but vandals have no feelings or respect.

Yours sincerely

Daphne Adams

OTTERHAM

Dear Editor

I would like say a very big thank you for the huge response I received for information regarding my book, Otterham, Kent - Your Heritage. Everyone was most helpful, I am very grateful to so many Action Forum readers. The book is available £5.99, (from December 1st) at Sunburst Bookshop in Station Road, Rainham. If you wish to order via post, the cost is £7.50, please contact Mike Gunnill, 24 Woodruff Close, Upchurch, Kent ME8 7XQ

The inspiration for the book was the building on the very last local brick field, Four Gun Field in Otterham Quay Lane, Upchurch. Recent announcements have been made in Otterham Quay Lane, under Medway Council, for two further housing developments. One between the Clover Lay Industrial Estate and the railway by Persimmon Homes and the other between the railway and London Road (A2) by Gladden Developments. These will total 500 new homes in addition to the 50 agreed by Swale Borough Council on Four Gun Field. The record of local heritage, the original idea of the book, is more important than ever To all who assisted with my project, a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you.

Thank you

Mike Gunnill

RAINHAM WAR MEMORIAL

Dear Editor,

Reading my Action Forum with the usual interest, I have wondered why the Memorial is so badly positioned that it allows any attending visitors the privilege of being liable to be run over on the London Road. This is not a CWG but a locally erected cross and there must be a way for it to be better located. I know the Church Commissioners are not known for their speedy deliberations but the simple solution would be to knock down and rebuild the churchyard wall six feet further back over a distance of, say, twenty feet.

This would allow the cross itself to be moved back that distance and, at the same time, railed off. This would afford it the dignity it deserves.

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I think the short answer is "not a snowball's chance". If the excuse is the standard one (no money), this is not true. It can always be found.

Perhaps, then, one could hear the words of the padre conducting the service undisturbed by passing teenagers on motorcycles with open exhausts.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Stopford R.N.R.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

St. Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham,
Thursday 11th - Saturday 13th December
4.00 - 7.30pm - Free Admission - Mulled Wine and
Mince Pies will be available - All Welcome

CAROL SERVICE

Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group
Sunday 14th December, 3.00pm

St Peters Church Bredhurst. A simple service to remember loved ones and light a candle for them. Everyone, children included, very welcome. Further details from Julie 01634 364309.

DISTRIBUTION Volunteer distributors are needed for:

Rainham

Hawthorne Avenue, Caldew Avenue
Lower Rainham Road, Motney Hill

Wigmore

Wigmore Road (Woodside to Fairview)
The Hazels, Fellows Close, Chamberlain Court

Hempstead

Wildwood, Black Rock, Stalham, Coppice Court
Barncroft and Old Carriageway

Upchurch

The Poles, Church Farm Road, Forge Lane, part of
The Street

If you live near any of these roads or are able to travel to them and could help for about an hour or so during the first week of each month we would be very pleased to hear from you on 01634 310011 (please mention that you are calling about Action Forum) or email af@thenet.uk.net

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Diary 2014

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: 6th January

December 6th - Christmas Fayre, Miers Court School,
11.00am - 2.00pm, Free Entry all welcome.
December 6th - Worzel Gummidge Christmas
Pantomime" A slice of cake and a cup of tea" 2.00pm,
The Centre, next to Travelodge, M2 Services, Farthing
Corner, Tickets £7 adults £5 children, 01634 361117.
December 6th - St Peter's Christmas Fayre, Bredhurst
Village Hall 2.00 - 4.00pm. Entrance 50p, children free.
December 6th - Union of Catholic Mothers, Carol
Concert featuring The Medway Singers, 7.45pm, St
Augustine's Church, Parkwood, Tickets 01634 371897.
December 6th - Christmas Wine and Wisdom St
Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore, 7.30pm,
Tickets £5, details 01634 370492.
December 6th - Autumn Concert, Old Barn Orchestra,
7.30pm Invicta School, Maidstone, £10 on the door.
December 7th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Tony &
Ann vajra.faulkner@tesco.net 01634 406634, 10.00am,
Otford public car park opposite Bull Pub. TQ 525593
TN14 5PG for a 5.3 mile leisurely walk. Bring picnic
lunch. Pub at end
December 7th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Chris Morris 01634 374923 07847
828249, River Valley Upchurch Golf Course overflow
car park, 4 mile easy Christmas Dinner walk, No dogs
December 7th - St. Margaret's Parish Church, High
Street, Rainham, 10.30am Christingle Service
December 8th - Monday Hub, St Paul's Church,
Parkwood, 10.00am - 12.30pm, light refreshments,
conversation, games etc, All welcome, ring 01634
230780 for details.
December 8th - Medway Scrabble Club, St Stephens
Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, alternate Mon
2.00 - 4.30pm, new members welcome, 01634 230500
December 8th, 9th & 16th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa
Sleigh Run, Hempstead, 6.00 - 8.15pm.
December 8th - Medway Organ & Keyboard Club
Concert, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.00 for
7.30pm, Organist - Tim Flint ring Brian Leonard 01634
234694 for details.

December 8th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets 2nd Monday
evening of each month to help people still in
employment who have lost a loved one, join us for a
cuppa and chat ring Julie 01634 364309 for details
December 8th - Rainham Wives, Methodist Church Hall,
Wakeley Road, Rainham 8.00pm, Christmas Evening &
Mince Pies, New members welcome, £2 per visit
includes refreshments, details ring Sue 01634 230639.
December 9th - Gillingham & District Fuchsia &
Pelargonium Society, 7.30pm Rainham School for
Girls, Derwent Way, AGM and Social Evening. For
more information ring 01634 852519.
December 9th - Medway Antique and Collectors' Club,
Christmas Dinner (pre-booking required), St George
Hotel, New Road, Chatham, 8.00 pm visitors welcome.
medwayantiquespublicity1@virginmedia.com
December 10th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa Sleigh
Run, Fairview, 6.00 - 8.15pm.
December 10th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Christmas at Home,
for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
December 10th - Bredhurst WI, 7.30pm Village Hall,
Story Telling, Roisin Murray, visitors welcome, For
details ring 01634 389966
December 11th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Carols and
Readings for Christmas, St Matthew's Community
Centre, 2.00pm, for over 50s, ring 01634 235507
December 11th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Games, tea
and chat, Village Hall behind Church 2.00 - 4.00pm.
Details ring 01634 366907 New members welcome
December 11th - 13th - Christmas Tree Festival, St.
Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham,
4.00pm - 7.30pm - Free Admission, Mulled Wine and
Mince Pies available, All Welcome
December 11th & 12th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa
Sleigh Run, Parkwood, 6.00 - 8.15pm.
December 11th - Donn Barcott Band, 44Two Sports and

Social Club, Featherby Road, Gillingham, 8.30 -
11.00pm, Admission £6, Details ring 01634 405037
December 12th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship
Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets every
Friday 9.45am - 12noon to help people who have lost a
loved one, join us for a cuppa and chat ring Julie 01634
364309 for details.
December 12th - UpARA Monthly Meeting, Upchurch
Village Hall, 2.00pm, Members Free, Guests £2, New
Members Welcome, davidpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
December 12th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, Byron Road Primary School, Gillingham
www.grlhs.weebly.com 7.15pm. 'Village Signs & Their
History' - Avis Harms, Visitors welcome for Ron Baker
01634 854982 or email r.baker1234@btinternet.com
December 13th - Christmas Concert, River Voice
Community Choir, 3.00pm, St George's Centre,
Chatham Maritime, Free Entry, Donations welcome
New members welcome, contact Claire 07890 705698
or cjfrewin@gmail.com
December 13th - Carol Concert, Rainham Ladies with the
UK Paper band. Royal Dockyard Church, Chatham.
ME4 4TE, 7.30pm, Raffle and refreshments in aid of
the Millie Moo Foundation, £7 adults, £3 under 12
01634 370797 secretary@rainhamladieschoir.org.uk.
December 13th - Christmas Songs, Gillingham Methodist
Church, Third Avenue, 7.30pm, Gillingham Male
Voice Choir, Carols for everyone Free Entry.
December 13th - Medway Folk Dance Club, Christmas
Ceilidh, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road,
Gillingham, 7.30 - 10.00pm, new and experienced
dancers welcome, with or without a partner, for more
information call 01634 366189 or 388546
December 13th - Instep Dancing, Rainham School for
Girls, Derwent Way, Christmas Dance ticket only, 7.30
- 11.00pm, for Ballroom - Latin - Sequence Dancing,
details 01634 363738 s.collins02@btinternet.com
December 13th - 'Jingle Those Bells', Wigmore MADS
Christmas Concert 8.00pm, St Matthew's Community
Centre, Wigmore, carols and songs, new and old.
Tickets £6 & £5 concessions, Sue 01634 370639
December 14th - Volunteer Task Day, Riverside Country
Park, 10.00am refreshments , ring 01634 337432
December 14th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet John Williams 01622 764821 07977
614821 Meopham Green car park GR 641652 DA13
0QA, 5.5 mile moderate circular walk, Dogs allowed

December 14th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Camer Country Park meet Graham 07989 753278 for a
5 mile leisurely walk Fairly flat good views on a clear
day. Pub at end with lunches available.
December 14th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Jim
lewislad@hotmail.com 07807 896995, 10.00am, left
hand car park approaching Aylesford Bridge from the
Running Horse roundabout TQ732589 ME20 7AU, for
a 12 mile moderate walk, steep climb between miles 2
and 3. Bring picnic lunch. Pub at end.
December 14th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship
Group, Carol Service, 3.00pm, St Peters Church,
Bredhurst. A simple service to remember loved ones
and light a candle for them. Everyone, children
included, very welcome, details 01634 364309.
December 15th - Monday Hub, St Paul's Church,
Parkwood, (see 8th Dec).
December 15th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa Sleigh
Run, Kenilworth Road, 6.00 - 8.15pm.
December 15th - Rainham Evening WI, 7.30pm,
Millennium Centre, Christmas Party Competition -
Tree Decoration, ring 01634 262577 for details.
December 16th - The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk,
Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 -
9.45pm, £3. Everything you didn't think you needed to
know about trees - Michael Walter. Walks see
www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway
December 17th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Mike,
10.00am, commuter car park just north of Bredhurst.
TQ799629 ME9 0LU for a 7.5 mile leisurely walk via
Darland Banks, Capstone Country Park, Spekes Bottom
and Chapel Lane. Bring picnic lunch. Pub at end.
December 17th - Hempstead Active Retirement
Association (HempstARA), Christmas Party, Scout
Hall, Duke's Meadow Drive, 2.00pm
December 17th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa Sleigh
Run, Lower Beechings Way, 6.00 - 8.15pm.
December 17th - The Wigmore Lectures, Library,
Fairview Avenue, Tickets £3.75, Booking 01634
337799, 8.00pm, Andy Thomas - A Celebratory History
of Christmas
December 18th - Rainham Community Friendship
Christmas Party, Millennium Centre, Rainham, 1.30 -
3.30pm, £2 fee 'Christmas Celebration', details ring
Lance at Hands 01634 577984 or email
community@gillinghamvolunteercentre.com

Continued on Page 11

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Rainham Soldiers World War 1 Experiences in 1914-1915

Lance corporal Percy Eames of the Buffs Regiment from Bredhurst Lane sent a letter home in June 1915 describing his experiences to his parents.

'I have had the terrible experience of being buried beneath sandbags and earth. It was 3-0' clock in the morning of Saturday June 19th. We had just stood to arms when the Germans started shelling us with 12 inch shells. The first shell knocked our trench in about five yards away from me. We stood waiting for the next one, which was not many minutes after the first one and that was the one that did the damage. Three of us fell flat in the trench to avoid being hit and I was the centre one. The men on each side of me were killed, one having his legs and back blown away, the other having his head blown off. I was very lucky and only received a slight head wound and was slightly crushed in the stomach. But I am going on alright and I expect I will be back in the firing line before many days. It took three quarters of an hour to dig me out of the debris. I have gone a bit deaf in both ears on account of the explosion. It is not the workmanship of the Germans that blows our trenches in; it is the volume they put over to us. They fire twelve shells to every one of ours.'

According to the East Kent Gazette Sergeant Frank Baker of the 1st Battalion of the Buffs from Station Road received the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry on September 21st 1915. This happened because he volunteered to go into no man's land and bring back the body of a regimental captain which lay 15 yards from the German lines. Frank Baker and a lieutenant crept to where the body lay then crawling on their stomachs the two men dragged it for about 150 yards and lifted it over the parapet of the British trench. Because of bright moonlight they were subjected to heavy German gunfire but they survived. When Frank Baker

returned to Rainham in December 1915 he attended a presentation in the church hall where Reverend Tamplin presented him with an inscribed watch for gallantry on behalf of the parish of Rainham. Later in 1916 after being made a sergeant-major Frank Baker died having been shot at the Battle of Guillemont in France.

David Wood

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

St. Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham
December 7th, 10.30am Christingle Service
December 21st, 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight
December 24th, 1.30 & 4.00pm Crib Services
Midnight Mass 11.30pm Carols from 11.00pm
Christmas Day December 25th, 9.30am
Family Communion Service

CAROL CONCERT

Saturday 13th December. 7.30pm start.
Rainham Ladies Choir - MD Mr Simon Tatnall
with the UK Paper band.

The Royal Dockyard Church, Chatham. ME4 4TE.

In aid of the Millie Moo Foundation.

Tickets £7 adults and £3 children under 12.

01634 370797 or 613715 or email
secretary@rainhamladieschoir.org.uk.

'JINGLE THOSE BELLS'

Wigmore MADs present their Annual Christmas Concert on Saturday 13th December, 8.00pm
St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive
Come and join us for an evening of carols and songs, new and old. Tickets £6 & £5 cons 01634 370639

CHRISTMAS CONCERT A Christmas Cracker

River Voice Community Choir
Saturday 13th December, 3.00pm
St George's Centre, Pembroke Gate, Chatham
Christmas Music, Raffle, Light Refreshment
Free Entry, Donations welcome
New members welcome, contact Claire
07890 705698 or cjfrewin@gmail.com

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

In November we paid a visit to Box Hill, which is part of the North Downs, between Leatherhead and Dorking in Surrey and which it is owned by the National Trust. Box Hill's mix of grazed down land, woodland and views has attracted visitors over many years. By Edwardian times thousands of Londoners were visiting Box Hill, by train, at weekends and on Bank Holidays. The main approach to the Hill is via a gorge in the North Downs through which runs the River Mole, a tributary of the Thames. A cliff-like slope rises up precipitously from the Mole. On it grows a renowned wood of box trees, one of the very few such woods in Britain. These evergreen trees grow in a density that permits very little else to grow under them. Box Hill was named after the box trees, as was Boxley, near Maidstone. There are just a few box trees in Boxley Wood. Another tree for which Box Hill is famed is the juniper; it is widely scattered on the exposed escarpment of the Hill. From the attractive village of Mickleham, alongside the River Mole, a road ascends up Box Hill in a series of zig zags, like an Alpine pass. It was not therefore surprising that the cycle time trials both at the Olympic Games and the more recent London Surrey Classic were scheduled to take in two ascents of the zig zags. The steep road passes through some of the finest hillside woods of beech and yew trees in England. Both species of tree grow well in the infertile, chalk soils of Box Hill.

We ourselves took the zig zag road, by car, and arrived at the summit near the cafe and shop, adjacent to which are a few juniper trees. In the south of England this scarce tree typically haunts the parched, chalk down lands. In the north, juniper trees are usually found growing with heather and bilberry on moorland. The tree is conically shaped, of a blue-green colour and has a fragrant smell of resin. It is one of just three conifers native to this country, the others being Scots pine and yew. The juniper's aromatic berries can be used to flavour gin. However, native juniper berries have probably not been used on a large scale by British distillers since the 19th century.

These days, berries for commercial use are mostly imported from eastern Europe.

Before commencing our walk on Box Hill, we took in the scene from a view point overlooking Dorking and the Surrey Hills. On the horizon we could see the tower on Leith Hill which, at 1,000 feet above sea level, is the highest point in south east England. We then walked down Juniper Bottom, also known as Happy Valley. The predominant trees were yew and box, the growth of which seem to have crowded out and killed off the juniper trees that once grew there. Yews resist pollution and can flourish in the shade of taller trees, but little can grow in the shade that they themselves create. This native tree can easily outlive any other, partly because its wood is exceedingly strong. Even a very hollow bole can hold together and support heavy branches. The largest yews on Box Hill are probably about 250 to 300 years old. They have squat trunks supporting branches that have sagged to the ground, from where they have sent out suckers. Very few species of insects are attracted to the evergreen yew and box trees. Consequently, we saw no flocks of birds such as tits in Juniper Bottom. Groups of small insect eating birds would normally be found in oak woods, for example, in November. The dense, hard wood of the box tree was once used for printing blocks, chessmen and rulers, among other objects. Now-a-days, it is more commonly used for hedging and topiary and also to provide shoots for wreaths; this sombre evergreen has long been associated with death. The atmosphere among the twisted trunks of the box trees in Juniper Bottom was humid and dark, as a result of the closed overhead canopy. This leads me to mention that evergreen woods can be gloomy and forbidding on dark days and are therefore best visited when the sun is shining, as it was during our own visit. We returned to our starting point via Juniper Top from where we had a view, to the north, of the Chiltern Hills, some 30 miles away, in Buckinghamshire. The down land on the Top has been kept open by centuries of light grazing. Anthills made by the yellow meadow ant indicate that the area has not been ploughed for very many years. In the past, shepherds grazed their flocks on the slopes by day and penned them in folds on the lower arable

fields at night. This reduced the nutrient levels of the soil under the turf and saved the low growing, down land plants, such as rock rose, birds' foot trefoil and wild thyme, from competition by dominant grasses. Whilst resting on the Top we saw a flock of fieldfares, members of the thrush family and winter visitors from Scandinavia, flying overhead. They had presumably been attracted by the berries of the yew, holly, wayfaring, hawthorn and whitebeam trees on Box Hill. Before leaving the Hill, we enjoyed tea and cake in the National Trust cafe.

Joe Ennis

GAS COMES TO RAINHAM

At the beginning of the nineteenth century engineers and inventors had been experimenting with gas for lighting, and the first public street lighting using it was demonstrated in Pall Mall, London, in 1807. The world's first gas company was the Westminster Gas Light and Coke Company, set up in 1813, and by 1859 about a thousand gas works had sprung up to meet the demand for the new fuel, which was made by heating coal.

Gillingham's Gasworks were in being by 1860 Rainham was not to be left behind: a contemporary account reports that 'The 24th February 1868 will be remembered as the day on which gas lighting was first introduced to Rainham Street. An illuminated star was exhibited at the White Horse in honour of the event, but the wind somewhat interfered with the success of the experiment. The unusual sight, however afforded great pleasure to a considerable number of lookers-on.... Now that gas is obtainable, it will be for the parishioners to decide whether the darkness of the street shall be enlightened and the church be at once warmed and illuminated'. There was much discussion by members of the Vestry and others about whether St Margaret's Church should be lit using gas, whose bright light would make it possible to hold services and meetings during winter evenings.

'Vestries' were the bodies of local Gentlemen who ran their villages, ensuring that roads were maintained, the poor looked after, law and order observed and so on, appointing inspectors and overseers to ensure that duties were carried out. Their role today has been assumed partly by national government and partly by local councils. In January 1870 the Parish magazine reported

'The lighting of Rainham Street with Gas is now an accomplished fact. So far as relates to a district beginning at the Station, and containing the Street from Mr G. Green's to Drury Lane, the provisions of the Act were unanimously adopted by the Vestry. The following gentlemen were chosen Inspectors:- Mr Walter, Dr Knight, Mr Miles, Mr Moss, Mr Atkins, and Mr Turner, who subsequently appointed the Vicar, Treasurer, and Mr John Longley, Secretary. The Lamp-lighter is Henry Honey; he entered on his duties on Christmas Eve, when the lights were lighted for the first time.' Although the Inspectors, (mostly wealthy or at least prosperous employers) were addressed as MR, Henry Honey, a 34-year old baker, does not qualify for the title.

'Drury Lane' is currently called High Dewar Road, but it has also been known as Hydors Lane. 'Mr G. Green's' was just to the west of Orchard Street - there were very few houses or businesses beyond that point. Many old photos show some of Rainham's early lamp standards, with a short horizontal bar just below the lantern against which the lamplighter rested his ladder.

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Diary 2014

December 18th - Rainham Women's Institute, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road, 1.45 - 4.00pm, Christmas Party. Visitors welcome for small entry charge per visit, Ring 01634 366276 for details.

December 18th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Informal Meeting - tea and chat, (see 11th Dec).

December 18th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Christmas entertainment and refreshments, (see 11th Dec).

December 18th & 19th - Gillingham Lions Club Santa Sleigh Run, Twydall, 6.00 - 8.15pm.

December 20th - Granary Evangelical Church, Oasthouse, Granary Close, Rainham - Christmas Carol Service 3.00pm, free coffee & mince pies. Ring 01634 310959, Transport available. www.granary-church.org.uk

December 21st - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438, Parkwood Shops car Park Long Catlis Road GR 808642 ME8 9PN, 6 mile moderate pre Christmas walk some street / lane walking. No dogs

December 21st - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Arthur & Jan arthur.waters@sky.com 01634 711734, 10.00am, the green near the church and Swan PH in West Peckham. TQ 644525 ME18 5JN for a 6.3 mile leisurely walk with one reasonably steep climb at the beginning. Pub at end with lunches available.

December 21st - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Jim jimbush46@btinternet.com, 10.00am, Chilham village car park, bottom of the hill. TR067536 CT4 8BZ for a 9 mile moderate walk visiting Godmersham with good views. Bring a picnic. Pub and tea room at the end

December 21st - St. Margaret's Parish Church, Rainham, 6.30pm Christmas Carols by Candlelight

December 21st - A peaceful, magical candlelit Christmas Service with buffet after, 6.30pm - 9.30pm, All welcome, The Centre, next to Travelodge, M2 Services

December 21st - Quiz Evening, 7.30pm, Rainham Oasthouse, admission £2.50 (£2 members), rolls 60p each, for details ring Maggi 01634 610391.

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December 22nd - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 8th Dec).
December 23rd - UpARA, Coffee Morning, Upchurch Village Hall, 9.30am - 12.30pm, Members £1.50, Guests £2, New Members Welcome, for details email

Chairman David Powell davidpowell5@hotmail.co.uk

December 24th - St. Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham, 1.30 & 4.00pm Crib Services, Midnight Mass 11.30pm (Carols from 11.00pm)

December 25th - St. Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham 9.30am, Family Communion Service

December 25th - Granary Evangelical Church, Oasthouse, Granary Close, Rainham - Christmas Day Service 10.30am, free coffee & mince pies. (see 20th Dec).

December 28th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Tony & Ann 10.00am, 01634 406634, vajra.faulkner@tesco.net
Leeds Church car park TQ825533 ME17 1RL for a 5.1 mile leisurely walk, Bring picnic lunch. Pub at end.

December 30th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Mike, 9.20am, Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre. where we get the 9.27am number 130 bus to Maidstone, for a 8.5 mile moderate linear walk back.

December 31st - Instep Dancing, New Years Eve Dance, 7.30pm - 12.30am, (see 13th Dec).

January 1st - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Geoff geoff.rambler@me.com 07525 161766, 11.00am, Wouldham, All Saints Church TQ712644 ME1 3TD for 4 mile moderate fairly strenuous climb - particularly after a week spent on the sofa Pub at end.

January 1st - Medway Organ & Keyboard Club Concert, Organist - Matthew Basin, (see 8th Dec).

January 3rd - Medway Folk Dance Club, New Year Dance, (see 13th Dec).

January 3rd - New Years Party, Peter's Place, 7.30pm, Southall Suite, 44two Club, Featherby Road, Gillingham ME8 6AN, £10 adult, £30 Family Ticket, ring 01634 570443 for tickets.

January 4th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Jim lewislad@hotmail.com 07807 896995, 10.00am, Teynham Station (No parking charge) TQ956631 ME9 9EA for a 6 mile moderate walk, two gates to be climbed and one narrow bridge with no hand rails, suggest boots as might be muddy. Bring picnic lunch.

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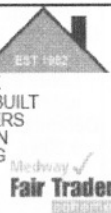
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Diary 2015

January 4th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
meet Roger Danks 07866 971819, Yalding, Anchor Inn,
GR 695499, 6 mile moderate walk, dogs allowed.
January 5th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 8th Dec).
January 8th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Games, tea and
chat (see 11th Dec).
January 8th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Talk -
'Prostitution in Victorian Medway' (see 11th Dec).
January 9th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society 'Innovations of the Stuart Period' David
Carder, (see 12th Dec).
January 9th, 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & 31st - Beauty & The
Beast' by Stage Right Creative Ltd, A traditional family
pantomime, Oasthouse Theatre, 8.00pm, matinees
every Saturday 2.00 & 5.00pm. (24th January extra
matinee 11.00am) Box Office 0844 8793224
January 11th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet David Brown 01634 373833, Newnham
park in The Street near George Inn GR 955576 ME9
0LL, 5.5 mile moderate circular walk. Generally flat,
some hills, may be muddy if wet. No dogs
January 11th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Heather
07887 750881, 10.00am Yalding, Anchor Inn
TQ687503 ME18 6HG Parking unavailable, free, on the
roadside by the canal or for a charge, at the Lees, for a
6 mile leisurely walk from Teapot museum only one
noticeable hill, short snack break midway. Lunch
available at the Anchor Inn or tea and snacks at cafe.
January 11th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet John
billingsjc@blueyonder.co.uk 07749 760788, 10.00am,
Camer Country Park, near Sole Street TQ649669 DA13
0XU for 11.5 mile moderate circular walk. Bring picnic
lunch. Pub midway. Pub at end with lunches available.
January 12th, 19th & 26th - Baby Massage Course, 10.00
- 11.00am, St Paul's Church, Parkwood, £5 for entire
course, To enrol contact Elaine Wheeler 01634 379360
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January 12th - Rainham Wives, New Year Party,
members evening, (see 8th Dec).

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January 13th - Medway Antique & Collectors' Club,
History of Doll's Houses with examples - George
Wildridge, (see 9th Dec).

January 14th, 21, 28 & February 11th, Free 'Silver
Surfers' beginners IT courses, 3.15 - 4.15pm. Rainham
School for Girls, Details from Mrs Moon 01634 362746

January 14th - Bredhurst WI, Dr. Ann Kneiff - Women's
Land Army, (see 10th Dec).

January 14th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Quiz
Night, (see 10th Dec).

January 14th - The Wigmore Lectures, Library, Fairview
Avenue, Tickets £3.75, Booking 01634 337799,
8.00pm, Prue Waller - Ropemakers, a film made in
2007 about the naval dockyard at Chatham.

January 15th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Phrases and
Sayings - Part 2, Paul Warren, (see 11th Dec).

January 15th - Hempstead Leisure Club, New Age
Curling, Bocchia, card games, (see 11th Dec).

January 17th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Margaret
magloul@yahoo.co.uk 01795 843927, 1.00pm, Lower
Halstow TQ859674 ME9 7DZ for a 5.5 mile moderate
walk with Afternoon Tea or Soup on the Edith May
Barge (Meet at main entrance to Brickfields park in
Lapwing Drive, book before 10th Jan for tea, approx £5
payable on the day. Walk could be muddy in places

January 17th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 13th Dec).

January 18th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Simon and
Mandy simonellwood@hotmail.com, 10.00am, Cuxton,
White Hart Pub TQ713666 ME2 1AA for a 8.5 mile
moderate walk, no harsh climbs, picnic for midway

January 21st - Bredhurst Garden Club, 7.30pm, Village
Hall, Talk - 'Pruning of garden Fruit Trees & Shrubs',
Hyacinth Show, Ring 01634 233554 for details

January 23rd - Medway Geographical Society, Byron
Road School, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.00pm 'Sradinia and
Corsica' - Mrs Elizabeth Sillifant, 01634 362683.

January 24th - Quiz Night for Macmillan Cancer Support,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, 7 for 7.30pm sharp, £6
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