

ACTION FORUM

May 2015
NUMBER 509

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■



Early in the 20th century plans were drawn for woodland south of Rainham to become residential and a road layout outlined. During the 1930s plots of land were sold throughout Wigmore to anyone who wished to have a weekend retreat. At £10 a plot many were bought by townspeople wishing to escape to the country. Huts soon appeared, some of which can still be seen, and during the following decades many were upgraded and rebuilt as Wigmore expanded. Can anyone identify this building or name the children playing in the garden?

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AF

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Editorial

Centennial anniversaries from the First World War will feature largely in the news for the next three years as horrific milestones are reached. The numbers of casualties at the famous battles of The Western Front at Ypres, the Somme and Verdun were often concealed at the time lest the home front became totally dispirited. Nevertheless as the dreaded telegrams arrived it must have been obvious to most that things were not going well. This was compounded in our area by two tragedies in the Medway estuary. On 26th November 1914 HMS Bulwark, a 15,000 ton battleship, was moored at buoy number 17 at Kethole Reach on the River Medway. She was taking on coal from the airship base at Kingsnorth, on the Isle of Grain. At 7.50am, as the crew were having breakfast, an explosion ripped the ship apart killing 745 men and 51 officers. Only 14 sailors survived and five of these died later of their wounds. At the following enquiry it was found that much of the ammunition for the ships guns had been stored in the corridors between the 11 magazines, and that either a fault with one of the shells or overheating cordite near a boiler room bulkhead could have started a chain reaction which destroyed the ship. Barely had Medway come to terms with this disaster then HMS Princess Irene exploded at 11.14am on 27th May 1915, again many locals witnessed the moment or certainly heard the blast. David Wood describes this event on page 9 in his latest article about the First World War. Sadly both disasters were put down to human errors the result of inadequate training and pressure to provide more ammunition than was realistically possible. Last month our front page picture was of a group of Rainham schoolchildren and I am pleased to say we can fill in one of the missing names, the girl holding the trophy is Pamela Stickings who used to live in Maidstone Road, Rainham. Kent Wildlife Trust are appealing for help to protect our roadside verges. Apparently in Great Britain, verges are breeding habitats for 20 out of 50 mammals, 40 out of 200 birds, all 6 reptiles, 5 out of 6 amphibians and 25 out of 60 butterfly species. In Kent alone, there are 8,000 km of roads, many of which have rare species on their verges. At Bluebell Hill a 1km stretch harbours over 15,000 orchids in a glorious sea of pink. Rare animals and plants include green-flowered helleborine in Eynesford, near Sevenoaks

and the Adonis blue butterfly on several verges around the county. 9 different species of butterfly were recorded along a 2 metre wide verge, adjacent to arable land. To find out more about the work of Kent Wildlife Trust and how you can help visit their website www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk. Another month gone and the year almost half over! Make the most of the summer – if it ever warms up. At least it looks bright outside when the sun shines even if we do still need our winter jackets. Have a good month until we are with you again in June.

Correspondence

FLOWER FESTIVAL

Dear Editor,

A Flower Festival is to be held in St. Peter's Church, Bredhurst, from 23rd May to 25th May, and on 30th May, from 10am - 5pm. Light refreshments will be available and cream teas from 1 - 4pm. The church will also be open from 26th - 29th May, 1 - 4pm.

Yours sincerely
Pam Merryweather

WATERSIDE LANE

Dear Editor,

I was born in 1950 at 21 Waterside Lane, Gillingham (off Gads Hill). We moved when I was two years old so I have no memories or information on the house its history or its surroundings. When my parents were alive they told me some lovely stories about the house it sounded very old possibly hundreds of years old. I have tried looking for pictures and information but sadly have so far come up with nothing. Apparently there was a row of cottages overlooking an orchard, near where the Startrite factory was, now the new houses. I would love to hear if any of your readers perhaps lived there or know of any history and photos of that area (copies of photos of course). I would be so happy and grateful if anyone can help me.

Yours sincerely
L Sharplin

86 Romany Road, Gillingham ME8 6TX

WIGMORE GARDENS WEEKEND

Dear Editor,

Readers are invited to the biennial Wigmore Gardens Weekend on the 20th & 21st June 2015. Over fifteen very different gardens will be open at various times during the two days for people to wander around and enjoy. Plants and other items will be available for sale, together with lunches and refreshments.

Admission into each garden on the day is £1 or by a programme allowing entry into all gardens over both days for just £6. Details of the gardens will be posted on St Matthew's Church notice board in Drewery Drive, Wigmore and on www.stmattswigmore.org.uk. Programmes can be purchased at any garden on the day or in advance from me on 01634 387328.

Kind regards
Paul Bellerby, Gardens Co-ordinator.

20th GILLINGHAM SCOUT GROUP

Dear Editor

Based in Hempstead we are looking to recruit more volunteers for all our sections. If you have some time to spare and are aged 18+ please get in touch. More details of our group can be found on our web page www.20thgillingham.com. If you are interested please contact Roger Lovesey, Group Scout Leader - rpl.gsl@gmail.com or 07792 065638. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
Roger Lovesey

HANDS & GILLINGHAM VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Dear Editor

Hands & Gillingham Volunteer Centre are looking for volunteers in Medway to assist for just a few hours each week with our gardening and transport services for the elderly and disabled. We also host monthly Community Friendship Groups in Twydall and Rainham and a lunch club in Twydall.

To find out more about volunteering, gardening, friendship groups/lunch or our Transport Scheme please contact us on 01634 577984 or email: enquiries@gillinghamvolunteercentre.com

Yours sincerely
Natalie Taylor

Project Manager Hands & Gillingham Volunteer Centre, 62 Watling Street, Gillingham

MARIE AND JAMES STEWART

Did anyone know my mum and dad Marie and James Stewart? Dad was in the Royal Navy (Chatham Rating) and they lived in Ash Road Strood in 1955 and 47 Taverners Road Rainham 1958. They also had their honeymoon in Gillingham - February 1955, and my big brother was born whilst they were at Strood. They moved to Malta for two years before returning to Rainham. My dad (Jim) died in May 1958 and I was born in August 1958. This is one reason for my search. Can you help? Phone 0061 432 530080 (Australia) or Email jeffirstewart@live.com

LILIES ON THE LAND BY THE LIONS PART

Oasthouse Theatre

May 7.8.9.14.15.16 Curtain up at 8.00pm
Lilies on the Land is a revealing, funny and wonderfully moving portrait of four women who sign up to join the Women's Land Army during the Second World War.

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Based on one hundred and fifty letters and interviews with original Land Girls, along with songs from the period, Lilies on the Land charts the personal journeys of four women who join the Women's Land Army – determined to work endless backbreaking hours on farms across the country in a bid to do their best for the War Effort.

But how do these women, all hailing from different walks of life, torn from their families and bereft of all basic home comforts, deal with the hardships of farming life and the pressures of war? This is a moving and amusing account of how these plucky women survived and is a tribute to the contribution they made during the Second World War. Box Office on 0844 8793224 or on-line www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk

MAKING TIME FOR A CUPPA

& supporting Alzheimer's UK at our monthly meeting at St Margaret's Millennium Centre, Gate Keeper Chase, ME8 9BH. Join us at 11.30am - 12.30pm on Monday 11th May 2015 and then the first Monday of the month thereafter for a friendly, informative and entertaining meeting to share knowledge and experiences of living with Dementia. Call Kerrie at Bluebird Care (Medway) on 01634 780909 for further details and information.

HEMPSTEAD VILLAGE FAYRE

Sunday, 17th May starting at 11.30am

Harrow Road Playing Field (behind The Flying Saucer Pub). We are again supported by a variety of 60 stalls, games and attractions. Something for everyone to enjoy including Arena Events throughout the day. Come along and join in the fun. Free admission.

If you would like a stall please contact Val by email valeriegorf@blueyonder.co.uk or telephone 01634 230214

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Diary 2015

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: May 26th

May 2nd – 30th - Art Exhibition, Wigmore Library by members of Rainham Art Club
May 3rd - Bluebell Walk Friends of the Wisdom Hospice 4.5km Buckmore Park Scout Campsite, all welcome Entry £5 pp See www.fowh.org.uk or 01634 831163
May 3rd - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Ade 01634 306405 adeballard@yahoo.co.uk, 10.00am, Yalding village war memorial TQ699503 ME18 6JA 7 mile leisurely walk, picnic lunch Pub at end with lunches
May 3rd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet John Trebill 01634 244045 Cobtree Manor Country Park, Forstal Road, Aylesford GR744587 ME14 3AX Toilets and Café 6.5 mile moderate walk some road walking. No dogs
May 4th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 11.00am Paige Stewart Appeal 5 mile walk from Rainham Shopping Centre car park easy walking around Berengrave Nature Reserve with complimentary refreshments and Kaddy Lee-Preston in attendance.
May 4th - Reiki Kyokai Led by Robert Jefford, 8.00 – 10.00pm, Ramada Encore Chatham Historic Dockyard, £12 per person, open to All, Booking Essential. For details and book email kentreikishares@gmail.com
May 5th - Rainham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, 'Design Ideas from Visiting some British Gardens' - Malcolm Withnall, New members welcome, ring 01634 366276
May 5th - Rainbow Whist Drive, Bredhurst Village Hall Hurstwood Road, 7.30pm A partner is not needed and all whist players are welcome, Details 01634 610364
May 5th - GHS Floral Art Group, United Reformed Church (rear hall) Balmoral Road, Gillingham, 7.30pm 'Beneath the Waves' Seascape petite arrangement, New members welcome, first visit free, no experience needed For details contact Kaye Buss 01634 232998 or email kayebuss@btinternet.com
May 7th - Wigmore Thursday Club, English Concertina, Sandra Sharp, St Matthew's Community Centre, 2.00pm, for over 50s, ring 01634 234712 or 01634 372508 for details.

May 7th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board games tea and chat. Village Hall behind the Church 2.00 - 4.00pm. New members always welcome. 01634 366907
May 7.8.9.14.15.16 - Lilies on the Land by The Lions Part, Oasthouse Theatre, Curtain up 8.00pm, moving portrait of four women who sign up to join the Women's Land Army during World War II. Box Office on 0844 8793224 or www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
May 8th - 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 Julie 01634 364309
May 8th - UpARA, Upchurch Village Hall, 2.00pm, Members Free, Guests £2, New Members Welcome, For details email davidpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
May 8th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History Society www.grlhs.weebly.com Byron Road Primary School, Gillingham, 7.15pm.AGM, Tea and coffee available prior to the meeting at a small charge details Ron Baker 01634 854982 or email r.baker1234@btinternet.com
May 9th - Craft Market, St Margaret's Millennium Centre, 9.00am – 12.30pm Free entry, Stalls £5 from carole@cdadswell.freemove.co.uk or 07779 366054
May 9th - RAMASES Newtoning Village Hall, 2.30pm, Lecture given by Lucia Gahlin 'The iconography and ideology of Nefertiti and the Amarna Royal women' Members £7, Guests £9 Tickets at the door, email ramasesnk@hotmail.com or John Dewey 01795 472316
May 9th - Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra, Applause Rural Touring Scheme, 7.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, Tickets £9 from Ann Keeble 01634 361263,
May 9th - Family Barn Dance - Lower Halstow Memorial Hall, 7.30pm, bring your own supper and drink £5 per person call 01795 844408.
May 9th - Joining Voices, 7.00pm, Britannia Theatre, Dickens World, Dockside, Tickets £10 from joiningvoices.tickets@hotmail.com or 07816 159668 or 07979 693205, in aid of Help for Heroes

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May 9th - 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. For more information ring 366189 or 388546
May 10th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Chris, 01634 360270 chris.strachan@live.com, 10.00am, Woodland Trust free car park Church Road Hucking Estate ME17 1QT (not Hook and Hatchet PH) for 8.75 mile moderate circular walk, some hills, one significant climb, picnic lunch for midday break. Pub near the end.
May 10th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am Meet Brian Gevaux 01634 235883 Chatham Whiffens Avenue top car park (£2) GR759681 ME4 4SE 'Walk Through History' 5 mile moderate road walking, climb up and steps down. No dogs
May 10th - Wheels for Wisdom, 45km or 75km Bike Ride Registration £15 - £20, See www.fowh.org.uk ring 01634 831163 or email info@fowh.org.uk
May 10th - Treasure Hunt 12noon from The Hungry Fox, Hempstead, £10 per car, prize for winner, proceeds to 25 Parkwood ATC. Details 01634 328888 or 388713
May 11th - Monday Hub, St Paul's Church, Parkwood, ME8 9PN, 10.00am - 12.30pm all welcome.
May 11th - Making Time for a Cuppa & supporting Alzheimer's UK, St Margaret's Millennium Centre, 11.30am - 12.30pm, share knowledge and experiences of living with Dementia. Call Kerrie at Bluebird Care 01634 780909 for further details and information.
May 11th - Medway Scrabble Club, St Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, alternate Mondays 2.00 – 4.30pm, new members welcome, 01634 230500
May 11th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham, meets 2nd Monday evening 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
May 11th - Medway Organ & Keyboard Club Concert, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30pm, Organist - John Bailey, ring Brian Leonard 01634 234694 for details
May 11th - Rainham Wives, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road, Rainham 8.00pm, 'A First Class Hobby' talk by Paul Warren, New members welcome, £2 per visit includes refreshments, ring 01634 230639.
May 12th - Gillingham and District Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society, 7.30pm, Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way, 'What we expect from Fuchsias' – Derek Luther, for details ring 01634 852519

May 12th - Medway Antique & Collectors' Club, St George Hotel, New Road, Chatham, 8.00pm, 18th Century London China dealers - Nicholas Panes, All visitors are made most welcome. Enquiries medwayantiquespublicity1@virginmedia.com
May 13th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Arthur/Jan 01634 711734, 10.00am car park adjacent to 103 Albatross Avenue, Strood TQ710690 ME2 2XP for a 4 mile leisurely walk. Pub at end with lunches
May 13th - Bredhurst WI, 7.30pm Village Hall, Annual Meeting –, visitors welcome, details 01634 389966
May 13th - Rainham Flower Club, Upchurch Village Hall, 7.30pm, Demonstration 'Where ever it may take me' by Sylvia Cheeseman, for details ring 01634 864572 or see www.rainhamflowerclub.co.uk
May 13th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, AGM, for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
May 14th - Wigmore Thursday Club, The History of The Royal Variety Performance, Dean Caston, (7th May).
May 14th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Outing to Highgrove Garden Centre. No meeting in Village Hall.
May 14th - Newtoning History Group, 7.00pm, Newtoning Methodist Hall - 'High Street Stroll', Historians Alan Abbey and Thelma Dudley, reveal lesser-known sights along the narrowest part of the A2. Refreshments, Guests £3, Members free, Contact 01795 842711 or thelma@newingtonhistory.co.uk
May 14th - Donn Barcott's 'Five 5 Live', 44Two Sports and Social Club, 8.30pmFeaturing Elaine Dyan and Andrew Hawkes Magician, Admission £6 all welcome, Details 01634 405037
May 15th - UpARA Village Walk, 10.00am, Meet car park Upchurch Village Hall, Good exercise, good fun, good company, The more the merrier! Details email davidrpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
May 15th - Bredhurst Woodland Action Group AGM, 7.00pm, Village Hall, guest speaker, Mike Bax, Chairman of Kent Wildlife Trust presenting 'Byways, Public Access and a Home-Grown Conservation Project'. Members and non-members welcome, details 07813 785940 or email bwag@vanessajones.plus.com
May 16th - Craft Fair 10.00am - 12.30pm, Millennium Centre, Rainham. Tables £10 all proceeds to Macmillan Cancer Support. Call Jean Mardel 01634 388111 or Jean Higgins 01634 233930 to book.

Continued on Page 11

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ART EXHIBITION

at Wigmore Library by members of Rainham Art
Club between 2nd May & 30th May 2015

BWAG'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Bredhurst Wood Fayre - 'Tread Lightly Through the
Woods' Bredhurst Village Hall & Bredhurst Woods
Saturday 30th & Sunday 31st May, 10am - 4.00pm
Join BWAG for a weekend of celebrations with
demonstrations of traditional woodland crafts in the
village hall and throughout the woods. Forest school
activities, storytelling, tractor rides, displays, shire
horses, art workshop, locally produced food & beer,
music & theatre Something for all the family
Free admission For details please call Vanessa Jones
07813 785940 email bwag@vanessajones.plus.com

MEDWAY HISTORY DETECTIVES

Thursday June 4th, 2.00pm

A new local history group invites you to a free talk
on the Kentish winners of the Victoria Cross (Glen
Jones) and Living in Rock Avenue, based on the
censuses 1891-1911 (Christine Rogers).
Please bring any old photos you have of Gillingham
to share with us. Booking is essential. Please contact
Christine Rogers on 01634 581462 or email
medwayhistory@hotmail.com and the full venue
address in Canterbury St Gillingham will be supplied

PAMPER EVENING

Friday 5th June, 6.30 - 9.30pm

Parkwood Community Centre

Entrance £2. Treatments from £5.

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TREASURE HUNT

Sunday 10th May, 12noon

Departing from The Hungry Fox in Hempstead
£10 per car with a prize for the winner

All proceeds will go towards funding the activities of
25 Parkwood Squadron ATC.

For more information ring 01634 328888 or 388713

HARTLIP OPEN GARDENS

Sunday 7th June, 11.00am - 5.00pm

A wonderful array of nine gardens will be opening
including wildlife, paddock, walled, formal/informal,
large country house and small cottage, which can be
visited by a circular walk around the lanes of our
village, all within walking distance of the Church
located in the centre of the village. The Village
School garden, Methodist Chapel garden and
Allotment gardens will also be open to explore

Admission: £5 each, accompanied children free

Refreshments: Available throughout the day:

From 11am tea, coffee & cake served in the tranquil
surroundings of the village Church -

From 12.00noon Ploughman's Lunches at the
Methodist Chapel. Our village pub The Rose and
Crown will also be open for lunches

Sale of plants: to take place on the School Lawn -
Grand Raffle with one main prize. In addition to the
plant sales artist Pauline Findlay will be displaying
her contemporary original outdoor fused glass
designs at Woodpecker House, available to purchase.

Event Passports: Tickets available on the day from
The Church located in The Street, car Park on Lower
Hartlip Road as well as all participating gardens

Free Parking: in field adjacent to Rose & Crown
pub on Lower Hartlip Road

Further information contact: Nikki 01795 841182 or
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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR APRIL

Faster than fairies, faster than witches, bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle, all through the meadows, the horses and cattle:

"From a railway carriage" by Robert Louis Stevenson
1850 to 1894

In April, some friends and I took a trip on the Bluebell Railway in East Sussex. The line, which runs for 20 miles between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead, passes through a hilly countryside of woods and fields. The latter are largely pastoral, being used for the grazing of sheep, horses and cattle. The line was originally built by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway in the 1880s. It was part of an alternative route between Brighton and London via East Grinstead and was built to main line standards. I went on the trip not only to pursue my interest in railways but also to see the bluebells after which the line is named. Bluebells are popularly regarded as Britain's national flower and a sea of bluebells provides one of the most glorious spectacles in the botanical world. According to the late Dr Oliver Rackham, a one-time botanist at Cambridge University, bluebells grow in this country on a larger scale than anywhere else. They are widely considered to be woodland plants but, in general, do not need woods in order to thrive. More importantly, they need humidity and continuity of habitat. Bluebells grow in open spaces in the damper west of Britain, from the Cliffs of Cape Wrath in Sutherland down to Land's End. On The Lizard in Cornwall bluebells can be found among rocks and boulders only feet from the surf. They grow along the hedgerows and deepest lanes of Devon in company with flowers such as red campion and lesser stitchwort. Especially in eastern England, bluebells in hedgerows or in bracken are a sign of woods that have disappeared. Those bluebells that do grow in deciduous woods seize the opportunity to emerge and to flower before the leaves of the trees in the woods come out and cut down on the light. An impressive display of bluebells, within easy reach of Rainham, can be found in Bredhurst Wood, which is

managed by Bredhurst Wood Action Group See www.bwag.org.uk.

After a coffee together in the restaurant of Sheffield Park Station, my friends and I departed on the first train for East Grinstead. The engine and the coaches had been built by the South Eastern and Chatham Railway in the early part of the 20th century. Immediately on leaving the station, we ran alongside the diminutive River Ouse which eventually empties into the English Channel at Newhaven. The countryside through which the railway passes is quite hilly and the track therefore runs through deep cuttings and along high embankments. It runs over or under numerous bridges, through a tunnel and over a five arch viaduct. The nascent River Medway, the two sources of which are at nearby Turners Hill, runs under one of these bridges. Our first stop was Horsted Keynes Station. It is in the middle of nowhere, but was at one time an important junction, and has four platforms all connected by a pedestrian underpass. It is perhaps the most impressive station on any preserved railway, having been restored to 1920s Southern Railway period. The line is as spectacular, in its own way, as the display of bluebells alongside it. The bluebells after which the line was named were growing not only in woods adjacent to the line but had also spread to the side of the track. Where they had massed together they were like a deep blue sea. Bluebells are persistent plants; they shade out wild flower competitors through sheer force of numbers and contain certain poisons that deter foraging animals such as sheep and deer. Only ramsons (wild garlic) have the same capacity as bluebells to take possession, more or less, of whole woods. I did indeed notice the bright green leaves and the white flowers of a large patch of ramsons. Some of the most spectacular displays of bluebells can usually be found in coppiced woodland, especially those that are coppiced regularly. Coppiced woods were once extensively managed, in Sussex, for the production of charcoal for the county's iron industry but those woods are now largely overgrown. The flowers, other than bluebells, that I noticed during our journey – in between the signal boxes, station buildings and platelayers' huts that also caught my attention – were lesser celandines, wood

anemones, primroses, cowslips, marsh marigolds and lady's smock or cuckoo flower. I also noticed the white flowers of cow parsley lining country lanes, those of blackthorn in hedgerows and those of wild cherry in woods. I thoroughly enjoyed my steam train trip. There was a jolly, holiday atmosphere in the carriage and an absence of mobile phones and laptops.

Joe Ennis

THE 'HMS PRINCESS IRENE' DISASTER OF MAY 1915

The centenary of the destruction of 'HMS Princess Irene' in a massive explosion on the River Medway during World War 1 takes place on May 27th. The disaster followed the destruction of HMS Bulwark which also exploded on the river in November 1914. Constructed in Scotland and launched on October 20th 1914, the Canadian owned 'HMS Princess Irene' started as a commercial liner until requisitioned by the Royal Navy and converted into a minelayer along with its sister ship 'HMS Princess Margaret.' It made two mine laying trips before being moored at Saltpan Reach between Port Victoria and Sheerness and loaded with a new consignment of 500 mines, that's about 150 tons of high explosives.

At 11.14 in the morning of May 27th 1915 the vessel blew up without warning. Firstly, a column of orange flame shot up into the sky, seconds later a second column rose up to about 300 feet. A deafening explosion followed which blew the vessel to pieces, rocked the area for miles around and could be heard in Maidstone.

The force of the explosion hurled debris to Sittingbourne where windows were shattered and people injured, severed heads fell in Hartlip and a boot, collar, tie and a case of butter landed in Rainham where, according to eye-witnesses, tiny fragments and soot from the explosion covered part of the village. Alfred Gulvin a bargeman from Henry Street got struck on the head by flying debris while working on the river and required stitches. A farm worker on the Isle of Grain died of a heart attack, a young girl was killed by a metal fragment while a man working on the Admiralty Fuel Depot at Port Victoria died after being hit by debris.

The dead included 273 officers and men and 76 dockyard workers who were on board ship at the time of the explosion. In total 352 people perished in the disaster. Three crew members who had gone ashore

escaped while stoker David Wills got blown off the vessel and into the sea. He became the only survivor when he was pulled from the water badly burned and covered in black oil by William Rider, a crew member aboard the tug 'Bruno.'

A small harbour launch and two barges lying alongside 'Irene' were destroyed and the Admiralty Fuel Depot at Port Victoria was badly damaged when debris pierced the fuel tanks and the pumping station. Part of one of 'Irene's' boilers landed on a collier about half a mile away knocking a crane off its bearings.

After the disaster recovered bodies were buried in the Naval Burial Ground of Woodlands Road cemetery in Gillingham and a memorial to the dead constructed there and opposite Sheerness Railway Station. A memorial plaque was also placed on the wall of Sheerness Holy Trinity Church.

Rumours spread that saboteurs had caused the disaster and a dockyard worker called John Harston was named as a suspect, but the Special Branch released him after an investigation.

A Court of Inquiry set up after the incident concluded that a faulty primer on one of the mines hurriedly fitted by poorly trained personnel had caused the explosion. Therefore a verdict of accidental explosion ended the inquiry into one of the biggest naval disasters witnessed on the River Medway during World War 1.

David Wood

RAINHAM METHODIST CHURCH

It is with deep regret that Rainham Methodist Church will be closing at the end of August. The building has been a part of the community of Rainham since 1900, and has served it well.

We are holding an 'Open House' Coffee Morning on Saturday 20th June, 10.00am - 1.00pm, to which you are warmly invited. It may be that you have had an association with the church or attended one of the many clubs held on the premises, so please come along and share your story, and perhaps if you have any photographs or memorabilia, you might like to bring them along too.

We do hope that you will come and join us.

For further information please contact Denise on 01634 374231.

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Diary 2015

- May 16th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, Stour Valley Walk section 1 Meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438 Lenham Village Centre ME17 2QH for an 8 mile moderate walk finishing at Hothfield Common off A20 GR971458 TN26 1HD No dogs
- May 16th - Kent Wildlife Trust Walk, 10.00am - 12.30pm, Darland Banks Meet at junction of Darland Avenue and Kingsway, ME7 3ER TQ 786659 Dogs on leads, Bring, sturdy footwear, snack and drink. Some fairly steep and uneven terrain, can be muddy after rain, Booking essential. Please contact Geoff Orton 07788 102238 or email geofforton@hotmail.com
- May 16th - Instep Dancing, social dances, Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way, ME8 0BX, Ballroom, Latin, Sequence, 8.00 - 11.00pm enquiries 01634 363738 or email s.collins02@btinternet.com
- May 16th - Quiz Evening, Rainham Oasthouse, 7.30pm, Admission £2.50 (£2 members) Rolls available 60p each, for details ring Maggi 01634 610391.
- May 17th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am Meet Patricia Daniels 07960 295164 text only, Charing small car park off School Road, For a 6 mile moderate walk, undulating some steeper bits, a few stiles No dogs
- May 17th - Hempstead Village Fayre, Harrow Road Playing Field (behind The Flying Saucer Pub) 11.30am. 60 stalls, games and attractions, something for everyone to enjoy including Arena Events throughout the day. Free admission. More details email valeriegorf@blueyonder.co.uk or 01634 230214
- May 17th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Karl 07974 169356 martinkarl@gmail.com, 10.00am, Whiffen's Avenue Car Park, behind the Old Town Hall/Brook Theatre, TQ759682 ME4 4SF for a 6 mile leisurely walk around Fort Amhurst, Great Lines, Brompton, Lower Lines, St Mary's Island. Many ups and downs on the route. Bring picnic lunch for midway break.
- May 18th - Rainham Wives, Fundraising, & tombola, for 'Kasbah' our charity for the year, (see 11th May)

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- May 18th - Monday Hub, (see 11th May).
- May 19th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 6.30pm Meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438 Bluebell Hill, Common Road Picnic Site ME5 9RG For a 4 mile easy evening walk part of Walderslade Loop, Dogs on leads
- May 19th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Stemi-end basket' Workshop with Carol and Kaye, (see 5th May).
- May 19th - Rainbow Whist Drive, (see 5th May).
- May 20th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Peter/Ann 01634 718895, 10.00am public car park on the right as you go into Cobham DA12 3BZ 4 mile easy walk, blossom may be out! Pub at end
- May 20th - HempstARA Hempstead Active Retirement Association, Scout Hall, Dukes Meadow Drive, 2.00pm. Contact 01634 364440 for details.
- May 20th - RainARA, 442 Club, Featherby Road, Talk "40 Years without a proper job" by Chris Hare, Members only, Details kentsofkent@tiscali.co.uk or 01634 373596
- May 20th - Bredhurst Garden Club, 7.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, Steve Edney, Illustrated Talk - 'Long Flowering & Good Value Plants for Small Gardens', New Members Welcome, Ring 01634 233554
- May 21st - Rainham Women's Institute 1.45 - 4.00pm, Annual Meeting, Methodist Church Hall, Wakeley Road, Rainham. Visitors welcome for small entry charge per visit. Ring 01634 366276 for details.
- May 21st - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board games, tea and chat (see 7th May)
- May 21st - Wigmore Thursday Club, How Tesco became what it is today, Elaine Cutting, (see 7th May).
- May 22nd - Medway Geographical Society, Byron Road School, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.00pm, AGM followed by a Quiz, All welcome, contact 01634 362683.
- May 23rd - 25th & 30th - Flower Festival, St. Peter's Church, Bredhurst, 10.00am - 5.00pm, Light refreshments (cream teas 1.00 - 4.00pm)
- May 23rd - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 9th May).
- May 24th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am Meet David Brown 07815 106791 Cobham car park behind school, 6 mile moderate walk from Cobham generally flat, some hills may be muddy if wet

Timeless Retro Events

<p>9th May</p> <p>Vintage Fair</p> <p>10.30am to 3.30pm</p>	<p>22nd May</p> <p>Barn Dance</p> <p>7pm</p>
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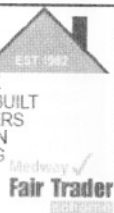
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Diary 2015

May 24th - Medway Ramblers Walk meet Len 01634
319391 10.00am Rose Inn Wickhambreaux CT3 1RQ
7.25 mile leisurely walk, bring picnic, pub at end.
May 25th - Medway Scramble Club, (see May 11th)
May 26th - UpARA Coffee Morning, Upchurch Village
Hall, 9.30am, Members £1.50, Guests £2 New
Members Welcome, For details email Chairman David
Powell davidrpowell5@hotmail.co.uk
May 27th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Hempstead
Village Hall, 8.00pm, The Golden Days of Variety:
Dean Caston, for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951
629444
May 28th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Service, (7th May).
May 28th - Hempstead Leisure Club, "Shopping in
Downe" Talk by Barbara Stevens (see 7th May)
May 28th - Rainham & District Dolls' House and
Miniaturist Group, 7.30pm, Howard Memorial Hall,
Woodside, Rainham, Sylvia Wildridge 01634 312038
May 30th - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Tania 07841
913561 office@taniapetzker.com 10.00am, Court Farm
Butchery Upper Halling ME2 1HR 5 mile leisurely
walk Possible BBQ food for purchase at end.
May 30th & 31st - BWAG's 10th Anniversary Weekend,
Bredhurst Wood Fayre, Village Hall & Woods,
10.00am - 4.00pm, Free admission, call 07813 785940
or email bwag@vanessajones.plus.com for details.
May 31st - Medway Ramblers Walk, meet Ade 01634
306405 adeballard@yahoo.co.uk, 10.00am, Hadlow
village by The Square TN11 0DA 6.6 mile leisurely
walk. Bring picnic lunch. Pub at end with lunches
May 31st - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
Meet Jim Gevaux 07807 896995, Teynham Station car
park (free) ME9 9EA, 6 mile easy walk, no stiles, local
history and stop beside Creek. Dogs on leads
June 1st, 8th & 22nd - Baby Massage Course, 10.00 -
11.00am, All Saint's Church, Hempstead, £10 for entire
course 01634 379360 babymassage@the139club.co.uk
June 1st - Rainham Wives, 'The Work of the Salvation
Army' with Anna & Dorothy, (see 11th May).

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June 2nd - Medway Ramblers Walk Joint with White
Cliffs Ramblers, meet Margaret/Jim 01795 843927
magloul@yahoo ME17 1RN 6 mile moderate Evening
walk, meal available at George Inn contact Margaret.
June 2nd - Rainham Horticultural Society, 'May Your
Photography Blossom and Bloom' Glyn Bareham, (5th)
June 2nd - Rainbow Whist Drive, (see 5th May).
June 2nd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group AGM, 7.00
for 7.30pm 442 Sports & Social Club, Featherby Road
June 2nd - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Wedding Bouquet'
Workshop, (see 5th May).
June 4th - Wigmore Thursday Club, My Grandfather, Ley
Liberson, (see 7th May).
June 4th - Medway History Detectives, 2.00pm, 'Kentish
winners of the Victoria Cross' (Glen Jones) and 'Living
in Rock Avenue', based on the censuses 1891-1911
(Christine Rogers). Booking essential 01634 581462 or
email medwayhistory@hotmail.com
June 5th - Pamper Evening, 6.30 - 9.30pm, Parkwood
Community Centre, (see page 7 for details).
June 5th - Charity Quiz Night in aid of Hands in Medway
St Margaret's Millennium Centre, ME8 9BH, 7.30 pm.
Tables up to 6, £7 pp, includes light supper. Bring your
own drinks. Book 01634 577984 or 07816 159668.
June 6th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, Stour Valley
Walk section 2, Meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438,
Hothfield Common off A20 TN26 1HD, 6.5 mile
moderate walk, Finish Ashford Blackwall Road South
GR 034426 TN24 0NX, No dogs
June 6th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 9th May).
June 7th - Hartlip Open Gardens, 11.00am - 5.00pm, 9
gardens Admission £5 pp (see page 7 for details)
June 9th - Medway Antique & Collectors' Club, Militaria
- Keith Reeves, (see 12th May).
June 12th - Deanwood Primary School, Summer Fayre,
3.15 - 5.30pm, Adults 50p, Children 30p, Pre-School -
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June 13th - Craft Market, St Margaret's Millennium
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