

ACTION FORUM

MARCH 2016
NUMBER 518

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ■



The Co-operative Society Shop at the top of Station Road, Rainham as it would have been in 1924. Kemp Brothers built the shop in the early 1900s for the newly formed Society. The canopy to allow elaborate outside displays of produce was added later but suffered badly in the terrible whirlwind, described by David Wood on page 8, and was subsequently demolished. In the 1960s the store was converted to a small supermarket and closed when the Co-op moved across the road and traded from 1979 - 1997 in their new large store (now Wilko) part of Rainham Shopping Centre. This building still stands converted to Lloyds and a Betting Shop downstairs with flats above.

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Editorial

'Clean for The Queen' has a certain ring to it. If you have not heard of this new slogan it is an initiative started by 'Keep Britain Tidy' and 'Country Life Magazine' to tidy some of the disgusting 'Grot Spot' areas of dumped rubbish that threaten to overwhelm us in time for the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations and encourage local groups all over the country to take responsibility for their area and clean up the litter. The weekend selected for a mass clean up is March 4th to 6th but even if you have missed this it is not too late to get out with your litter picker and do your bit for the massive clean up. Regular readers will know that I periodically have a moan about the amount of litter I pick up walking our narrow country lane to M2 Farthing Corner Services - our local Newsagents. It has not improved! So much is just mindless littering. Why, I wonder, if you have gone to the effort of tying 10 or so empty cans in a carrier bag can you not take them home and put them in your own rubbish sack (or better still your recycling) instead of chucking them from the car into the hedgerow for me to pick up? Rarely do you actually catch anyone in the act and even if you do getting a number plate and subsequently being able to prove what occurred is highly unlikely. I once collected a name and address from dumped rubbish only to be told by the local Council Contact Centre that because I had picked it up and not the Council Officers nothing could be done about it. So all we can do is tidy up after the unsocial characters who have little regard for the environment. If everyone who does care about where they live spent half an hour a week picking up the bottles, cans, crisp packets, cigarette cartons etc perhaps the message would get through and less litter would be dropped - but maybe not. Anyway I will continue with my personal mission. I can always collect at least one carrier bag full of discarded rubbish during my half mile walk and sometimes three or four bags - more than I can sensibly carry.

The weather seems all over the place at the moment, to date we have not really had a winter at all and certainly the spring flowers are totally confused. So many daffodils are already in bloom that even though Easter is early this year there may not be many left in flower for the traditional displays. At least we have a respite from the continual rain and the garden is beginning to dry out. The days are noticeably longer,

the sun is shining and winter has almost gone so we have much to be cheerful about and enjoy in life. Do make the most of the good days, get out and savour the warm spring air. Until we are with you in April have a very happy Easter and a wonderful month.

Correspondence

THE MULBERRY TREE

Dear Editor

I was interested to see the photo of The Mulberrytree on the front cover of the Jan/Feb edition of Action Forum. Readers may be interested in the names of the people shown in the photo. The list was made by a late uncle, so I have no way of confirming the accuracy of any except my great grandfather and his grandson. Left to Right 1 Tom Mannering, 2 Ted Ledger, 3 Jim Morrison, 4 Jim Jackman (Tiger), 5 Jim Brown, 6 Walter King, 7 Walter Pearce, 8 Fred Bartlett 9 Unknown, 10 James Norwood - licensee 11 James Thorlby - licensee's grandson 12 Tim (dog) (the dog on the right?!)

A clue to the likely date of the photo is that there is only one entry on the Freebmd website for a James Thorlby born in Medway district - at Hoo in 1903. Assuming this refers to the same person, the photo would have been taken rather later than 1905. For the eagle-eyed, a correction to note in my account of Sharps Green Mission: the two references to Mulberrytree Cottages should in fact read Mulberrytree Place cottages. The actual Mulberrytree Cottages, about 20 yards from the pub, were also home to relatives, but not those I mentioned. There were only a few houses in the hamlet, but most of them had some family connection!

Ron Norwood

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

Dear Editor

Reference the interesting article by Richard Church (October Action Forum) Memories of World War II - The verdict at the time on the Messerschmidt 109 in Hartlip churchyard, he refers to, it was not shot down but ran out of fuel so crash landed. This was frequently the case with the Messerschmidt 109 and 110. After arriving from Europe they had about 20 minutes fuel for combat before they had to return the way they had come. It was a big worry for Luftwaffe pilots they would not have enough fuel to cross the Channel and would have to ditch. My father delivering grocery orders for Rainham Co-ops customers in Hartlip walked through the churchyard next day for a close-up look. A surprise was the plane had only knocked down or damaged two or three headstones. Even more surprising was the tyres on the wheels and the cockpit lighting and bulbs were all made by well known British companies.

Yours sincerely Alan Major

41 Heaton Road, Canterbury, CT1 3PY 01227 459246
PS I saw the Dornier that crashed on Gore Bank and had a door from it, but that's another story....

COACH OUTINGS

Dear Editor

When I saw your front cover of the November 2015 edition it reminded me of before the war when I lived in Garlinge, Margate. During the summer, after tea it was our Sunday evening entertainment all the family, dressed in our 'Sunday Best' to walk down through Westbrook to Margate sea front. We always walked on the pavement (Best Shoes!) never down on the sands. One of the big stores had issued a range of satin blouses, very popular. How I envied the lucky holiday ladies who passed us wearing a PINK blouse - well I was about eight or nine at the time. I was told that char-a-banc drivers liked to be leaving the town by 6 o'clock before the pubs opened otherwise some unfortunate person would have to go and round up the stragglers who had stopped to have a drink. On the way home I may have waved to those very coaches pictured.

Yours sincerely
D Southern

GILLIAN'S CHARITY OPEN GARDEN 2015

Dear Editor

I would like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone who supported my first charity open garden and art exhibition in aid of British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research and Macmillan Nurses.

We were able to donate £500 to each charity 3 times the amount I had expected, amazing! Special thanks to "Captain Flood" who bravely volunteered to have his chest hair waxed, this boosted donations by £600! Thanks also go to all the bakers who donated some wonderful cakes and pastries and to all raffle prize and cutting donations which kept me well supplied for the 9 Open Day Sundays in July and August. On behalf of the 3 Charities, lots of love and thanks to all my fellow Medway health walkers, artists, Mahjongers and friends from Tai Chi who visited.

Yours sincerely
Gillian Entwistle

gillianentwistle@virginmedia.com

BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

I wish to thank the supporters in Rainham and Gillingham for support over 8 years. The total collected during this period for the charity has reached £10,000 in support of Robert O'Dowd. I am carrying on fund raising and this year there are two events.

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April 23rd - A Quiz at Twydall Church Hall 7.30 to 10.30 pm Ticket £5, and September 17th Autumn Songs with Kingfisher Singers at St Margaret's Parish Church, High Street, Rainham 7.30 to 10.30pm Ticket £7.50 Refreshments and Program Raffle. Please contact Olwen O'Dowd 01634 263622 for a table at the Quiz or Tickets for the concert.

COMMUNITY CHEST PROJECT

The Rotary Club of Medway invites applications from local charities, groups, projects etc to bid for sums of money up to the value of £250. To apply download a Community Chest application form from the website www.medwayrotary.org.uk - printed copy available from Mike Williams 01634 253598.

Applicants should be non-profit making (If possible a registered charity, or attached or associated to one) and have a bank account in the name of the group. The request must be for a specific thing/s they need such as equipment or trips. It cannot be an addition to a larger fund, but must be for a specific item.

Minimum £50, maximum £250 per grant
Closing date for completed forms 24th March 2016
email to info@medwayrotary.org.uk

Successful applications will be invited to send a representative to the Rotary Evening meeting on the 17th May 2016, to receive the award

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Volunteer distributors are needed for:

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Wildwood, Black Rock, Stalham, Coppice Court
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Diary 2016

No charge is made for Diary entries
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Diary Copy Date: March 22nd 2016

- March 1st - 31st - Art Exhibition, Paintings by Local Artists Clive Bass, John Gilson & Ron Wiseman on show & For Sale Rainham Library, Birling Avenue
- March 5th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, Meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438 London Capital Ring Walk stage 2 for a 9 mile walk starting at Friars Lane, Richmond via Osterley Lock, finish at Greenford. Ring for details, No dogs
- March 6th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet Steve Giddings 07720 628511 Grove Ferry Picnic Area car park (fee £2) GR 236631 CT3 4BP for a 5 mile circular walk via Stodmarsh and part of Stour Valley Way and Grove Nature Reserve. Very flat, could be muddy. No dogs
- March 6th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet Jim, jimbush46@btinternet.com Chilham car park at the bottom of the hill. TR067536 CT4 8BZ for a 10 mile moderate walk to North Downs Way, Godmersham Park, back on the other side of the valley. Moderate walk with some hills. Bring picnic lunch for midway break, pub at end.
- March 6th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet Beryl, bmhosegood@live.co.uk East Malling Railway Station Car Park. TQ703569 ME19 6AJ for a 5 mile leisurely largely flat walk through orchards and woodland with some fine views of The North Downs. Refreshments and meals available at the King and Queen pub or West Malling village.
- March 7th - Rainham Women's Institute, 1.45 - 4.00pm. Wakeley Hall, Oast House Community Centre, Granary

- Close, Members Meeting. Visitors welcome for small entry charge per visit. Ring 01634 366276 for details.
- March 8th - Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society, 7.30pm, Rainham School for Girls, Workshop Evening. Practical advice about growing fuchsias and pelargoniums. Members £1, Non members £1.50 All Welcome, details ring 01634 852519
- March 8th - Friends of Medway Archives, 7.30pm at Frindsbury Parish Hall, Church Green, talk by Odette Buchanan 'Strood's Industrial Heritage.' Tickets £5 (£3 FOMA Members) includes light refreshments.
- March 8th - Rainbow Whist Drive, Bredhurst Village Hall Hurstwood Road, 7.30pm A partner is not needed and all whist players are welcome. Details 01634 610364
- March 9th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Fund raising, for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
- March 10th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's Community Centre, 2.00pm, The Royal Voluntary Service, Caroline Carter, for over 50s ring 01634 234712 for details.
- March 10th - Hempstead Leisure Club, 'Make or Bake Sale' Tea and chat. Village Hall, Behind the Church, 2.00 - 4.00pm. New members always welcome phone 01634 366907
- March 10.11.12.17.18.19 - Hayfever by Noel Coward, Oast House Theatre, Rainham Curtain up at 8.00pm. Box Office on 0844 8793224 or www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
- March 11th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham every Friday 9.45am to help those who have lost a loved one. Join us for a cuppa and chat, ring Julie 01634 364309.
- March 11th - UpARA, Monthly Meetings, Upchurch Village Hall, 2.00pm, Members Free, Guests £2, New Members Welcome, details email Chairman David Powell davidpowell5@hotmail.co.uk

- March 11th - Gillingham and Rainham Local History Society, 7.15pm, Byron Road School, The Huguenots - Huguenot Museum, For full details please contact Ron Baker 01634 854982,
- March 12th - Craft Market, St Margaret's Millennium Centre, 9.00am - 12.30pm Free entry. Stalls £10, carole@cdadswell.freereserve.co.uk or 07779 366054
- March 12th - Rainham South Councillors surgery, Parkwood Youth Centre, 10.00am - 12 noon, no appointment necessary
- March 12th - Songs of Celebration Kent Chamber Choir, 7.30pm, St. Mary the Virgin, Upchurch Alan Vincent - conductor, Geoffrey Lester - organ, Tickets £10 (£5 children and full-time students) at the door or Helen Osborne 01634 361508 f.osborne394@btinternet.com
- March 12th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham 7.30 - 10.00pm, new and experienced dancers welcome, with or without a partner, 366189 or 388546
- March 13th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet Brian Gevaux 01634 235883 Marine Parade, Barton Point, Coastal Park, Sheerness GR 940747 ME12 2BX for a 4 mile walk via The Lees and Minster, mainly flat but uphill to cliffs and downhill to Minster. Fields paths and unmade roads, No dogs
- March 13th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet Frank/Mim, Headcorn Church, park considerably around village, in public car park or in lane leading to village hall. TQ833442 TN27 9NH for a 7.5 mile leisurely circular walk through pleasant countryside. Bring picnic lunch for midway. Pub and cafe at end.
- March 14th - Medway Scrabble Club, alternate Mondays, 2.00 - 4.30pm, St Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, new members welcome, 01634 230500
- March 14th - Rainham Flower Club, second Monday each month 7.30pm, St Matthews Community Centre, Wigmore ME8 0NX Demonstration by Jacqui Arnold 'The Three R's' For details ring 01634 864572 or see www.rainhamflowerclub.co.uk Visitors welcome.
- March 14th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham meets 2nd Monday evening each month to help those still in employment who have lost a loved one. Join us for a cuppa and chat, ring Julie 01634 364309.
- March 14th - Concert Medway Organ & Keyboard Club, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30pm, Organist - Chris Powell details ring Brian Leonard 01634 234694

- March 15th - The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk, Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.45pm £3.50. The Plight of the Bumblebee - Dr Nikki Gammans. Walks www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway
- March 15th - GHS Floral Art Group, United Reformed Church (rear hall) Balmoral Road, Gillingham, 7.30pm, 'St Patrick's Day' - an inverted crescent arrangement, New members welcome, first visit free, no experience needed, for details contact Kaye Buss 01634 232998 or email kayebuss@btinternet.com
- March 16th - Upchurch Darby & Joan Club Easter Fair, 10.00am - 12noon, Upchurch Village Hall. Home made Cake, Easter Egg Raffle, Raffle, Craft Stall, Easter Cake Raffle, Refreshments reasonable prices and more. Plenty of Free Parking. We do not rent table space.
- March 16th - Wigmore Ladies Club, 2.00pm, Howard Hall, Woodside, cheerful group of ladies would love you to join us. Just come along or call 01634 388912
- March 16th - Bredhurst Garden Club, 7.30pm, Village Hall, Sue Shaw 'In the Footsteps of Paddington Bear' Spring Show - Judge G. Chilmaid, New Members Welcome, Ring 01634 233554 for more details
- March 16th - RainARA, 442 Club, Featherby Road, Talk on 'Henry the Eighth' by Tony Harris, Members only, Details kentsoftkent@tiscali.co.uk or 01634 373596
- March 17th - Hempstead Leisure Club, '40 years without a proper job' Speaker Chris Hare (see 10th March)
- March 17th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Britain on Foot, Tony Mitchell, (see 10th March)
- March 18th - UpARA, Walk, Village Hall, 10.00am, all welcome (see 11th March)
- March 18th - Hempstara Whist Afternoon, 1.30pm, Scout Hut, Dukes Meadow Drive, Hempstead, all abilities welcome, Partner not required, Eunice 01634 231664
- March 18th - Jazz Gig, Derek Nash Experience, Anchorians Rugby Club, Darland Avenue, 8.30pm, £10, Details 01634 365352 or 07544 312743
- March 18th - Medway Geographical Society, Byron Road Primary School, ME7 5XX 7.30 - 9.00pm, 'A Career in Island Hopping' - Alan Mills, All welcome come on the evening or ring Lorna Bailey 01634 572139
- March 19th - Charity Coffee Morning / Cake Sale in aid of Marie Curie and 20th Gillingham (Hempstead) Air Scout Group, 10.00am - 1.00pm, Scout HQ, Dukes Meadow Drive, Hempstead, All Invited, Free Entry, Donations of cakes welcome.

Continued on Page 11

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SONGS OF CELEBRATION Kent Chamber Choir
St. Mary the Virgin, Upchurch
Saturday March 12th, 7.30pm
Alan Vincent — conductor Geoffrey Lester - organ
Music includes works by Mendelssohn, Bruckner,
Byrd and Finzi in the first half. After the interval,
there's music to celebrate 400th anniversary of
Shakespeare's death, with settings to the Bard's
songs by Vaughn Williams and George Shearing.
The entertainment concludes on a modern note with
arrangements of songs by Lennon and McCartney.
Tickets £10 (£5 children and full-time students)
Available at door or in advance from Helen Osborne
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EASTER FAIR
Upchurch Darby & Joan Club
Wednesday 16th March, 10.00am — 12noon,
Upchurch Village Hall.
Home made Cake Stall, Easter Egg Raffle,
Big Raffle, Craft Stall, Easter Cake Raffle,
Refreshments. Plenty of Free Parking.
We do not rent table space.

JAZZ GIG Anchorians Rugby Club,
Darland Avenue, Gillingham.
Friday 18th March, 8.30pm
Derek Nash Experience featuring:-
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CHARITY COFFEE MORNING / CAKE SALE
In aid of Marie Curie and
20th Gillingham (Hempstead) Air Scout Group
Saturday 19th March, 10.00am — 1.00pm
Scout HQ, Dukes Meadow Drive, Hempstead
Help us change lives with a cup of tea and
a slice of cake! All Invited. Free Entry
Donations of cakes welcome.

GRAND CHARITY SPRING BAZAAR
Saturday 19th March, 10.30am — 12.30pm
St. Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore
Many well-known charities and dozens of local
craftspeople will be selling gifts & handmade wares
at low prices! Delicious homemade refreshments
available, Entrance 20p (all proceeds to charity).

REQUIEM by Gabriel Fauré
Upchurch Choral Society
Good Friday 25th March, 7.00pm
St. Mary's Church, Upchurch.
Conductor: Helen Osborne, Organist: Janet Stone
Admission free. Collection for the Wisdom Hospice

WORKING WITH DANNY LA RUE
A talk and costume exhibition
Oasthouse Theatre, Rainham
Friday 1st April, 8.00pm.
Annie Galbraith worked with Danny La Rue for over
20 years. She toured with him and she will be
sharing stories about her time working with one of
Britain's best loved entertainers. Also see a selection
of Danny's costumes, wigs and memorabilia.
An evening not to be missed!
Tickets £12 from Box Office 0844 8793224

BARNARDO'S CHARITY QUIZ NIGHT
Saturday 2nd April, 7.00 for 7.30pm start
Twydall Church Hall, Twydall, Gillingham
Tickets £5 each, tables of 6-8, Book in advance
Bring your own drinks and nibbles. free tea coffee
and biscuits available. Plenty of free parking
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HANDEL'S MESSIAH A Dramatised version
performed by The Merry Opera Company
Saint Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham Green
Saturday 2nd April, 7.00pm
Advanced tickets: Adults £8 concessions £6
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Tickets at the door on the night £10

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR JANUARY / FEBRUARY
Seasalter, to the west of Whitstable, is one of those places that I return to time and time again. It is a place of mudflats, shingle beach, sea wall, grazing marshes and wide open sky. Summer memories are of sailing dinghies, picnics on the beach, ice cream at Walden's shop, the cries of redshank and oyster catcher, blue skies and yellow horned poppies. Winter memories are of dog walkers, bait diggers, locked-up beach huts, waders in spectacular massed flight, skeins of brent geese and cold easterly winds. Seasalter is approached via Faversham, Goodnestone and Graveney. After Denley Hill Farm, the Graveney Marshes and the distant sea wall come into view. On the landward side of the wall are the former coast guard cottages and a few other isolated buildings. It was on a cold but sunny January day that I visited Seasalter. I took some steps up the sea wall near Seasalter Sailing Club. On this occasion the tide was in. A small flock of brent geese were riding up and down in the choppy sea, waiting for the tide to go out when they could feed on eel grass. A few turnstones were running up and down the tide line looking for sand hoppers and small molluscs among the seaweed and flotsam. Turnstones are relatively tame and can often be seen at Whitstable Harbour where they rummage among cockle shells that have just been processed and discarded. Whitstable is of course synonymous with oysters and oyster catchers are common sight in Whitstable Bay. The large black and white waders have powerful bills. They typically open oysters, as well as cockles, by stabbing the muscle that holds the two shells of the molluscs together. The landward view from the sea wall is of the marshes of the Seasalter Levels. They are divided into fields delineated by drainage ditches lined with common reed. I could see a flock of lapwing wheeling above the Levels. Salt was once produced on what were then saltings, by means of evaporation of sea water. However, in the early 14th century, the monks at Christchurch Priory at Canterbury built the first sea walls and reclaimed the saltings for the grazing of livestock. The Levels are still grazed by cattle and

sheep and are a breeding ground for skylark, meadow pipit, reed warbler, yellow wagtail, redshank and lapwing. During the winter months Walden's shop is open for just three hours a day. Through the windows I spotted beach balls and buckets and spades, among other seaside necessities, for which there would be little demand, however, until the summer months. The chalet next to the shop displayed a notice that Poppet's Cafe and Tea Room had had a successful first year and that it would be reopening at the beginning of March 2016. That was good news. I commenced my walk along the sea wall in the direction of Faversham. The Kent Wildlife Trust's South Swale Nature Reserve begins just beyond the beach huts near to The Old Sportsman Public House and Restaurant. There is a long stretch of well-established shingle on which grow various species of lichens and stonecrops, as well as larger plants that can withstand the salty atmosphere. I came across clumps of sea beet which is a large straggly perennial and is a close relative of certain cultivated beets. Still in flower were a number of sea mayweeds, which are members of the daisy family. I noted dead yellow horned poppies and carline thistles, the latter of which have yellow bracts in the form of rays and which are used in dead flower arrangements. Blowing about in the wind were the bleached skeletons of sea holly plants. The seeds of dead flowers on the shingle attract snow buntings in the winter but I saw none. I did however disturb a flock of linnetts. I try not to disrupt feeding birds, especially in the winter, but they took me by surprise. In due course I came to Castle Coote, which is an area of salt marsh, on the seaward edge of which is a semi-circular cockle bank. Hundreds of redshank and dunlin were huddled down out of the wind, waiting for the tide to go out. Ringed plovers and oyster catchers nest on the shingle in the spring and Kent Wildlife Trust discourages people from straying into the area. Unfortunately, the greatest disturbance comes from predators. Eggs and young birds can be lost to foxes, gulls and carrion crows. In the middle of the Swale were Horse Sands, onto which, in summer, common seals haul themselves. On the opposite bank of the Swale, were Harty Ferry Inn and Harty Parish Church.

Looking inland, over the Graveney Marshes, I spotted two marsh harriers, soaring lazily in the sky. The harriers feed on small mammals and birds and various small reptiles and amphibians. They nest in the reed beds of the watercourses of the marshes. In the distance was the delicate spire of Faversham Parish Church. It was soon time to turn round and head back towards The Old Sportsman, where some patrons were doubtless enjoying beef or lamb raised on the Seasalter Levels. Hungry as I was, I had to wait until I arrived back at home before I could enjoy my own Sunday lunch.

Joe Ennis

THE RAINHAM WHIRLWIND of 1924

Many present day Rainham residents will remember the great hurricane of 1987 that caused considerable damage but few will remember the whirlwind that struck in 1924.

According to the East Kent Gazette of March 8th 1924 black clouds and an eerie semi darkness covered the late afternoon sky on Friday March 1st followed by a powerful spinning whirlwind that struck the top end of Station Road with terrific force.

The whirlwind destroyed both chimney stacks on Ramsey House and on Mrs Kitney's house almost opposite Longley Road. Debris loudly crashed onto the road and pavement while bricks were hurled through the air and smashed windows and landed on the roofs of other houses nearby. A house owned by Mrs Kitchingham had its roof lifted and a chimney pot blew off and went through a greenhouse while another house belonging to Mrs Clark also had the chimney stacks destroyed. Mrs Clark's parents who were in the house were left terrified by the violent commotion.

As Mr Shepherd of 38 Station Road stood at his front gate he was sucked into the air, hurled across the road and thrown down by the force of the whirlwind. He only suffered a cut wrist but others were not so lucky like Donald Ede who worked for grocer George Quinell. While driving a horse and cart packed with groceries down the top end of Station Road the terrifying force of the whirlwind caused the horse to bolt and crash the cart into a lamp post. The cart turned over, the shafts were snapped and groceries were strewn across the road and ruined in the heavy rain while Donald Ede was thrown onto the road and needed medical attention.

Rainham vicar Reverend Ball luckily escaped serious

injury by taking shelter in a doorway just as chimney stacks from houses crashed down on the pavement a few feet away but he did not get struck and remained uninjured.

The Salvation Army Hall in Station Road had one side blown off its foundation by the force of the whirlwind. Mr Russell who was inside with his wife looked out of the window when the upper part was blown in and the glass hit him in the face causing minor injury. The hall got so severely damaged that services had to be held in Rainham Church Hall for several weeks.

Just below the Salvation Army Hall the whirlwind demolished thirty yards of brick wall, lifted a chicken house in the air and deposited it in Parsonage Meadow. In Longley Road a row of houses had windows smashed and flames belched from chimney pots as the wind blew flames from fires in the houses up the chimneys causing the soot to ignite which lit up the semi darkness of the late afternoon sky.

Meanwhile, because of torrential rain people sheltered under the veranda of the Co-Operative Stores at the top end of Station Road. The force of the whirlwind lifted the roof of the building from its supports which caused panic amongst people sheltering underneath but nobody got injured.

As the whirlwind rapidly spun across central Rainham slates were blown off roofs in Ivy Street and outbuildings behind had roofs removed while farther along at Moor Street Mr and Mrs Castle's house got so badly damaged that they had to vacate the premises and sleep at Westmoor Farmhouse for the night.

At Westmoor Farm outbuildings were damaged while a large bough from an elm tree crashed onto the roof of the fruit store and completely wrecked the building incurring £100 worth of damage.

After the whirlwind had moved away Mr Stinton and a gang of helpers cleared up the mess in Station Road while lots of residents flocked to the area to view the devastation. Glaziers and slaters arrived the next day to repair damaged houses after the only known whirlwind to hit Rainham in living memory.

David Wood.

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Diary 2016

March 19th - Grand Charity Spring Bazaar, 10.30am - 12.30pm, St. Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore, ME8 0NX, entrance 20p.
March 19th - Charity Quiz, 7.30pm in aid of Bloodwise (Leukaemia/Lymphoma) Parkwood Community Centre, Tickets £5 Teams of 6 Ring Dot 01634 864642 to book
March 20th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet Geoff 07525 161766, geoff.rambler@me.com
Doddington TQ935572 ME9 0BG for a 7 mile leisurely walk. Pub at end with lunches - need to book.
March 20th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet David Brown 07815 106791 Faversham car park off Leslie Smith Drive (pay & display) for a 6.5 mile circular walk from Faversham to Graveney. Flat with road, field and grass sections plus hard standing and riverside areas, 4 stiles, muddy if wet. No dogs
March 22nd - UpARA Coffee Morning, Upchurch Village Hall, 9.30am, Members £1.50, Guests £2, New Members Welcome, (see 11th March)
March 22nd - Lower Halstow Gardening Club, 7.30pm, Memorial Hall, School Lane ME9 7ES. Sue Shaw Talk 'In the Footsteps of Paddington Bear. Find out why Peru is such a special place for animals, plants and adventures.' Visitors £1.50 - do join us.
March 22nd - Rainbow Whist Drive, (see 8th March)
March 23rd - All Saints Women's Fellowship, The Humorous side of Being an Actor: John Fryer, (9th Mar)
March 23rd - UpARA Outing, KentARA Quiz, Ditton, 2.00pm, (see 11th March)
March 24th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Entertainment from Newington Concert Party, (see 10th March)
March 24th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Return of our friend speaker Rita Woodward (see 10th March)
March 25th - Requiem - Gabriel Fauré, Upchurch Choral Society, 7.00pm, St. Mary's Church, Upchurch. Conductor Helen Osborne, Organist Janet Stone, Free, Retiring collection for Wisdom Hospice
March 25th & 26th - Free Easter Workshops Hempstead

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Valley near Pandora, 11.00am - 1.00pm & 2 - 4.00pm, Makendoo art and craft, make Easter themed masks and hats, no need to book, supervision required at all times.
March 26th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 12th March)
March 27th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am meet Jim jimbush46@btinternet.com Barham near the shops TR206498 CT4 6QH for a 14 mile walk, uphill to Elham Valley Way. After lunch return on the other side of the valley. Moderate walk with uphill sections. Bring picnic lunch for midway break, pub at end.
March 27th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet Gill Smith 01622 710569 07999 858981
Sevenoaks Suffolk Way, Buckhurst 2 car park GR 533547 TN13 1LW for a 5 mile undulating Easter Day walk through Knole Park and Godden Green, woodland and fields using roads, hilly with 6 stiles. No dogs
March 28th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 14th March)
March 30th - Gillingham Horticultural Society, 7.15pm, United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Speaker - Darren Everest. 'Sowing, Growing and Showing Sweet Peas'. Members £2, non members £3 includes refreshments, details Janet 01634 852519
March 31st - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board games, tea and chat (see 10th March)
March 31st - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's Community Centre, Bingo, (see 10th March)
March 31st - Rainham & District Dolls' House and Miniaturist Group, 7.30pm, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside, all welcome, more details from Sylvia Wildridge 01634 312038.
April 1st - UpARA, Village Walk, 10.00am from Village Hall, New Members Welcome (see 11th March)
April 1st - Oasthouse Theatre, Rainham, 'Working with Danny La Rue' Annie Galbraith, A talk and costume exhibition, 8.00pm. Tickets £12 from 0844 8793224 or on-line www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
April 2nd - Handel's Messiah - A Dramatised version by The Merry Opera Company, St Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham Green ME7 1SS, 7.00pm, Advanced tickets Adults £8, cons £6 from Mrs Rita McIntosh 01634 851965, on the door £10, Free parking at Saxon Way School
April 2nd - Barnardo's Charity Quiz Night, 7.30pm start, Twydall Church Hall, Twydall, Tickets £5 each, tables of 6-8 Book in advance, Bring your own drinks and nibbles, free tea coffee and biscuits available, Plenty of free parking, Phone 01634 233405 or 01634 375486
April 3rd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am, Meet Mo Fleisig 07976 600393, Newington High Street car park (Free) GR 861649 ME9 7JP for a 6 mile circular walk towards Lower Halstow. Fairly flat but undulating using fields, tracks and lanes. No dogs
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April 4th - 10th - Free Spring Holiday Workshops at
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cupcake decorating, 6th - Gardening Fun decorate a pot
to grow cress or a bean, 7th - 10th Makendoo art and
craft, no need to book, supervision required at all times.
April 5th - Rainham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm,
Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Spring Show,
New members welcome, ring 366276 for details.
April 5th - Rainbow Whist Drive, (see 8th March)
April 5th - Medway & Swale (West) Association for
Breast Cancer, 7.00 - 9.00pm Medway Maritime
Hospital, Area 7 Level 2, Penny Auction raising funds
for our charity, details 01634 861802 or 07761 853750
April 5th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Laid Back' - a
horizontal arrangement, (see 15th March)
April 7th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Speaker Caroline
Carter on RVS (see 10th March)
April 7th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Birthday Lunch and
entertainment from Harmony, (see 10th March)
April 8th - UpARA, Monthly Meeting, Upchurch Village
Hall, 2.00pm, AGM 3.30pm, Members Free, Guests £2,
New Members Welcome, (see 11th March)
April 8th - Gillingham and Rainham Local History
Society, Memories of events etc. in the Medway
Towns, (see 11th March)
April 9th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group Meet
Stephen Manning 07551 712438 London Capital Ring
Walk stage 3, 9.5 miles from Greenford via South
Kenton, to Wembley Park, Ring for details, No dogs
April 9th - Craft Market, St Margaret's Millennium
Centre, (see 12th March)
April 9th - Spring Craft Fair, St. Margaret's Church,
Lower Halstow, 2.00 - 4.00pm, first sale of the year,
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April 9th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 12th March)
April 10th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am
Meet Chris Morris 01634 374923 07847 828249,
Lower Upnor car park near Arethusa Centre GR
762713 ME2 4XB for a 5.5 mile walk which starts with
a steep climb on the way to Hoo, returning along the
Saxon Shore Way, some road and hard standing
walking with field and woodland, no stiles. No dogs
April 10th - Pedal for a Purpose, Demelza Hospice,
10mile Family Route, 52 mile Classic Route or 103
mile Epic Route visit www.demelza.org.uk Ring 01795
845249 or email emma.austen@demelza.org.uk
April 11th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 14th March)
April 11th - Rainham Bereavement Evening Friendship
Group, (see 14th March)
April 11th - Rainham Flower Club, 'Update your Skills'
part 1, (see 14th March)
April 11th - Concert Medway Organ & Keyboard Club,
Organist - Michael Wooldridge, (see 14th March)
April 12th - Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society, Growing
Pelargoniums - Ken Abel, (see 8th March)
April 13th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, American
Heiresses: Sheila Boyd, (see 9th March)
April 15th - UpARA, Village Walk, 10.00am from
Village Hall, New Members Welcome (see 11th March)
April 15th - Quiz Night, Hands & Gillingham Volunteer
Centre, 7.30pm start, Holy Trinity Church Hall,
Twydall Lane, ME8 6JU, Tickets £7 pp/up to six per
table, Sausage & Chips supper provided, bring own
drinks and nibbles, Contact Hands office 01634 577984
April 15th - Jazz Gig, The Greg Heath Sax Quartet, (see
18th March)
April 17th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
Meet Pearl Stevens 07724 602929 GR 862653 ME9
7JT for a 6 mile undulating walk with road, field and
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