

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

DECEMBER 2017
NUMBER 538



We Wish you a Happy Christmas



A tableau from the Nativity play, c1947, presented by the Women's Fellowship in St Margaret's Hall, Orchard Street (corner with Hurst Place, demolished in 2002, now flats). The play was produced by Mrs Rayner and Miss Irene Cox. A Rainham tradition for many years, the same costumes appeared in many productions for church, schools, Guides and clubs. The cast included: Shepherds Mrs Fairey, Mrs Lazenby, Mrs Hollingsworth and Mrs Nicholls, the shepherd boys were Rev Mitchell's two sons. Joseph was Mrs I. Wall, the kings Mrs Choules, and Mrs Hopkins, and the angels included ? Garlinge, ? Smith, Pat and Elizabeth Barrow and Janice Hawkins, the grandmother was Miss Norwood and the page Mrs Hollingsworth's son.

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AF

Next Issue January 13th 2018
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Editorial

Christmas is a very special time of year on so many different levels. The most obvious is the overbearing commercial aspect. Immediately Halloween and Bonfire Night have exploded the shopping malls are resplendent with Christmas Trees and glittery decorations. This we accept and you can almost ignore it but the looped tapes of seasonal music this early must drive the shop assistants to distraction! Of course it is all to encourage us to spend more money – and presumably it works. Why else would all the supermarkets and major stores spend the reputed millions they do on much hyped television advertising. Cynically once the advert is released it is almost immaterial if the critics love it or hate it. If it has provoked some discussion or better still even caused some controversy it has served its purpose. Greggs infamous sausage roll / baby Jesus was only aired for a very short space of time but will be recounted and remembered for many years to come I am sure. We all fall prey to the marketing, it is so easy to buy unnecessarily. In our hearts we know much of the extra is superfluous, do we really need new themed decorations? Will extravagant wrapping and fancy bows make our present more acceptable? Will the very expensive and desperately wanted toy still be played with once Boxing Day has gone? But still year after year we succumb, it seems the right thing to do. It is good therefore that hand in hand with all this gratuitous spending equally the generosity to charity has increased. The shoe box appeal, the Salvation Army gifts appeal for local families, Children in Need, Crisis at Christmas are all 20th century innovations making a real difference for many who find times are hard. Caught up in the rush to make Christmas Day perfect for our family it is easy to forget that not everyone looks forward to 25th December quite as we do. This year I have spotted two new events, amongst the many Fayres and Carol Concerts we advertise in our Diary, to help people in this situation. One on December 21st entitled 'Blue Christmas' is a service at St Margaret's Church, Rainham for those who find, for whatever reason, this time of year tough to bear, and the other two days later on December 23rd at St Matthew's Church, Wigmore is called 'The Longest Night' a quiet reflective event for those who find Christmas difficult. I don't expect they will attract the crowds that enjoy the Crib Services or Midnight Carols but will be much appreciated by the few.

However before the Christmas rush really gets going in earnest may we say a very big Thank You to all our many distributors who reliably bring a copy of Action Forum to every door each month. Your help is very much appreciated. As in previous years our next issue is a combined January/ February edition which will be published on January 13th followed by the March copy on February 24th then back to the regular first Saturday of each month for the rest of the year. We wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and look forward to being with you again in 2018.

Correspondence

RAINHAM COMMUNITY CHOIR

Dear Editor

We at Rainham Community Choir would like to welcome new members to join us on Mondays (term time only) at The Howard School in Derwent Way between 7.00pm and 8.30pm.

There are no auditions, the choir is open to anyone who enjoys singing a variety of songs for fun, and being challenged along the way. We offer two free sessions as an introduction, then a charge of £15 for a 4-week session payable in advance. If you require further information please contact us by email inforainhamcommunitychoir@gmail.com

We are holding a small concert on 11th December at 7.30pm and it would be a good opportunity to come along and see what we are all about.

Kind regards

Deborah Razzell - Secretary.

THE LONGEST NIGHT

Dear Editor,

Saturday 23rd December, 2.30pm, at St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore, ME8 0NX

From the start of November, if you turn on the TV or walk into any shop, you could be forgiven for thinking that Christmas is a time of magical happiness for everyone, decorated with flashing fairy lights and a jolly soundtrack to be enjoyed without exception.

In reality, Christmas is the worst time of the year for many people for a variety of reasons. Bereavement, relationship breakdown, loneliness, money worries, and unemployment are just some reasons why the seasonal merriment all around us is hard to live with.

The Longest Night is what we are calling our event on the Saturday afternoon before Christmas. The birth of Jesus wasn't all happy days and party nights, so we will narrate that familiar story, in a safe space, with music, readings, and prayers, which acknowledge the pain and emptiness this time of year can emphasise for some. The whole event will be no longer than 45 minutes. There will be people happy to talk if you want to talk, but if you want to simply "be" in the quiet, the space will be open afterwards. All are welcome.

Kind regards,

Jean Penney, Church Warden - 01634 387379

MEDWAY ANTIQUE & COLLECTORS' CLUB

Dear Editor,

The members of our club would be pleased to welcome anyone interested to our meeting on January 9th 2018. To start the New Year we have a SPECIAL OFFER of £1 per visitor entrance fee. We meet in the St George Hotel, New Road Avenue, Chatham at 7.30 for an 8.00pm start.

We are very fortunate to begin the year with a talk entitled 'My Life as a Silversmith to Date' by Mr Andrew Putland who is chairman of the Goldsmith Craft and Design Council. It promises to be a very interesting evening and you will be sure of a warm welcome.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Margaret Davison 01634 235285

TAKE CARE

Dear Editor

We would just like to write via the pages of your wonderful publication to let all your readers know that our local Rainham company, Take Care has just celebrated its 10th Anniversary.

The directors Julie Hunter and Anita Willoughby would like to take this opportunity of thanking all our present and past staff from all over Medway who have worked with us in the local care sector over the last ten years to provide a quality service for Medway residents.

We are also deeply thankful to all our mainly elderly clients who have used our wide range of domestic, gardening and home help services, currently and in the past and would like to thank them all for their part in our ten year journey.

Thank you for allowing us to celebrate with everyone via Action Forum as we have met and worked with so many lovely people.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Willoughby and Julie Hunter
01634 316821

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BERENGRAVE NATURE RESERVE

In answer to the recent letter from Mr T Coote, the now disbanded "Friends of Berengrave" group still have a Website on-line and this has lots of information, newsletters etc especially covering the Industrial history of the site. There is also a scale model depicting how the Washmill would have looked on display in the library.

Although I agree that it is somewhat neglected the Chalk Pit often throws up a few Wildlife surprises. Recently round the lake area I have seen numerous Golderests, a Firecrest, Grey Wagtail and a Water Rail. In the Spring it is always full of singing Blackcaps and both Greater Spotted and Green Woodpeckers nest there.

For those new to the area Rainham Dock East just across the other side of Lower Rainham Road is always worth a look. Its a good spot for Cuckoos, Nightingale, Turtle Doves and Whitethroat in the Spring, Kingfisher can be seen later on in the year plus occasional Marsh and Hen Harrier. Last Winter there was also for a while quite a sizable Starling murmuration over the Reed beds at dusk.

Richard.Lusted@hotmail.com

POST YOUR LETTERS TO FATHER CHRISTMAS

Children can also hand deliver their letters for Father Christmas and post them in our big red post box and collect their Free personalised reply back from the grotto elves. You must include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to have your reply posted. Please allow a week before you collect your reply from the grotto elves. The last posting date is 20th December, with last collection on 22nd December.

THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY QUIZ

Many thanks to everyone who supported the Quiz Evening in October, £401 was sent to the charity www.braintumourcharity.org

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Diary 2017

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: January 2nd 2018

December 2nd - St Peter's Church Christmas Fayre,
Bredhurst Village Hall 2.00 - 4.00pm. Entry Free
December 2nd - Medway Folk Dance Club, Christmas
Dance, United Reformed Church hall, Balmoral Road,
Gillingham, 7.30 - 10.00pm. New and experienced
dancers welcome, with or without a partner, for more
information ring 366189 or 388546.
December 3rd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet Stephen Manning 07551 712438 River
Valley Upchurch Golf Course Christmas Lunch Walk
ME9 7AY for 3 ½ Mile Easy stroll, No Dogs
December 3rd - Medway Ramblers Walk, Hosey Hill to
Chartwell via Toy's Hill, 10.00am, Leisurely circular
walk 6 miles / 9.7 km finish 1.15pm, meet Hosey Hill
Car Park TN16 1PJ, TQ452531 maybe muddy, minor
hills, no stiles. John Watts, FLAME451@hotmail.co.uk
December 3rd - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 10.30am, Toy Service - new boxed toys
please. 4.00pm, Advent Carols, all welcome.
December 4th - Monday Hub, 10.00am - 12.30pm, St
Paul's Church, Parkwood, ME8 9PN, Board games,
Table Tennis, use of Laptop and much more, Free light
refreshments, phone Jill on 01634 230780
December 4th - Medway Scrabble Club, 2.00 - 4.30pm,
St Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham,
new members welcome, details 01634 230500
December 4th - Medway Towns Bridge Club, Sociable
duplicate Bridge every Mon, Tues and Fri, 7.30pm
start, St. Luke's Methodist Church Hall, City Way,
Rochester ME1 2BQ. Table money £3.50 guests, £2.50
members (£10 to join). We can usually find a partner
for you on a Monday, details 01634 375706, 840094 or
visit www.bridgewebs.com/medwaytowns
December 5th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely circular walk 4 miles / 6.4 km, finish 1.15pm,
Capstone Farm Country Park, Meet Orchard Car Park .
ME7 3JH, TQ781646 no roads or stiles, some short
undulations. Stop halfway for drinks, toilets available.
December 5th - GHS Floral Art Group, United Reformed

Church (rear hall) Balmoral Road, Gillingham, 7.30pm,
Workshop 5 - Pomander, New members welcome, first
visit free, no experience needed, Kaye Buss 01634
232998 or email kayebuss@btinternet.com
December 7th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's
Community Centre, 2.00pm, 'Christmassy Things' -
Mel Rees, for over 50s ring 01634 234712 for details.
December 7th - Hempstead Leisure Club. Outing for
Christmas Lunch
December 7th - Christmas Carol Concert, BWAG,
7.30pm, St Peter's Church, Hurstwood Road & Green
Court, The Street, Bredhurst ME7 3JY The Cantium
Singers, Tickets - £7 pp, under 16s free (includes
refreshments) from 07813 785940 (eve/weekends)
December 8th - 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.
December 8th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00pm - 8.30pm, Canterbury St, Rock Ave area
December 8th - RiverVoice Community Choir Christmas
Concert, 7.30 - 8.45pm with Children from Byron
Primary School, St George's Centre, Chatham Maritime
ME4 6UB, Adults £6, Children £3 on the door
December 8th - Gillingham and Rainham Local History
Society, Byron Primary School ME7 5XX, 7.15pm,
Paranormal/Spooky Kent - Neil Arnold, Visitors
welcome (charge) Val Barrand 07947 583327 email
lupusrufus@sky.com or see www.grlhs.org
December 8th - Donn Barcott Band 'Five Live', 8.00 -
10.30pm, Brompton Conservative Club, High Street,
Gillingham, Licensed Bar, Quality Raffle, Light
Snacks, 01634 405037 or 07977 262564 for details
December 9th - Craft Market, St Margaret's Millennium
Centre, Rainham, 9.00am - 12.30pm, Free entry, Stalls
are £10 each contact cjdcraftmarkets@yahoo.com or
ring 07779 366054 for more details
December 9th - Christmas Concert, 7.00pm, Gillingham
Methodist Church, 100 Third Avenue ME7 2LU,
Gillingham Male Voice Choir with Guest Choirs,
Traditional Carols for all, Tickets £5, Refreshments
December 10th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 10 miles / 16.1 km finish
3.30pm, Challock, Meet Village Hall Car Park, TN25
4AU, TR010505 varied, scenic walk. One steep hill.
Bring packed lunch, not suitable for dogs. Walk led by
Ashford Ramblers Group. Medway Ramblers most
welcome to join. Contact: Kevin, 07734 309155

December 10th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet Lindsay Floyd / Andy Boorman 07743
702049 07881 933358 Hand & Sceptre PH. London
Road. Southborough Common. Park in Pennington
Road. GR 577428 TN4 0RJ for 4 ½ miles One steep
slippery slope. Crossing railway. 8 Stiles. Dogs allowed
December 10th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Riverside Country Park, 10.00am - 2.00pm, Get
involved helping with practical tasks on the site. Meet
at visitor centre, Ring 01634 337432 for information
December 10th - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 4.00pm, Christingle Service, all welcome.
December 10th - Hempstead Valley Carol Concert
4.45pm accompanied by the Medway Band, local
churches and Medway school children.
December 11th - Rainham Flower Club, St Matthews
Church Hall, Wigmore, ME8 0NX Christmas Party
(Members only) 7.30pm, details ring 01634 864572 or
see www.rainhamflowerclub.co.uk
December 11th - Rainham Community Choir Concert,
The Howard School, Derwent Way, 7.00pm, new
members very welcome, for more details email
inforainhamcommunitychoir@gmail.com
December 11th - Rainham Evening Bereavement
Friendship Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham meets
2nd Monday 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.
December 11th - Concert Medway Organ & Keyboard
Club, Parkwood Community Centre, Rainham, ME8
9PN, 7.30pm, Organist - John Cooper, details ring
Brian Leonard 01634 234694
December 12th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Taverners Road, Lonsdale Drive area
December 12th - Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society,
7.30pm, Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way,
Christmas Party and AGM, Non-members £1.50, New
members and visitors always welcome, 01634 852519
December 13th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 9.30am,
Leisurely linear walk 7.5 miles / 12.1 km, finish
1.45pm, Bredhurst to Maidstone, park at Bredhurst
commuter car park ME9 0UL TQ799629 Bring snack,
pubs and cafes in Maidstone. Return 130 bus from
Kings Street.
December 13th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00pm - 8.30pm, Barnsole, Woodlands Road
December 13th - Rainham Historical Society, Millennium

Hall, Rainham, 7.30pm The History of Rochester
Bridge Trust, All welcome, Contact secretary Olwen
O'Dowd 01634 366276 for more details.
December 13th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Christmas at Home,
for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
December 14th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Carols and
Readings for Christmas, (see 7th Dec).
December 14th - Hempstead Leisure Club. Whist,
scrabble, board games, All Saints Church, Hempstead
Road 2.00 - 4.00pm New members always welcome,
phone 07583 343782
December 14th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Edwin, Durham, Marshall Road area
December 14th - 16th - Christmas at St Margaret's
Church, Rainham, Christmas Tree Festival, 3.30 -
7.00pm, all welcome.
December 15th - St Margaret's C of E Junior School,
Rainham Christmas Fair, 3.30 - 5.00pm at the school.
December 15th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Canterbury Street, Napier Road area
December 16th - Christmas Craft Drop In, Gillingham
Parish Church, St. Mary Magdalene ME7 1SS, 10.00am
- 12noon, Craft Activities for children (and adults!)
Refreshments, Short Service, No charge, All welcome
December 16th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float at Rainham Shopping Centre
December 16th - Family Christmas Concert, Rainham
Ladies Choir, 6.30pm, Gillingham Methodist Church,
Third Avenue ME7 2LU Tickets 01634 370797, £7
Adult, £3 under 12yrs, www.rainhamladieschoir.org.uk
December 16th - Medway Folk Dance Club, Christmas
Ceilidh, (see 2nd Dec).
December 16th - Union of Catholic Mothers, Carol
Concert featuring The Medway Singers, 7.45pm, St
Augustine's Church, Parkwood, Coffee/tea and mince
pies Tickets from Mrs Janet Nastaly 01634 371897
December 16th - Wigmore Voices 'Christmas Gloria',
8.00pm, St Matthews Community Centre, Wigmore,
Tickets £7 from Sue 01634 370639
December 17th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely circular walk 10 miles / 16.1 km, finish
3.30pm, meet Faversham Railway Station - top of The
Mall off the A2. Parking Sunday £1. ME13 8EB,
TR015609, via Goodnestone, and Graveney, Contact:
Geoff, geoff.rambler@me.com

Continued on Page 11

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ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FLOAT ROUTES

Rotary Club of Gillingham, 6.00pm - 8.30pm

From 5.00pm Christmas Eve. The collection from
this annual event goes to local charities

Friday 8th December - Canterbury St, - Rock Ave

Tuesday 12th December - Taverners Rd,

Bettescombe Rd, Elmstone, Aerthur Rd, Herbert Rd,

Lonsdale Dr, Broadview Ave,

Wed 13th December - Third Ave - Barnsole Road,

Thursday 14th December - Charlotte Drive,

Vancouver Drive, Jefferson Drive, Edwin Rd,

Durham Rd, Maidstone Rd left side, Lyndhurst Ave,

Marshall Rd, The Goldings, The Platters

Friday 15th December - Canterbury St - Napier Rd,

Saturday 16th Dec - Rainham Shopping Centre

Monday 18th Dec - Eastcourt Lane - Featherby Rd,

Tuesday 19th December - Tufton Rd, Suffolk Ave,

Northumberland Ave, Berengrave Lane, Holmoaks,

Wooldeys Rd, Broomcroft Rd, Bushmeadow Rd,

Chalky Bank Rd, Childscroft Ave, Parkfield Ave,

Heartpiece Close, Station Rd

Wednesday 20th December - Taswell Rd Henry St,

Station Rd, Ellison Way, Macklands Way, Cobdown

Grove, Caldecote Close, Ten Acre, Burrstock Way,

Shorefields,

Thurs 21st December - Napier Rd - Livingstone Rd

Friday 22nd December - Yeoman Dr - Darland Ave

Saturday 23rd December - ASDA Gillingham

Christmas Eve starts 5pm - Park Ave - Oxford Rd

CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

Bredhurst Woodland Action Group

Thursday 7th December, 7.30pm

St Peter's Church, Hurstwood Road &

Green Court, The Street, Bredhurst ME7 3JY

The Cantium Singers,

A 50 strong choir from Rochester

After the concert take a short walk to

Green Court for mulled wine, mince pies and grand

Christmas raffle.

Tickets - £7 per person, under 16s free

(includes refreshments).

Tickets must be purchased in advance

Not available on the night.

For information and tickets call Vanessa Jones

07813 785940 (eve/weekends) or email

bwag@vanessajones.plus.com or purchase online at

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PTA CHRISTMAS FAYRE

St Margaret's Infant School Orchard St, Rainham

Friday 8th December, 3.40 - 5.15pm

Visit Santa in his Grotto, raffle, chocolate tombola,
lucky dip, snowball scavenger, find Olaf's nose,
decorate your own wooden Christmas decoration,
hand-made Christmas presents and homemade cakes
and refreshments.

CHRISTMAS FAIR

St Margaret's C of E Junior School

Orchard Street, Rainham

Friday 15th December 3.30 - 5.00pm

CAROL CONCERT

featuring The Medway Singers

Saturday 16th December, 7.45pm

The Union of Catholic Mothers

St Augustine's Church, Deanwood Drive, Parkwood,

All proceeds for our charity which this year is The

Medway Night Shelter. Coffee/tea and mince pies

served in the interval. Tickets Mrs Janet Nastaly

01634 371897 or Mrs Alma Payne **01634 362896**.

'CHRISTMAS GLORIA'

Saturday 16th December, 8.00pm

St Matthews Community Centre

Drewery Drive, Wigmore

Wigmore Voices annual Christmas Concert

Tickets £7 from Sue **01634 370639**

BLUE CHRISTMAS

Thursday 21st December 7.30pm

St Margaret's Church, Rainham

A service for those who find this time of year tough

THE LONGEST NIGHT.

Saturday 23rd December at 2.30pm, at St Matthew's

Wigmore.

A quiet reflective event for those who find Christmas

difficult for whatever reason - all welcome. For more

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES

It is a little over thirty years ago since the Great Storm of October 1987. Eighteen people died and 15 million trees were lost. In Kent, most of those trees were mature beeches. The nature reserve within boundaries of the then Gillingham Borough Council that was perhaps most badly affected was Fox Burrow Wood, off Deanwood Drive. I want to write about the reserve by first referring to a sketch map produced by boys of Gillingham County Grammar School in 1949. It was part of a survey of the flora of Rainham Park, which lay between Maidstone Road and Mierscourt Road and consisted of Fox Burrow Wood in the north and Park Wood in the centre and the south. The boys' map shows that the two woods consisted mainly of four species of coppiced trees, namely, Spanish (sweet) chestnut, ash, hazel and hornbeam, interspersed with oak standards and areas of beech trees which were probably planted in the 18th century for ornamental or landscape reasons. The flowers recorded by the boys included nettle leafed bell flower (or bats-in-the-belfry), yellow pimpernel, woodruff, long stalked cranesbill and birds' nest orchid. The latter feeds off rotten vegetation.

In August and September 1987, quite fortuitously in view of what happened in the following month, a Mr A C B Henderson wrote a report on the flora and fauna to be found in local woods, for Gillingham Borough Council, which was apparently concerned by the mounting loss of woods to development. He found that the relatively small remnant of the once larger Fox Burrow Wood was divided into two halves. The southern half (that adjoining Park Wood Primary School) was composed of woodland of coppiced sweet chestnut and other trees with many oak standards and a clump of mature beeches. This was much the same composition recorded by the grammar school boys, some 38 years earlier, for Rainham Park as a whole, before it was developed from the 1960s onwards. Mr Henderson reported that the northern half of Fox Burrow Wood consisted of a shrub layer of Norway maple and sycamore saplings and a stand of mature beech trees. It was these beech trees which were

blown down in October 1987 and, unfortunately, one fell on top of a house in, I think, Ploughmans Way. It must have been a terrifying ordeal for the family concerned. In due course, the Council had the fallen trees cut up and the timber removed. Photographs show the site apparently cleared, apart from a number of stumps and massive clumps of upturned roots. I myself recently visited the wood. In the southern half there was a number of beech trees that Mr Henderson would have seen. I found that the coppiced sweet chestnut and other coppiced trees were very overgrown but the wood was clearly recognisable as a remnant of semi-natural, ancient woodland. Kent Wildlife Trust had treated the woods in Rainham Park as a whole as being "ancient" under the nationally agreed designation of having been in existence before the year 1600. The evidence of the woods' age was almost certainly determined from maps and other documents and also from plant indicators such as the evergreen butchers broom, a number of clumps of which can be seen in Fox Burrow Wood. The wood is semi-natural because of the trees planted by man, especially sweet chestnut seedlings. Ideally the overgrown coppiced trees should be cut down to their stools as would have been done, every few years, when the wood was managed by foresters. To do so would let in light to the wood, and so encourage the spread of typical woodland flowers such as bluebell, lesser celandine and wood anemones, and would also prolong its life. During my visit I disturbed many grey squirrels and two jays burying acorns and sweet chestnuts under the leaves of the woodland floor. As regards the position in the northern half of the wood, a Fox Burrow Wood Restoration Group was subsequently formed, after the storm, and the members, along with school children, planted 12,000 young trees. Those concerned are to be thanked and congratulated for their hard work which, I am sure, will not have been in vain. However, it is likely that none of us will live long enough to see the culmination of what they set in train, as I shall explain. I do not know what species were planted by the Group, but I would assume that they included beech. As noted above, Mr Henderson found a shrub layer of Norway Maple and sycamore in 1987. It is very likely that the

well-known pioneer trees of oak, silver birch, hawthorn and ash, which easily invade vacant ground, will have self-seeded in the northern half of the wood. During my recent visit I also noted hornbeam, field maple, cherry, willow and hazel. All of the above the species (plus any others that are present) are trying to outgrow each other in order to remain in the light. It is likely that the beech, oak, ash and sycamore trees will predominate. If they grow close to each other, their canopies could merge together and cut out the light for all the less tall trees. The latter would eventually die and rot away. This climax of the journey from young saplings on the wood floor to the only four (?) species in the wood, might have taken a hundred years or more. Whatever the eventual outcome, bear in mind that, in his report to Gillingham Borough Council, Mr A C B Henderson warned that ancient woodland is effectively a non-renewable resource. Once lost, it cannot be recreated.

Joe Ennis

THE EARLY YEARS of CINEMA in RAINHAM

Although a cinema no longer exists in Rainham two flourished at different times from 1915 to 1966. The first cinema to be established in Rainham known as the Empire Theatre operated in the High Street on the site of the present United Services Club during World War One. Although small and basic the cinema showed films using a stereoscopic screen which created a bright image. Seats varied in price from 2d to 6d. Children had a reduction for the Saturday afternoon matinee at a cost of 1d or 2d. A full programme of continuous performances which included the Pathe Gazette, an early version of Pathe News ran from 7.00 to 10.00pm. Popular films like 'The Million Dollar Mystery' starring Charlie Chaplin ran from June to the end of December 1915. Other films such as 'The Siege of Troy,' 'Henry VIII' and 'David Garrick' raised money for the war effort. Mrs Sayer performed as pianist and Mr Cheeseman provided a small orchestra. After the war demand for a cinema was such that plans were drawn up for the establishment of a bigger and more modern cinema in Rainham. Originally constructed as a Salvation Army hall, the Royal cinema could seat 395 people and it opened on Monday October 25th 1920 in the building now used by Martin Lukehurst as a furniture showroom in Rainham High Street. In the early years the Royal

showed black and white films with a basic but powerful lantern and a recessed screen located at the High Street end of the building and proved popular at a time when TV did not exist. At a later date the Royal became known to locals as the 'Bug Hutch.'

The East Kent Gazette reported in October 1920, 'Inside the hall is beautifully decorated and furnished, making a handsome modern cinema.'

Marshall Harvey from Sittingbourne designed the cinema building and Kemp Brothers from Station Road in Rainham constructed it. Mr W Baldock became the first manager, Mr W Thompsett caretaker and Mr Will George the pianist. According to The East Kent Gazette a packed audience watched the first show and Mr W Furness-Maxwell, the managing director gave a speech and said that the finest films on the market would be shown.

'Romany Rye' became the first film to be screened with a programme of short comedies and a topical events news programme. In following weeks 'Billeted' with Billie Burke and 'The Warrior Strain,' a comedy in which the Prince of Wales appeared were also shown. Continuous performances took place every evening from 6.15pm to 10.30pm with a children's matinee 2.30pm every Saturday afternoon. The Royal cinema later proved to be unique in the area with its double seats and became very popular during the inter-war years with high attendances. On Boxing Day in December 1921 The East Kent Gazette reported that nearly 2,000 people attended the day's performances. Although a fire almost destroyed the building in 1947, the cinema's popularity continued for over forty years and improvements were made until it came under financial pressure due to dwindling audiences. This led to the owner Mrs Gass deciding to close it and sell up after the screening of 'Cat Ballou' starring Lee Marvin on March 5th 1966.

David Wood

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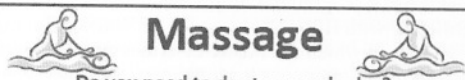
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Diary 2017

December 17th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet Jim Gevaux 07807 896995 Sittingbourne
Dog Track. Church Road. GR 922646 ME10 3SB for 7
½ mile easy walk. No pub at end. Dogs Allowed

December 17th - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 6.30pm, Carols by Candlelight, all welcome.

December 18th - Monday Hub, (see 4th Dec).

December 18th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 4th Dec).

December 18th - Rainham Evening Women's Institute, St
Paul's Church, Parkwood, 7.30pm, Christmas Party, All
welcome, ring Kate Archer 01634 360797 or just come.

December 18th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Eastcourt Lane, Twydall Lane area

December 18th - Wigmore WI meet 3rd Monday in the
month 7.30 - 9.30pm, St Matthew's Community Centre,
Anyone interested ring Chris Ellison on 01634 372976

December 19th - Christmas Wildlife Crafts, Riverside
Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon, £3 per child, suitable
for the whole family, Ring 01634 337432

December 19th - Rustic Christmas Decoration, Capstone
Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon, £3 per child,
suitable for the whole family, Ring 01634 338191

December 19th - The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk,
Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 - 9.45
pm £3.50. Birds beyond the Boughs - Simon Ginnaw
for Field Trips: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway.

December 19th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Tufton Road, Childscroft Ave area

December 20th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely circular walk 7.5 miles / 12.1 km, finish
2.15pm, meet commuter car park, north of Bredhurst.
ME8 0LU, TQ799629, via Capstone Country Park.
Bring picnic lunch - pub at end.

December 20th - Christmas Wreath making, Riverside
Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon, £3 per child, suitable
for the whole family, Ring 01634 337432

December 20th - Rustic Christmas Presents, Capstone
Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon, £3 per child,
suitable for the whole family, Ring 01634 338191

December 20th - Rotary Club Christmas Float, 6.00pm -
8.30pm, Station Road, Ellison Way area

December 20th - Bredhurst Garden Club, Village Hall,
7.00pm, Christmas Dinner, Bring and Buy Stall, New
members always welcome ring 07791 781 910

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December 21st - Rainham Friendship Group Christmas
Buffet & Entertainment, 1.30pm, St Margaret's
Millennium Centre, £2 entry fee. All welcome! For
more details please call the office 01634 577984.

December 21st - Rainham Women's Institute 1.45 -
4.00pm. Christmas Party, Wakeley Hall, Oast House
Community Centre, Granary Close, Visitors welcome
for small entry charge. Ring 01634 366276 for details.

December 21st - Wigmore Thursday Club, Informal
Meeting, (see 7th Dec).

December 21st - Hempstead Leisure Club. Christmas Tea,
(see 14th Dec)

December 21st - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00pm - 8.30pm Napier Road area

December 21st Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, Blue Christmas 7.30pm, a service for those
who find this time of year tough, all welcome.

December 22nd - Christmas at St Margaret's, Rainham,
10.00am Craft making for families, all welcome.

December 22nd - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00pm - 8.30pm, Yeoman Drive, Darland Ave
December 23rd - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float at ASDA Pier Road, Gillingham

December 23rd - The Longest Night, St Matthew's,
Wigmore, 2.30pm, for those who find Christmas
difficult - all welcome, details 01634 231071

December 24th - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 9.30am Parish Eucharist, all welcome

December 24th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely linear walk 7.6 miles / 12.2 km, finish
2.15pm, meet Rochester Railway Station ME1 1NH
TQ745685, via Fort Amherst, and Riverside Park to
Rainham Station. At end walkers are welcome to visit a
nearby micropub. Contact: Mandy, 07758 232871

December 24th - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 1.30 and 4.00pm Crib Services, all welcome.

December 24th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, starts 5.00pm - Park Ave, Watling Street area

December 25th - Christmas at St Margaret's Church,
Rainham, 9.30am Family Communion, all welcome.

December 25th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 9.30am, Easy
circular walk 2.5 miles / 4 km, finish 10.00am,
Christmas Day - Rochester Walk, meet end of
Nashenden Farm Lane, ME1 3TQ TQ732659, a gentle
morning stroll to blow away cobwebs, all welcome
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Diary 2018

December 31st - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Moderate circular walk 9 miles / 14.5 km, finish
 1.30pm, Hilly Walk from Trosley Country Park,
 parking £2.50, DA13 0SG, TQ632610 a hilly, scenic
 walk led by Dartford and Gravesham Ramblers Group.
 Medway Ramblers most welcome, Bring a picnic.
 January 3rd - Medway Ramblers Walk, 9.20am, Moderate
 linear walk 8 miles / 12.9 km, finish 1.00pm, meet
 Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre to catch number
 130 bus outside Kent Reliance Building Society. ME7
 3SD, TQ794633, (Bring your bus pass)
 January 4th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Social Meeting,
 (see 7th Dec).
 January 7th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Leisurely circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5 km, finish
 1.30pm, meet Chequers Inn, The Street, Doddington
 Village. Please park considerately. ME9 0DA,
 TQ928570 Contact: Tony/Ann, 01634 406634,
 vajra.faulkner@tesco.net
 January 8th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 4th Dec).
 January 9th - Medway Antique & Collectors' Club, New
 Year Special Offer, visit us for £1 visitor entrance, St
 George Hotel, New Road, Chatham 8.00pm. Talk 'My
 Life as a Silversmith to Date' Mr Andrew Putland for
 more details ring 01634 851512
 January 10th - East Medway U3A, 2.00 - 4.00pm, Lite
 Meeting - an opportunity to chat with friends over
 coffee/tea at Dobbies Restaurant Non-members
 welcome. Details 07895 890635
 January 10th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Quiz
 Night - bring drink and nibbles, (see 13th Dec).
 January 11th - Wigmore Thursday Club, The Wildlife
 and Estuaries of North Kent - Cllr Alan Jarrett (7th Dec)
 January 12th - Local History Society, Talk John Short
 'Move Backstage to Front of House' (see 8th Dec).
 January 14th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Leisurely circular walk 5.2 miles / 8.4 km, finish
 1.00pm, meet Meopham Green DA13 0AP, TQ641652
 varied countryside, little road walking and a few

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 January 14th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Moderate circular walk 9 miles / 14.5 km, finish
 3.00pm, Harrietsham to Leeds Castle, meet Car park
 South of A20 Fake Oast Houses with Green and Orange
 Flags ME17 1AH, TQ867525, uphill to top of downs,
 Derek, 07768 448633, derek.kent@blueyonder.co.uk
 January 16th - GHS Floral Art Group, Workshop 1 - Leaf
 Manipulation, (see 5th Dec).
 January 18th - Wigmore Thursday Club, History of the
 London Bus - Bob Appleton, (see 7th Dec).
 January 20th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 2nd Dec).
 January 21st - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Moderate circular walk 8 miles / 12.9 km, finish
 2.30pm, The Darnley Trail, Jeskyn's Country Park Car
 Park, Henhurst Road, Cobham, Parking £1.50 DA12
 3AN, TQ661699 Bring picnic pubs in Cobham at end.
 Contact: Chris, 01634 360270, chris.strachan@live.com
 January 26th - Medway Geographical Society, 7.30pm,
 Martin Harris - Opera and Volcanoes, a trip through
 Italy, Holy Trinity Church, Twydall Lane, ME8 6TN,
 all welcome, just come or ring 01634 572139 Drive,
 (see 13th Dec).
 January 24th - Wigmore Ladies Club, Howard Hall,
 Woodside, Wigmore 2.00 - 4.00pm, new members
 welcome to this cheerful group, just come along or ring
 01634 388912 for more information
 January 24th - Rainham Historical Society, The History
 of the Hovercraft, (see 13th Dec).
 January 24th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Beetle
 Drive, (see 13th Dec).
ART EXHIBITION
 Watercolours, Crayon Drawings, Paintings and Pen
 Illustrations by local artist John K. Austin on show and
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 The exhibition and sale will include original
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