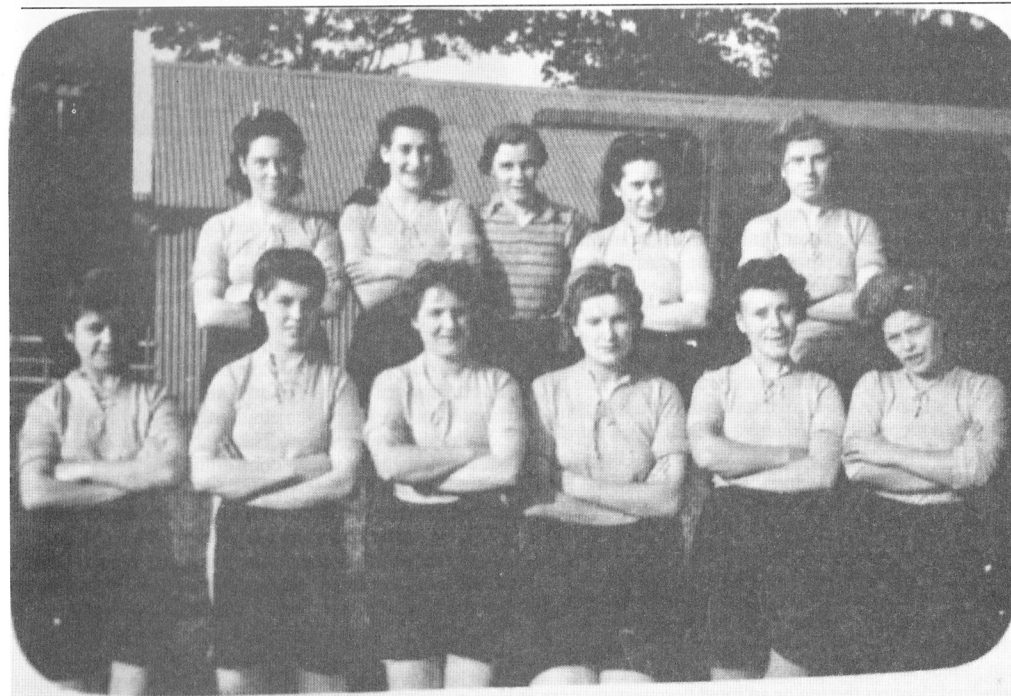


ACTION FORUM

JANUARY 2018
NUMBER 539

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA



Rainham Ladies Civil Defence Football Club - 1944. A report of this match in the local newspaper read: 'Rainham Ladies beaten - Aylseham ladies' team beat the ladies of Rainham Civil Defence at Rainham on Saturday by 2-1 in a hard-fought game in which the issue was in doubt up to the final whistle. On the Rainham side White (Elsie - front row 3rd from left) was a good leader, well supported by Robinson (Ruth - back row 2nd from left), who was about the cleverest player on the field. Major, (Katherine - back row centre) making her debut in goal, gave a smart display and Hart and Constant were sound backs. A collection was taken for the Red Cross' See the letter from Derek Twort on page 2.

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Next Issue February 24th 2018
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Gillingham ME8 0QN
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Editorial

Rather belatedly we wish you all a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year. How the time flies. After weeks of hectic preparation the big day arrives and goes in the blink of an eye and already it is the middle of January and we are still finishing up those chocolates, cakes, biscuits, nuts and other treats that no one really likes or wants but we feel obliged to provide at Christmas. I remember watching a family in Mote Park feeding the ducks mince pies at Easter – the ducks didn't want them either!

Now is the time for the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, this year the weekend of 27th – 28th January. Around 500,000 people took part in the last birdwatch and your contribution really helps to provide a picture of bird life in Britain today. Even if sadly you have nothing to record it is of interest to the RSPB but of course it is much more exciting for you and the children or grandchildren, whoever you can rope in to help, if there is lots of activity in your garden. Putting out feed obviously helps but if you do not want to do this you can count the birds in a local park or on a country walk through nearby fields and orchards. Don't worry if you do not recognise many different birds even the most experienced birders have difficulty sometimes. You can request a Free Pack to help you at the website www.rspb.org.uk

I am confident on the ten or so most common visitors to our garden but beyond that I falter so I really admire the skills Joe Ennis demonstrates in Nature Notes each month.

Joe is an exceptionally reliable contributor with his interesting and informative items for Action Forum virtually every month since August 1979 and it is very much appreciated. We congratulate him as he celebrates his 80th birthday and look forward to many more years of Nature Notes. His daughter has spent many hours uploading his Action Forum articles to a website which can be enjoyed by all (see her letter). Log in to www.joennis.jimdo.com for a nostalgic trip among the archives. Joe is also well known for his many other contributions to local life in Rainham as can be seen by his letter this month in his role as a governor at St Margaret's School.

Count the birds, go for a walk when the sun shines, stay indoors in the warm when it is wet and windy but whatever you do have a very good month until we see you again at the end of February.

Correspondence



JOE ENNIS

Dear Editor,

I thought your readers might like to join me in wishing my father and long-standing Action Forum columnist, Joe Ennis, a very Happy 80th Birthday. Joe was born December 31st 1937 in Shepshed, Leicestershire, and moved to Rainham in 1969, shortly after his marriage to Eve.

My father commuted to London for 25 years and at weekends worked two allotments on Solomon Road, plus a large fruit and veg patch at home. His love of the natural world and the changing seasons is expressed in your column 'Nature Notes'. It is hard to believe that Joe has been contributing to Action Forum's pages for nearly four decades. I believe he started to write his 'Rides from Rainham' series in 1979. He wrote under the pseudonym 'Kemsley and I' - with Kemsley being a three-gear ladies bicycle on permanent loan from Eve. In the mid-1990's Joe began 'Nature Notes', which he still writes to this day.

To mark my father's milestone birthday I have begun to upload all his contributions to Action Forum onto a website: www.joennis.jimdo.com. New articles will be uploaded monthly. I hope many of Action Forum's readers will subscribe to this 'retro blog' and share articles they have enjoyed on facebook etc. With many thanks for all your hard work over the years in bringing Action Forum to Rainham's residents.

Regards,

Annabel Ennis Johnson

Email annabel_johnson@hotmail.co.uk

RAINHAM LADIES FOOTBALL

Dear Editor,

I read with interest earlier in the year the article Rainham Ladies Football, as I recalled my mother telling me she played football as a young lady.

I have only just obtained our family records which include photo's and newspaper clips related to my mother Ruth Twort (nee Robinson) days as a player. I am pleased to report that she played for Rainham Civil Defence Ladies Football Team in 1944 as did Katherine Major, the cousin of Alan Major who wrote the article in your June 2017 issue. Katherine Major is mentioned in the newspaper clip in a match they

played against Aylesham Ladies (see page 1 caption) On the back of another photo my mother recorded in a different match she scored the winning goal, which resulted in each of the Rainham Ladies team receiving an 8 lb basket of fruit (which I imagine would have been a real treat in 1944) and on another being knocked out, but still enjoying the match. The players of the Rainham Civil Defence Team in 1944 were Major, Black, Constant; Chadwick, Blake, Arnold, Golding, Moore, Robinson, White, Reid and Ashby My mother also worked for Mosses the bakers in 1942 next to St Margaret's Church, which is now the site of Marlborough House - a residential home.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Twort

Email derektwort@msn.com

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

Dear Editor

The Local Governing Body (LGB) of St Margaret's Church of England Junior School, in Orchard Street, is seeking another co-opted governor. The LGB should consist of the Head Teacher (ex officio), one staff member, two parent members and six co-opted members. We are looking for someone who will be committed to helping the LGB to both challenge and support the School Leadership Team in its role of improving the quality of teaching and learning. At our last OFSTED inspection in December 2013 we were judged to be "Good". The LGB meets six times a year, in the school, from 4pm to about 6.30pm. Training will be given, usually at school. If anyone wishes to put his or her name forward, or wants further information, please ring me, Joe, on 235182, or Chrissie Hornby on 387348. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

Joe Ennis,

(a governor at St Margaret's C of E Junior School)

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RAINHAM LADIES CHOIR DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

Dear Editor

Rainham Ladies Choir are pleased to announce that 2018 is their 60th year since it was founded in 1958 by the much respected Joan Bigwood who devoted her life to music, as a piano and voice teacher – and to her choir. Starting with a handful of ladies, Joan built the choir into a local institution in the Medway Towns, winning many cups at festivals and raising thousands of pounds for charities through concerts.

Today the choir has around 40 ladies from all walks of life who share a love of singing with vocal abilities of Soprano, Mezzo Soprano and Alto. We rehearse every week on Monday evening and our repertoire includes early madrigals and sacred music to songs from the shows and modern popular songs. To mark this very special occasion, the choir is looking for a couple who celebrate their Diamond Anniversary in 2018 to invite, as our very special guests, to our gala commemorative concert on 6th October 2018.

For more information visit our website:

www.rainhamladieschoir.org.uk/join

Telephone 01634 373132 or 01634 370797 or email:

secretary@rainhamladies.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Sandra Paine – Committee member

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Diary 2018

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: February 13th 2018

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
Contact: Frank/Min Ewen, 01634 669970
January 14th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
moderate circular walk 9 miles / 14.5 km, finish 3.00pm,
car park South of A20 Fake Oast Houses with Green
and Orange Flags ME17 1AH, TQ867525, Walk to
Hollingbourne, Leeds Castle and Harrietsham. Contact:
Derek, 07768 448633, derek.kent@blueyonder.co.uk
January 14th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet Doreen Maguire 01634 376230 Motney
Hill car park GR 821674 ME8 7TZ. 5 mile fairly flat
walk across fields and through orchards, fairly via The
Strand and Berengrave. Dogs Allowed
January 15th - Rainham Evening WI, St Paul's Church,
Parkwood, 7.30pm, A Tour of New England, Michael
Bunn, All welcome, ring Kate Archer 01634 360797.
January 16th - The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk,
Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30 - 9.45pm, £4. So
you want to be a Wildlife Presenter? - Mike Dilger for
Field Trips: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway.
January 16th - GHS Floral Art Group, 7.30 - 9.00pm,
United Reformed Church (rear hall) Balmoral Road,
Gillingham, Workshop 1 - Leaf Manipulation, New
members welcome, no experience needed. Just come
along and receive a friendly welcome, details contact
Kaye Buss 01634 232998 kayebuss@btinternet.com
January 17th - Bredhurst Garden Club, Village Hall,
7.30pm, Norman Beauchamp 'Tax, Care and Toy
Boys', Hyacinth Show + Quiz, New members always
welcome ring 07791 781 910 for details
January 18th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's
Community Centre, 2.00pm, History of the London Bus
- Bob Appleton, for over 50s ring 01634 234712
January 18th - Hempstead Leisure Club, A crafty
afternoon with Elaine. All Saints Church, Hempstead
Road 2.00 - 4.00pm, new members always welcome.
Phone 07583 343782

January 18th - Rainham Women's Institute, 1.45 -
4.00pm. Speaker on 'Pearls' Wakeley Hall, Oast House
Community Centre, Granary Close. Visitors welcome
for small entry charge per visit. Ring 01634 366276
January 19th - 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.
January 20th - Rainham South Councillors surgery 3:16
cafe Parkwood 10.00am - 12, no appointment needed
January 20th - Medway Asthma Self-Help (MASH), Quiz
Night, Roko Health Club, Watling Street, ME8 6BY.
7.30pm start. Tickets £5, teams up to 8. All drinks must
be bought at the bar, snacks welcome 01634 855844 or
email medwayasthmaselfhelp@btconnect.com
January 20th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United
Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham,
7.30 - 10.00pm. New & experienced dancers welcome,
with or without a partner ring 366189 or 388546.
January 21st - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 8 miles / 12.9 km, finish
2.30pm, Park Jeskyn's Country Park Car Park, Cobham,
Parking £1.50, café and toilet. DA12 3AN, The Darnley
Trail, passing through Shorne Country Park. Bring
picnic lunch, pubs in Cobham at end. Contact: Chris,
01634 360270, chris.strachan@live.com
January 21st - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am
meet John Trebill 01634 244045 Leybourne Lakes
Country Park. A228 GR 696602 ME20 6AA, carpark
£1, for 6.5 mile fairly flat walk with slight inclines,
country lanes, across fields / grassland and through
woods Expect muddy sections. Dogs Allowed
January 22nd - Medway Scrabble Club, 2.00 - 4.30pm, St
Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, new
members welcome, details 01634 230500
January 24th - Rainham Historical Society, Millennium
Hall, 7.30pm, The History of the Hovercraft, All
welcome, Membership £10 (full member) £3
(associate) Contact Olwen O'Dowd 01634 263622
January 24th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Beetle Drive, for
details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
January 24th - Wigmore Ladies Club, Howard Hall,
Woodside, 2.00 - 4.00pm, new members welcome, just
come along or ring 01634 388912 for more information
January 25th - Hempstead Leisure Club, whist, scrabble,
board games, tea and chat (see 18th Jan)
January 25th - Wigmore Thursday Club, AGM (18th Jan)

January 26th - Medway Trams 1895 - 1930, 10.00am -
12.15pm, The Oast Community Centre, Granary Close,
Rainham ME8 7SG, Talk by a Local Historian followed
by Q & A and Refreshments, Tickets £3 or £5 for 2
from oastcentre.org/historytalk or pay on the day
January 26th - Medway Geographical Society, 7.30pm,
Martin Harris - Opera and Volcanoes, a trip through
Italy, Holy Trinity Church, Tyddall Lane, all welcome,
just come or ring Lorna Bailey 01634 572139
January 27th - Quiz Night, 7.30pm start, Carmel Hall,
Ufton Lane, Sittingbourne Tables of 6 - 8, £5 pp BYO
food, drinks and glasses Net proceeds for JTT Trust
Fund Mike 01634 360906 mikew16@blueyonder.co.uk
January 28th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet Brian Gevaux 01634 235883 Lower
Halstow. Lapwing Drive GR 858674 ME9 7DZ for 5
mile walk via Saxon Shore Way, Upchurch and Golf
Course using footpaths and roads. Dogs Allowed
January 28th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
moderate circular walk 8.5 miles / 13.7 km, ends 2.45pm,
Ightham Mote please park at the top end of National
Trust car park £2, TN15 0NU, TQ584537 good
footpaths and some road walking. Bring picnic lunch.
Contact: 07749 760788, billingsjc@blueyonder.co.uk
January 31st - Wine and Wisdom Evening, 7.00pm, bring
your own team or join ours, Raffle and refreshments,
Members £2, Non Members £3, The United Reformed
Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham, ME7 4PU
All welcome, light refreshments available
February 1st - 28th - Art Exhibition, Paintings by Local
Artists Clive Bass and John Gilson on show and For
Sale in Rainham Library, Birling Avenue
February 1st - Hempstead Leisure Club, Talk 'Managing
Asthma - Self Help' (see 18th Jan)
February 3rd - Medway Folk Dance Club, see 20th Jan
February 4th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet David Brown 07815 106791 Boughton
White Horse Pub GR 057594 ME13 9AL. Park In The
Street for 5.5 mile circular walk via Boughton and
Dargate undulating with hilly sections, could be muddy
if wet. Dogs Allowed
February 4th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am, easy
circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5 km, finish 1.30pm, park
Chartham village. Meet on green CT4 7LA, TR107551
follow the river into Canterbury, hour and a half stop
then return. Wheelchair friendly. Contact: Tony/Ann,
01634 406634, vajra.faulkner@tesco.net

February 4th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Riverside Country Park, 10.00am - 2.00pm, help with
some practical tasks on the site, meet at the visitor
centre, Ring 01634 337432 for details.
February 5th - Medway Scrabble Club, see 22nd Jan
February 6th - Rainham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm,
Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Darren
Everest - Growing Sweet Peas. New members
welcome, details from 01634 366276.
February 6th - Breast Cancer Support Group, Medway
Hospital, Level 2, Area 7, 7.00 - 9.00pm, A speaker
from 'Toy Boys' talking about Tax Care, details Angela
Blackwell 01634 861802 or 07761 853750
February 8th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Collection of
Annual Subscriptions, (see 18th Jan)
February 8th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Age Concern
Medway, Speaker Karen Arnold (see 18th Jan)
February 8th - Free Films at St. Mary Magdalene Church,
Gillingham Green "Jersey Boys", 2.00pm, Free entry
and refreshments, No need to book. 01634 324783
February 9th - Local History Society, Byron Primary
School, Gillingham, ME7 5XX, 7.15pm - 'Textus
Roffensis' - Rochester Cathedral Staff, Membership
£20. Visitors £3 per meeting. Tea and coffee available
before the meeting for a small charge, details Val
Barrand 07947 583327 or visit website www.grlhs.org
February 10th - Fire Building & Cooking, Capstone Farm
Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon or 1.00 - 3.00pm,
Bring sausages and marshmallows for a smoky lunch.
£3 pp suitable for all the family. Ring 01634 338191
February 11th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate figure of 8 walk. 9.5 miles / 15.3 km, finish
1.15pm, Meet and park Offham Village Green ME19
5NR TQ656573 for 5 miles to West Malling, return
through Manor Country Park, picnic lunch before
second leg of 4.5 miles on woodland paths, Contact:
Len, 01634 319391 lenbeadle@blueyonder.co.uk
February 11th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am meet John Williams 01622 764821 07977
614033 The Friars, Aylesford, car park (Donation) GR
724588 ME20 7BX for 6 mile undulating walk hilly in
parts and possibly muddy, roads, fields, grass, tracks
and woodland. 2 stiles and 15 steps. Dogs Allowed
February 11th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 2.00pm, Meet
at the visitor centre, Ring 01634 338191 for details.

Continued on Page 11

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QUIZ NIGHT
Medway Asthma Self-Help (MASH)
Saturday 20th January, 7.00 for 7.30pm start
Roko Health Club Watling Street, ME8 6BY.
Tickets are £5 each, teams of up to eight.
All drinks must be bought at the bar, all are welcome
to bring snacks. Free parking.
To book or more details ring 01634 855844, visit
www.medwayasthmahelp.co.uk/
quiz-night-tickets or email
medwayasthmahelp@btconnect.com

MEDWAY TRAMS 1895 - 1930
Friday 26th January, 10.00am - 12.15pm
The Oast Community Centre
Granary Close, Rainham ME8 7SG
Join us for an exclusive History Talk by a Local
Historian followed by Q & A
Two 30 minute sessions with a half hour break,
questions afterwards
Tea and pastries available in the Tea Room
Tickets £3 or £5 for 2 pay on the day
Or online from oastcentre.org/historytalk

QUIZ NIGHT
Saturday 27th January, 7.00 for 7.30pm start
Carmel Hall, Ufton Lane, Sittingbourne ME10 1JB
Tables 6 - 8, £5 pp BYO Food, Drinks and Glasses
Net proceeds for JTJ Trust Fund, for Orphanage and
Technical School in The Philippines
Contact - Mike 01634 360906
Email - mikew16@blueyonder.co.uk

WINE AND WISDOM EVENING
Gillingham Horticultural Society
Wednesday 31st January, 7.00 for 7.15pm
Bring your own team or join ours
Raffle and refreshments
Members £2 Non Members £3
The United Reformed Church Hall
Balmoral Road, Gillingham, ME7 4PU
Light refreshments, All are welcome.
Details email social@gillinghamhs.org.uk

FREE FILMS AT ST. MARY'S!
Thursday 8th February, 2.00pm
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Gillingham Green
Do join us for a showing of
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Free entry and refreshments, No need to book.
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FAMILY FRIENDLY BINGO EVENING
The Friends of St Margaret's Church
Saturday 17th February, 6.00pm
Millennium Centre
Gatekeeper Chase, Rainham
Tickets £3 including one book of 8 games from
Lesley 379796 or Kay 230430
BYO Drinks and Nibbles

VALENTINE DANCE
Saturday 17th February 7.30 - 10.30pm
St Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore
Music by Rich Phillips - a mixture of Ballroom,
Disco, and Line Dancing
Tickets £6.50 must be booked in advance
Includes nibbles. Bring your own drink
call 01634 370492 and mention Action Forum.
All proceeds to Church funds.

PETER'S PLACE 70s DISCO NIGHT
Saturday 17th February, 8.00 - 11.00pm
United Services Social Club
Rainham, ME8 8AY
£10 per person including nibbles.
Tickets available from billetter.co.uk
or on the door
Bar available at venue

QUIZ NIGHT: Medway Sunlight Rotary
Saturday 24th February, 7pm for 7.30pm start
Roko Health Club
Watling Street, Gillingham ME8 6BY
To help raise funds to combat blindness in the
developing world through the charity
Global Sight Solutions.
Tickets £5 per person. Teams of 6 to 8.
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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR DECEMBER

In December I paid a visit to the North Downs to the south of Sittingbourne. The villages and hamlets of the Downs sit in an ancient landscape of woods, small fields, narrow lanes and mediaeval churches. The latter are at the heart of rural and sparsely populated parishes whose boundaries were settled before the Norman Conquest and have hardly changed since. I visited a countryside that, despite its antiquity, is not in decay. On the contrary, its fields are in use for the growing of fruit and arable crops and for the grazing of beef cattle, sheep and riding horses. Many of its woods are actively managed for timber. The beauty of the Downs is perhaps more evident in Spring or the Autumn but they still have their appeal in winter; once the leaves have fallen, views of the Downs that were obstructed in summer, open up once again. I set out on a cold but sunny day. I went through Hartlip and Stockbury, crossed over the Stockbury Valley and took a narrow lane up the slope of the Downs to Bicknor. The parish sits on a high plateau of land which is devoted to the growing of top fruit. It is claimed by the fruit industry that we have the best climate in the world for growing apples and that English apples really do have the best taste. As I motored through the orchards I came across a mixed flock of fieldfares and redwings, members of the thrush family that come to this country in the winter from Scandinavia. They feed not only on fallen fruit but also on hawthorn, holly and other berries and invertebrates such as worms and leatherjackets. I headed for Hucking, one of the most isolated of the hamlets on the Downs. It is reached along miles of single track lanes which become very muddy in winter. If one meets a tractor in the middle of nowhere, one often has to reverse an interminably long distance. There is a diminutive church at Hucking, Norman in origin, but extensively rebuilt in Victorian times. Apart from the church, the only sign that this remote spot is the heart of a local community is a red painted George VI post box. Hucking can be one of the coldest places on the North Downs. The southern boundary of the parish runs along the top of

the steep escarpment of the Downs. Here the latter rise to over 600 feet above sea level and place names such as "Cold Blow" and "Cold Harbour" are an indication of the bitterly cold winds that sweep up from the Weald of Kent in winter. Buzzards can often be seen quartering the skies above the grassland at Hucking. They prey on rabbits, young hares, voles and other small mammals. They are colonising the down land haunts from which they disappeared in the 19th century as a result of persecution by gamekeepers. I am afraid that I saw none on my December visit. I headed for Torry Hill via Wormshill and Frinsted along narrow lanes that ascend and descend the sides of steep, dry valleys. Beech woods cover the steepest slopes and sheep graze on the open chalk down land. In winter, the woods on the North Downs, especially beech woods, can sometimes be silent places. However, one can occasionally come across a mixed flock of great, blue and long tailed tits searching for insects or disturb a flock of chaffinches feeding on fallen beech masts. With my eyes on the road ahead, I caught a glimpse only of wood pigeons; they would probably have been in search of beech masts, acorns or holly berries. I also noticed the fluffy, silvery fruits of Old Man's Beard on the hedgerows. I eventually reached the Torry Hill Estate which occupies a flat upland with views over the Isle of Sheppey. It consists of parkland, arable fields, cherry orchards and woods. In the parkland beef cattle and sheep were grazing among the beech, oak, lime and other trees; rooks and jackdaws were searching in the grass for worms and other invertebrates. Most of the cherry orchards on the estate consist of modern, dwarf stock but a large, traditional orchard of standard trees has been retained. In the summer I met an elderly man who was living in a caravan for the duration of the cherry season. One of his jobs was to keep the rooks, blackbirds, wood pigeons and starlings off the crop. He would fire his shot gun at 9am and at dusk and this would usually keep the birds away both day and night. The estate has acres of coppiced woodland under management, timber from which is made into fence posts and chestnut palings. Rolls of the latter are exported to countries bordering the North Sea where they are used to stabilise sand dunes.

After having had a coffee from my vacuum flask, I headed for Highstead and Sittingbourne via Bottom Pond Road which runs along the bed of a dry valley. The sky had clouded over, producing a wintry, watery sun. I stopped at an area of grass by the side of the road which was marked 'Bottom Pond' on my map. The pond, now silted up, is the place where the boundaries of the Parishes of Bredgar, Wormshill, Milsted and Frinsted meet at a single point. These boundaries were set in Anglo-Saxon times. The pond was vital for the watering of livestock and all four parishes were given access to it. I'm sure I can conclude that the down land countryside I visited is not only ancient, but is one that supports thriving horticulture, agriculture and forestry.

Joe Ennis

Editor: We reprint below an extract from one of the early articles Joe wrote for Action Forum which was first published in January 1981— not much has changed!

RIDES FROM RAINHAM by KEMSLEY & I WIGMORE AND HEMPSTEAD

We started our short tour of Wigmore as we turned off the Maidstone Road into Woodside. The latter might be described as the one-time centre of Wigmore. At the Maidstone Road end is the Queen's Head and at the other is the Spyglass and Kettle. In between is Wigmore Nursery School (once a chapel), Wigmore Post Office and the Smallholders Club. Wigmore's other institutions (the Park, St Matthew's Church and Community Centre and Fairview Schools) have become established well away from Woodside on what were among the last remaining orchards in the area. The first large scale ordnance survey map of the area, published in the 1860s, shows that Wigmore takes its name from a group of buildings (which we assume constituted a large country house) on the edge of an orchard and surrounded by woods. (The Spyglass and Kettle now stands on the site of these buildings and a house in Woodside called 'The Orchard' stands in what was once part of the adjoining orchard.) The revised map of the early 1900s shows that a smallpox hospital had by then been built on the southern boundary of the War Department's East Hoath wood. A few scattered houses had also been erected amongst the woods and coppices to the south of the hospital. But the area was still a very isolated part of Gillingham, for it appears on the map to have

been served by little more than unmetalled country lanes and footpaths. But land was cheap in the 1930s and this encouraged a growth of housing (mainly bungalows and summer houses) set in large plots of land. Wigmore continued to grow plot by plot - or more accurately in later years, infill by infill. Its development has thus been in complete contrast to that of its neighbour Parkwood, on the other side of the Maidstone Road, which was developed almost in one fell swoop.

Before leaving Wigmore we did a short diversion to the only building in the area, which gets a mention in the guide books, St Matthew's Parish Church of South Gillingham. It is a light and airy building designed, so we read, to encourage the greatest possible participation in services by the congregation. We headed out of Wigmore along Hoath Lane, a short distance down which we turned left and passed under the M2 link road through a pedestrian tunnel. It runs along what was once Hospital Hill Road where stood the Alexandra (Princess of Wales) smallpox hospital. The latter had been established by Gillingham's Local Board of Health following a series of smallpox epidemics in the latter part of the 19th century. (In 1872 a Government inspector conducting an Inquiry into sanitary conditions reported that in the whole of his experience he had never come across a place in such a disgraceful state as New Brompton!) Once out of the tunnel we climbed up Hempstead Road towards Hempstead itself. To our right we could see the Darland Banks. Over our head a raucous cry drew our attention to a jay. This colourful member of the crow family is still fairly common locally, despite diminishing woodland. In 1907, when its 'pretty little school' was opened with 28 children on the roll, Hempstead was described as "the delightful rural suburb of Gillingham." Ideas were being muted at that time of developing the village as a garden city, but clearly nothing became of them. However, much new housing is currently being built at Hempstead and this has ensured the survival of the village school, as well as All Saints Church (built in 1911 as a satellite of St Mary's Parish church Gillingham) and the local public house, the Flying Saucer. One can imagine the more energetic people of Chatham walking up to the Flying Saucer on Summer Sundays of long ago, although it presumably had a more mundane name in those days.

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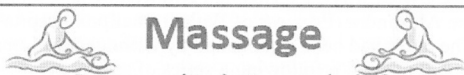
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Diary 2018

February 12th - Concert Medway Organ & Keyboard
Club, Parkwood Community Centre, Rainham, ME8
9PN, 7.30pm, Organist - Nicholas Martin, details ring
Brian Leonard 01634 234694

February 12th - 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.

February 13th - Wintering Wildlife and Waders,
Riverside Country Park, 10.00am - 3.00pm, suitable for
adults and enthusiastic children 12+, binoculars not
necessary, £10 per person (cons £5) 01634 337432

February 13th - Recycled Feeders and Bug Homes,
Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon or
1.00 - 3.00pm, £3 per child suitable for accompanied
children aged 5 - 12 years. Ring 01634 338191

February 13th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Valentines
Cushion' - a tapestry style arrangement, (see 16th Jan)

February 14th - Kite Making Workshop, Capstone Farm
Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon or 1.00 - 3.00pm, £5
per child, Join the rangers making kites in then fly
them on the hill in the bracing winds (see 13th Feb)

February 14th - East Medway U3A Rainham Social Club,
2.00 - 4.00pm, Mr Lenny Clark - 'Canterbury
Cathedral' non-members welcome £2. Free to
members, details 07895 890635

February 14th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Chocolate Making - Gillian Cromarty, (see 24th Jan)

February 15th - Den Building and Fire Lighting,
Riverside Country Park, 10.00am - 1.00pm, the whole
family can learn the basics of Bushcraft. £3 per person,
ring 01634 337432 for more information

February 15th - Hempstead Leisure Club, whist, scrabble,
board games, tea and chat (see 18th Jan)

February 15th - Rainham Women's Institute, Speaker on
'Life in a Victorian Workhouse' (see 18th Jan)

February 15th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Royal Visits to
Kent - Part 2 - Colin Breed, (see 18th Jan)

February 16th, 17th, 23rd & 24th - 'The Snow Queen' St
Paul's Drama Group, Gillingham Methodist Hall, Third
Avenue, ME7 2LU, 7.30 pm, mat Sat 24th 3.00pm.

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February 17th - Rainham South Councillors (see 20th Jan)
February 17th - Family Friendly Bingo Evening, Friends
of St Margaret's Church, 6.00pm, Millennium Centre,
Tickets £3 including one book of 8 games from Lesley
379796 or Kay 230430, BYO Drinks and Nibbles
February 17th - Valentine Dance, 7.30 - 10.30pm, St
Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore, Music by
Rich Phillips. Tickets £6.50 must be booked in
advance, call 01634 370492 for more information.
February 17th - Peter's Place 70s Disco Night, 8.00 -
11.00pm, United Services Social Club, Rainham, ME8
8AY, £10 per person including nibbles. Tickets from
billetto.co.uk or on the door, Bar available
February 17th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 20th Jan)
February 18th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
moderate circular walk 8 miles / 12.9 km, finish
2.30pm, meet Hollingbourne Railway Station. ME17
1FZ, TQ834551 walk through ancient woodlands and
Hollingbourne. A significant climb up to the downs and
one stretch can be very muddy. Good views. 07989
753278, graham.jenkinson@blueyonder.co.uk
February 18th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am Meet Chris Morris 01634 374923 07847
828249 Capstone Park, Lower Car Park GR 780653
ME7 3JG Cafe & Toilets, for 5.5 mile winter walk
undulating urban and little used paths. Dogs Allowed
February 19th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 22nd Jan)
February 19th - Rainham Evening Women's Institute,
Birthday Party, (see 15th Jan)
February 20th - RSPB Medway Group Talk, Birds and
Wildlife of New Zealand - Graham Ekins (16th Jan)
February 21st - Wigmore Ladies Club, (see 24th Jan)
February 21st - Bredhurst Garden Club, Rachael Castle
Primula auriculas - history, cultivation and categories,
Jewellery and scented candles on sale. (see 17th Jan)
February 22nd - Wigmore Thursday Club, Social
Meeting, (see 18th Jan)
February 22nd - Hempstead Leisure Club, Speaker Eunice
Norman - League of Friends, Hospital Radio (18th Jan)
February 23rd - Medway Geographical Soc, Christopher
Bull - The Ancient Parishes of Gravesham, (26th Jan)
February 24th - Quiz Night- Fairview PTFA, 7.30pm,
Fairview Community Primary School, ME8 0NU,
Tables of 6 - 8, £7 per person, includes supper. BYO
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Diary 2018

February 24th - Applause Rural Touring Theatre,
 Bredhurst Village Hall ME7 3JZ, 7.30pm. 'Think of
 England'. Tickets £10 from Ann Keeble, 01634 361263
 February 25th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Moderate circular walk 7 miles / 11.3 km, finish
 2.00pm, meet Red Lion public house, 75 High Street,
 Bridge, CT4 5LD, TR182541 walk via Bourne Park,
 Kingston and Charlton Park, back through arable and
 fruit farmland. Bring picnic or Sunday pub lunch at
 end. Contact: Len, 01634 319391,
 lenbeadle@blueyonder.co.uk
 February 25th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
 10.00am Meet Joan Weekes 01634 855522 07791
 883982 Jeskyns Country Park GR 662699 DA12 3AN.
 Carpark charges. Toilets and cafe. 3.5 mile mainly flat
 walk. Could be muddy. Dogs Allowed
 February 28th - Rainham Historical Society, Building
 Rochester Cathedral, (see 24th Jan)
 February 28th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, A
 Swipe at the 70s - Alan Haines, (see 24th Jan)
 March 1st - Wigmore Thursday Club, History of the
 Hovercraft - Brian Laverick-Smith, (see 18th Jan)
 March 3rd - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 20th Jan)
 March 4th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am, Moderate
 circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5 km, finish 1.30pm, meet
 and park car park behind Birling Church, ME19 5JG.
 TQ680606. 01634 306405, adeballard@yahoo.co.uk
 March 4th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am, Leisurely
 circular walk 6 miles / 9.7 km, finish 2.30pm, park
 considerably in The Street and meet outside the
 Maypole Inn, Borden, ME9 8JN TQ882629 walk roads
 and footpaths through Tunstall and Woodstock to
 Cromer's Wood, return via Woodstock, and Hearts
 Delight. Meet Martin Keelor of Kent Wild Life Trust in
 Cromer's wood. He will explain woodland management
 and the relationship to wildlife. Contact: Tony/Ann,
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 March 4th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day, Riverside
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March 5th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 22nd Jan)
 March 6th - Breast Cancer Support Group, A
 demonstration of 'Pilates' with Tina, (see 6th Feb)
 March 6th - Rainham Horticultural Society, Caroline
 Halfpenny - The Gardens of Cornwall, (see 6th Feb)
 March 6th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Mothering Sunday' -
 hand tied arrangement, (see 16th Jan)
 March 7th - Bird Walk, Riverside Country Park, 10.00am
 - 12.00noon, Join a ranger on a gentle walk identifying
 the most common birds seen or heard along the estuary.
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QUIZ NIGHT- FAIRVIEW PTFA
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