

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

DECEMBER 2018
NUMBER 549



We Wish You a Happy Christmas



A picture of The Street, Upchurch in approximately 1909. The finger post points along Forge Lane to Halstow 1 mile and Newington 2 miles. The village water pump can be seen in front of the churchyard wall just before The Crown Public House. The shop and cottages are clearly recognisable in The Street. See page 8 for David Woods article about the name 'Upchurch'.

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AF Next Issue January 12th 2019
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 Advertising: Hamish Mackay Miller
 See top of page 14 for current prices.
 Action Forum Office
 4 Saracen Close, Gillingham Business Park
 ME8 0QN Tel: 01634 310011 please mention
 AF when ringing. Email: af@thenet.uk.net

Editorial

Congratulations to The Prince of Wales who celebrated his 70th birthday in November. There were delightful family pictures in the Sunday papers to commemorate the event. Having four young grandchildren ourselves, with much the same age range as the royal children, the one that appealed most was an informal family shot of Prince George on his grandfather's knee, Princess Charlotte sitting obediently on the bench and 7 month old Prince Louis trying to escape his mother's arms to explore the future Kings nose. Of course all adult eyes are on the baby as they would be in any family. Much media attention of the milestone birthday resulted in documentary programmes which were a coup for the public relations department, both interesting and entertaining. One snippet that caught my attention was Prince Harry explaining how he and his brother spent walks with their father during holidays picking up litter. This resulted in an engrained habit (it can become addictive) so he continued even when at school for which he was unremittently teased. Would that he could work his magic on the population at large – litter is a constant problem particularly in country areas. No sooner has the council removed a load of fly tipping from our quiet country lane than the next mound appears. Most is household cast offs that the weekly refuse collection would have no trouble removing at the kerbside – so why drive out and offload it in a hedgerow?

Several times each week I walk the half mile from our house to our local 'corner shop' - Moto services on the M2 - to get the daily paper. It is a great walk along an ancient green lane so the road for a good part is sunken below the surrounding orchards and bounded by trees and hedgerows which are beautiful whatever time of year – except for the daily quota of litter! I can always gather at least one full carrier bag if not two or three each time I walk so just for interest one week in November I kept a survey of the items I rescued in a 24 hour period. (You could almost sing the result to 'The Twelve Days of Christmas').

Twelve miscellaneous items, 11 plastic bottles, 10 choc bar wrappings, 9 cups and lids, 8 plastic straws, 7 cardboard cartons, 6 serviettes, 5 drinks cans, 4 crisp packets, 3 food receipts, 2 happy meal packs and 1 glass bottle half full. At least the cans, bottles, card

and Macdonalds packs are mostly recyclable! It does not seem possible that Christmas is nearly here and 2019 not far off but do enjoy all the festive activities and when it comes to New Year Resolutions perhaps 'picking up litter' could be included. Have a very good month – we will be here again in the middle of January with the usual Jan/Feb combined edition.

Correspondence

5th RAINHAM BROWNIES 50th BIRTHDAY
 Dear Editor,

5th Rainham Brownie pack turns 50 this year and we are celebrating by having a party on Thursday 24th January 2019. If you were a Brownie or a helper in this pack we would like you to get in contact with us so we can invite you to help us celebrate.

Please contact us via our Facebook page or by email 5thrainhambrownies@blueyonder.co.uk for more information.

Yours sincerely
 Natalie Smith

ANTIQUE & COLLECTORS' CLUB

Dear Editor

Good News for the People of Rainham!

After meeting for 25 years in Chatham the Medway Antique and Collectors' Club now meet in Rainham. Why not join a friendly club with monthly entertaining talks on Antiques and Collectables while you relax with your inclusive tea or coffee. We meet at 7.30 for 8.00pm, on the second Tuesday of every month at the Club House of Rainham Cricket Club in Berengrave Lane. Our next meeting is Tuesday 8th January - 'Wonderful Things – The Treasures of Tutankamun'. Some forthcoming talks and events are: My Miniature Ceramics, Kentish Crafts, Post Cards of the First World War, History of Teddies, Buttons, a Silent Auction and a Summer Outing to Frogmore House. Membership is now open at £25. For further information ring 01634 851512 or simply just turn up.

Yours sincerely
 Cyril Baldwin

CHRISTMAS SLEIGH COLLECTIONS.
 Lions Club of Gillingham

Each evening 6.00pm to 8.15pm

Monday December 10th - Hempstead 1

Tuesday December 11th - Hempstead 2

Wednesday December 12th - Highfield

Thursday December 13th - Parkwood 1

Friday December 14th - Parkwood 2

Monday December 17th - Kenilworth

Tuesday December 18th - Fairview

Wednesday December 19th - Lower Beechings

Thursday December 20th - Twydall 1

Friday December 21st - Twydall 2

All money collected is donated to local charities.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS FLOAT ROUTES

Rotary Club of Gillingham 6.00 - 8.30pm each evening except Christmas Eve from 5.00pm

Friday 7th December - Canterbury St, Rock Ave,

Saturday 8th Rainham Precinct 8.30am - 1.00pm

Tuesday 11th Dec- Taverners Rd to Broadview Ave,

Wednesday 12th Dec - Third Ave, Barnsole Road

Thursday 13th Dec - Charlotte Drive to The Platters

Friday 14th Dec- Canterbury St, Napier Rd,

Monday 17th Dec - Eastcourt Lane, Twydall Lane

Tuesday 18th Dec - Tufton Rd to Childscroft Ave.

Wed 19th Dec - Station Rd, Ten Acre, Shorefields

Thursday 20th December - Napier Rd, Barnsole Rd,

Friday 21st December - Darland Ave, Leyton Ave

Saturday 22nd outside ASDA 8.30am - 5.30pm

Monday 24th December - start at 5pm

Stuart Rd, Park Ave, Barnsole Rd, Oxford Rd

ART EXHIBITION at WIGMORE LIBRARY

1st December – 29th December

An exhibition of original paintings for sale in a variety of media and styles by local artists from the Rainham Art Group. For more information about the group please email: rainhamartgroup@gmail.com

HOW CAN YOU HELP OTHERS?

The year of 2019 is just around the corner together with the making of New Year Resolutions. We all have many calls on our time but even a couple of hours a week helping in the Marie Curie shop in Rainham makes a real contribution to the charity's fundraising enabling direct help to individuals and their families dealing with terminal illness. If you have visited our shop, to buy or donate, you may have heard the audio announcements including the phrase 'We wouldn't be here without you'. This includes the volunteers as well as those who buy or donate. So when you write, record or think about making New

Year Resolutions please add "Find out more about volunteering at the Marie Curie Shop in Rainham Precinct". We really need you. We will appreciate any time you can give, and remember this can really help those in need of support.

Please call in at the shop, near Wilko, we are open 7 days a week, to find out more and perhaps take the opportunity for a taster session to find out if this type of volunteering is for you. Alternatively please telephone on 01634 387512 for more information. Many thanks for giving your time to read this and we hope to hear from you.

On behalf of MARIE CURIE at Rainham Precinct

JACK & THE BEANSTALK

by Jack Homewood

Oasthouse Theatre, Rainham

January 11.12.18.19.25.26 & February 1 & 2

Curtain up at 8.00pm

Saturday Matinees at 2.00pm & 5.00pm

The Rainham Theatrical Society will be performing another traditional family pantomime packed full of music, comedy and plenty of audience participation to get the new year off to a flying start.

Book Now! Box Office on 0844 8793224 or on-line www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk

DISTRIBUTION

Volunteer distributors are needed for:

Rainham

Langdale Close

Solomon Road, Old Orchard,

Russells, Gloucester, Chichester Closes

Oastview, Sheldon, lower part Mierscourt Road

Tilbury & Finwell Road, Wivenhoe, Cooden, Twyford

Upchurch - part Chaffes Lane

Wallbridge Lane, part of Oak Lane, Jubilee Terrace

If you can help please email af@thenet.uk.net

or ring 01634 310011 (please mention Action Forum)

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 Carol, she could have been family!

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Diary 2018

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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 1st 2019

December 1st – 29th - Art Exhibition, Wigmore Library
Rainham Art Group, rainhamartgroup@gmail.com
December 1st - St Peter's Bredhurst, Christmas Fayre,
12noon – 2.00pm,

December 1st - Christmas Fair, St Michael and All
Angels, Hartlip, 12noon – 3.00pm, Village Hall,
December 2nd - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am – 2.00pm, Meet
volunteer block. Ring 01634 338191 for information

December 3rd - Medway Scrabble Club, 2.00 – 4.30pm,
St Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham,
new members welcome, details 01634 230500
December 4th - Breast Cancer Support Group, 7.00 –
9.00pm, Medway Hospital, Level 2, Area 7. Christmas
Social, Angela Blackwell 01634 861802, 07761 853750

December 4th - Rainham Horticultural Society, 7.30pm,
Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, AGM New
members welcome, details from 01634 366276.
December 5th - Play and Chat, 1.30 - 3.00pm Parents,
Carers and their pre-school children. Lots of toys for
toddlers. £1.50per family includes refreshments for all,
St Paul's Church, Parkwood 01634 364338.

December 6th - Play and Chat, 10.15 - 11.45am, (see 5th
December 6th - Bird walk, Riverside Country Park,
10.00am – 12noon, Adults only, £3. 337432 to book
December 6th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's
Community Centre, 2.00pm. A Dickens of a Christmas
- Mick Lynn, over 50s ring 01634 234712 for details.

December 6th - Christmas Carol Concert, BWAG St
Peter's Church, Bredhurst & Green Court, 7.30pm,
Tickets only in advance - £8 pp, u16s free (includes
refreshments) call Vanessa Jones 07813 785940

December 7th - 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 7th - Games Afternoon Lower Halstow
Memorial Hall, 2.00 - 4.00pm £1.50 includes tea/
coffee, biscuits and a warm welcome. (no joining fee)
December 7th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Canterbury St, Rock Ave,

December 8th - Craft Market, 9.00am – 12.30pm,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, Free entry, 07779
366054 or email cjdcraftmarkets@yahoo.com
December 8th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, Rainham Precinct 8.30am - 1.00pm

December 8th - Winter Wonderland, St Matthew's
Church, Wigmore 11.00am – 2.00pm.
December 8th - Old Barn Orchestra Concert, 7.30pm,
Rainham School for Girls, Tickets £14 children £1,
01634 376979 or 07808 068881 members of orchestra
or on the door, In aid of Demelza Children's Hospice.

December 8th - Carol Concert, Union of Catholic
Mothers featuring The Medway Singers, 7.45pm, St
Augustine's Church, Parkwood, refreshments. Tickets
Mrs Janet Nastaly 01634 371897 or 01634 362896.
December 9th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Harry Keane 01634 231533 07729
356835 GR 716726 ME3 7JQ Higham Station Carpark
(Free) for 6.5 mile walk, No Dogs

December 9th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely linear walk 6.5 miles / 10.5km, finish 1.30pm
from Whitstable All Saints Close - close to Station to
Canterbury returning by frequent bus Contact: Graham,
07989 753278, graham.jenkinson@blueyonder.co.uk

December 9th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day, 10am
– 2.00pm. Riverside Country Park, Refreshments but
bring own lunch. Meet visitor centre, 01634 337432
December 9th - Hempstead Valley Carol Concert,
4.45pm, accompanied by the Medway Band.
December 10th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club
of Gillingham, Hempstead 1, 6.00 - 8.15pm
December 10th - Rainham Evening Bereavement
Friendship Group, Millennium Centre, Rainham 2nd
Monday each month to help those still in employment
Join us for a cuppa and chat, ring Julie 01634 364309.
December 10th - Rainham Flower Club, 7.30pm, St
Matthews Church Hall, Wigmore, Christmas Party 'The
Swinging Sixties' www.rainhamflowerclub.co.uk or
ring 01634 863034
December 10th - Concert Medway Organ & Keyboard
Club, Parkwood Community Centre, Rainham, 7.30pm,
Organist - Andrew Nix, Brian Leonard 01634 234694
December 11th - Caring for carers - Pop-In, 10.00 -
12noon, St. Paul's Church, Parkwood, tea/coffee &
cake, details Maureen Cannon 01634 235723
December 11th - Christmas Wreath Making, Riverside
Country Park, 10.00am – 12noon Suitable for adults
and children 7+, £8 per person, book 01634 337432
December 11th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Taverners Rd, Maidstone Rd,
Lonsdale Dr, Broadview Ave,
December 11th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club
of Gillingham, Hempstead 2, 6.00 - 8.15pm
December 12th - Play and Chat, Christmas Party,
Booking essential (see 5th Dec)
December 12th - Christmas Crafts for Tiny Tots,
Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am – 12noon. Drop
in any time Accompanied children aged 2 – 5 years, £3
per child, please ring 01634 338191 to register interest
December 12th - Carol Service, 2.30pm, St. Matthew's
Church, Wigmore for people living with Dementia,
information ring Jean Penney on 01634 387379.
December 12th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club
of Gillingham, Highfield, 6.00 - 8.15pm
December 12th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Third Ave, Barnsole, Woodlands
December 12th - Bredhurst WI, Village Hall, 7.30pm,
Michael Lack, Saxophonist/singer, details, Pam
Ormiston on 01634 365789
December 12th - Rainham Historical Society, 7.30pm
start, Millennium Centre, Rainham, 'A Celebratory

History of Christmas' - Andy Thomas, Visitors
welcome £2 per visit, Contact 01634 263622 for details
December 12th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Christmas at Home,
for details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444
December 13th - Free Films at St. Mary Magdalene
Church, Gillingham Green, 2.00pm, Free entry and
refreshments. No need to book. 01634 324783
December 13th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Carols and
readings, (see 6th Dec).

December 13th - Play and Chat. Christmas Party
(Booking essential) (see 6th Dec).
December 13th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Christmas
Sing-a-Long All Saints Church, Hempstead Road 2.00 -
4.00pm. New members welcome, 07583 343 782
December 13th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club
of Gillingham, Parkwood 1, 6.00 - 8.15pm
December 13th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Charlotte Drive, Edwin Rd,
Maidstone Rd Marshall Rd, The Goldings, The Platters,
December 13th - Charity Christmas Concert Mantissa
Opera and The Cantium Singers, 7.00pm. Emmaus
Church Centre, Clover Street Chatham ME4 4DT,
Tickets £10 (£9 cons) (Under 16/ £5) 01634 575842
email: simon1053sam@gmail.com

December 14th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, Twydall Evangelical Church, Goudhurst Road
2.30 - 4.30pm. The Suffragettes...Ian Porter. Details Val
Barrand 07947 583327 email lupusrufus@sky.com
December 14th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas
Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Canterbury St, Napier Rd,
December 14th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club
of Gillingham, Parkwood 2, 6.00 - 8.15pm
December 15th - Newington Christmas Craft Fair,
10.00am – 2.00pm Village Hall, High Street, ME9 7JJ
Handmade Crafts and Refreshments 07799 137548
December 15th - Rainham South Councillors surgery at
3:16 café Parkwood 10am - 12 noon, no appointments.
December 15th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United
Reformed Church hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham,
7.30 – 9.30pm. New and experienced dancers welcome,
with or without a partner, ring 366189 or 388546.
December 15th - Concert. Community Oast House,
Rainham, 7.30pm, Chorusgirl & Support, Admission £5
in advance, £7 on the door. Full details are available
at facebook.com/carefulnowpromotions

Continued on Page 11

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WINTER WONDERLAND, WIGMORE

Saturday 8th December 11.00am – 2.00pm

St Matthew's Church, Wigmore. Admission free.

There will be a children's maze and activities,

Father Christmas, many stalls of all kinds,

Lunches and mince pies

CAROL CONCERT

The Union of Catholic Mothers

featuring The Medway Singers

Saturday 8th December, 7.45pm

St Augustine's Church, Parkwood, Rainham.

All proceeds for our charity which this year is CRY

(Cardiac Risk in the Young).

Coffee/tea and mince pies in the interval.

Tickets from Mrs Janet Nastaly 01634 371897 or

Mrs Alma Payne 01634 362896.

OLD BARN ORCHESTRA CONCERT

Saturday 8th December, 7.30pm

Rainham School for Girls, Derwent Way, ME8 0BX

Quilter - A Children's Overture

Mendelssohn - Violin concerto in E minor

Soloist Catherine Alsey

Dvorak - Symphony no 8 in G major

Conductor Dwight Pile-Gray, Leader Kate Coles

Tickets £14 children £1

From 01634 376979 or 07808 068881 from

members of the orchestra or on the door

In aid of Demelza Children's Hospice

HEMPSTEAD VALLEY CAROL CONCERT

Sunday 9th December from 4.45pm

Traditional carol concert, always a favourite event.

Stores will be closed. For more information see

www.hempsteadvalley.com

CAROL SERVICE

Wednesday 12th December, 2.30pm

St. Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore

A Service for people living with Dementia and

people who find it difficult to take part in more

traditional Carol Services. The Carol Service is part

of our regular Dementia Friendly services held on

the fourth Wednesday of the month, 2.30pm in St.

Matthew's Church. The service will be very

informal, sitting around a table, singing our favourite

Carols followed by refreshments and a time to

chat. We hope many people will join us to celebrate

Christmas. If you would like further information or

need support to get to the service please ring

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'CHRISTMAS MAGIC'

Come and join Wigmore Voices
in our celebration of Christmas music

Saturday 15th December, 8pm

St Matthews Community Centre

Drewery Drive, Wigmore,

Tickets £7 from Sue 01634 370639

RAINHAM FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Thursday December 20th, 1.30pm - 3.30pm.

St Margaret's Millennium Centre Join us for a

couple of hours of Christmas themed carols/songs

with festive snacks/buffet and raffle. Entry £2

Contact Hands Gillingham 01634 577984.

THE LONGEST NIGHT

Saturday 22nd December, 4.00 - 4.45pm

St Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore

Christmas can be a difficult time of the year for

many people, for a variety of reasons. Bereavement,

relationship breakdown, loneliness, money worries,

and unemployment are just some that make the

relentless celebrations hard to live with.

There were no parties or festive meals in the Bible's

account of the birth of Jesus, but there were people

who were anxious and fearful. We narrate that

familiar story, in a safe space, with music, readings,

and prayers. 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. For support in advance or

if transport is a problem please call 01634 231736.

O COME LET US ADORE HIM

Carol Service

Rainham Christian Fellowship,

Waltham Road, Twydall

Sunday 23rd December, 4.00pm

Christmas Day Service

Tuesday 25th December, 10.30am

All Welcome

MISTLETOE - Rainham Community Orchard

Sprigs of Mistletoe are available for a donation (£2+)

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR NOVEMBER

The late Dr Oliver Rackham, the noted botanist, wrote that the inhabitants of the British Isles had inherited a richer legacy of ancient trees than those of any other country in Western Europe. Of Britain's native trees, certain examples of the oak and the yew have the largest girths and are thus deemed to be among the longest living trees in this country. But when does a long living tree become ancient? One widely quoted proposition is that an oak be assumed to be ancient at 400 years and a yew at 800 years. But how to determine the age of a tree? Dendrologists are usually able only to give an approximation of the age of a tree, such as '500 to 700 years old' or '800 years plus or minus 200 years' and they would take into account, among other matters, whether or not a given tree had been pollarded, which has the effect of prolonging the age of that tree. One should not rely on a ready-made table which is said to enable one to read off the age of a given species of tree according to its girth, or circumference at the tree's lower trunk. Unless a tree was planted, and there is documentary evidence of the date of that planting, the only way to determine the accurate age of a tree is to drill out a core of its growth rings. But this method does not work if the tree has become hollow through age.

Two parklands where claimed ancient oaks grow are Windsor Great Park and the grounds of Blenheim Palace. The former park is owned by The Crown and was reserved as a hunting ground by William the Conqueror. It is today an area of a gently undulating, varied landscape, including woods containing several hundred huge, solitary oak trees dating back 500 years or more. The oldest of these trees are called 'Dodders', being the traditional name for more than a hundred ancient pollarded oaks that were self-sown in the middle ages. They predate the oaks planted in Windsor Great Park, for timber, from 1580 onwards. 'Offa's Oak' is one of these 'dodders'. Its hollow trunk has split into four parts, one of which one has fallen to the ground. Measurements taken in 1998 show that it had a girth of 11.8 metres and was considered likely to be at least 800 years old. The tree still thrives and produces a large, green crown of leaves in summer. It is claimed that Windsor Great Park and Forest have one of the largest collections of

ancient and veteran trees in Northern Europe. A large number of the country's claimed ancient oak trees are also in the grounds of Blenheim Palace, which is owned by the Dukes of Marlborough, in an area not open to the public and known as High Park. The trees were in the news last year. The story was that Blenheim's parkland as a whole was laid out by Capability Brown in the late 18th century, but 120 acres of ancient woodland was left untouched by his plans. This woodland was once a Royal hunting ground, founded by Henry 1st in the 11th century. Little notice had been paid to this woodland over recent years. However, permission was given to a researcher, who was writing a book on ancient woods, to investigate the flora in the wood. Much to everybody's surprise and delight the wood was found to contain at least sixty oaks which were said to be up to 900 years old and dating back to the middle ages. Published photographs show that some, if not all of the ancient oaks had been pollarded. It was announced that they appeared to have seeded naturally and had not been planted. Five of the oaks have a girth of 9 metres which, it is claimed, gives them an age of nearly a thousand years. Blenheim Palace claims to own Europe's oldest oak woodland at an estimated age of 900 years, and to have the greatest collection of ancient, mediaeval oak trees anywhere in Europe. I do not pretend to know why it is that Western Europe has less ancient trees than the British Isles. But, as far as oaks are concerned, one reason may be that more trees were pollarded here than there in mediaeval times. The practice consisted of cutting down a growing tree just above the reach of cattle or deer thus enabling a continuous regrowth and harvesting of wood. Some pollards were created specifically to act as boundary markers. As I show below, pollarding prolongs the life of a tree. In Nature Notes of some time ago I wrote about two oaks which Thomas Pakenham (author of 'Meetings with Remarkable Trees') described as having the largest girths in the British Isles – and probably in Europe. The oak in Lincolnshire (the Bowthorpe Oak) has a girth of 13.6 metres and has been pollarded. It therefore has a short trunk and a small crown and is considered to be some 600 – 1000 years old. The oak at Nonnington, here in Kent, and called 'Majesty', is a maiden tree, that is, it has not been pollarded. At 12 metres in girth, which is not increasing, it now has a

slightly smaller circumference than the Lincolnshire tree. The Kentish oak is considered to be some 500 to 800 years old. On my last visit, her crown was much reduced and she had shed the last remaining lower limb, weighing perhaps a ton, which had crashed down and dug itself into the soil. Majesty seems to have been under some stress. It may be a hundred years yet before the last green leaves appear on the last live branches spouting from what is to be left of her hollow trunk. But clearly Majesty, which was never pollarded, is in the last phase of her long life and is slowly dying. The Bowthorpe Oak, which has been regularly pollarded over the centuries, is still putting on weight around its waist.

Joe Ennis

THE NAME UPCHURCH

The village name Upchurch is Anglo Saxon and means 'Church on the hill'. It dates from about 1100, but the origin of the surname is less straightforward. The only evidence of the name Upchurch outside the village is in Upshire near Waltham Abbey in Essex from which the Upchurch family name is believed to have originated. There is also a family crest from the same area which indicates that the family became high standing. In present day Essex less than 2% of people have the surname Upchurch while in Kent the figure is less than 1%.

In the village of Upchurch there is no evidence of the surname in the parish register of births, marriages and burials back to the 16th century. However, in Huntingdonshire there are 105 families bearing the surname Upchurch, in Hertfordshire 86 families and in Cambridgeshire 62. Many families in foreign English speaking countries with the name exist, especially in the United States. How did people living in these locations get the surname Upchurch?

The logical reason is movement of people bearing the Upchurch name to other countries. During the 17th and 18th centuries people travelling to America from England may have wanted to keep a connection with their town or village so changed their name to their place of origin. Some may have been orphans and did not know their real surname or were evading the law. Some early settlers travelling to America, particularly to North Carolina before the American War of Independence, went as indentured servants and some present day families named Upchurch living there can be traced back to these. The servants were often

teenagers from poor families who did not have money for the journey from England, so they borrowed it from the shipping company and got free passage. In return they obtained jobs as indentured servants mainly for farmers, planters and shopkeepers and worked to pay back the shipping company over several years. They were also provided with free accommodation, food and clothing by their employers. In North Carolina today there are 194 families bearing the Upchurch name and in the Upchurch district of Cary in Wake County numerous residents with the surname Upchurch exist. There are also businesses like real estate company 'Upchurch Farms.' In Texas there are 106 recorded Upchurch family surnames and the name can be found in other American states. Some African Americans have the surname Upchurch and the most likely reason for this is because their forebears were named after a tobacco or rice plantation owner for whom they worked.

Americans named Upchurch have visited the Kent village over the years trying to find their roots, the possibility of relatives or some connection with the village. Some are shocked to discover that no families with the surname Upchurch exist which means that finding family connections is almost impossible unless there are other names to work on. Late postmaster Cliff Wanstall kept a guest book in the village post office for visiting tourists to sign and many of these were named Upchurch. In recent times American tourists with the surname have stayed at Suffield House, the village bed and breakfast establishment. Although they have not found evidence of relatives at least they have visited the only village in existence bearing their surname.

David Wood.

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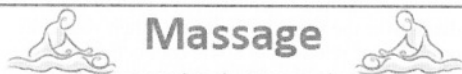
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Diary 2018

December 15th - Wigmore Voices 'Christmas Magic'

8.00pm, St Matthews Community Centre, Drewery
Drive, Wigmore, Tickets £7 from Sue 01634 370639.

December 16th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,

10.00am, meet David Brown 07815 106791 GR 764543
ME15 6AZ Armstrong Road, Maidstone. South Park

Car Park for 5 mile circular walk to Loose village &
Loose valley, undulating with climbs. Dogs Allowed

December 16th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,

Moderate circular walk 5.5 miles / 8.8km, finish

1.00pm Meet Eridge Railway Station carpark TN3 9LE.

Contact: Contact: Tony/Ann, 01634 406634,

faulknera075@gmail.com

December 17th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 3rd Dec).

December 17th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club

of Gillingham, Kenilworth, 6.00 - 8.15pm

December 17th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas

Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Eastcourt Lane, Twydall Lane

December 17th - Rainham Evening Women's Institute, St

Paul's Church, Parkwood, 7.30pm, Christmas Party, All

welcome, ring Kate Archer 01634 360797.

December 17th - Wigmore WI, 7.30 - 9.30pm, St

Matthews Community Centre, Drewery Drive, Visitors

Welcome, Chris Ellison 01634 372976 or 01634 268611

December 18th - Christmas Sleigh collection, Lions Club

of Gillingham, Fairview, 6.00 - 8.15pm

December 18th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas

Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Tufton Rd, Berengrave Lane,

Holmoaks, Parkfield Ave, Childscroft Ave, Station Rd

December 18th - RSPB Medway Local Group Illustrated

Talk, Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 -

9.45pm £4, Rolf goes Wild - Rolf Williams For Field

Trips: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway.

December 18th - GHS Floral Art Group, 7.30 - 9.00pm,

United Reformed Church (rear hall) Balmoral Road,

Gillingham, 'Xmas is coming' - double ended table

arrangement, pew end or swag plus Christmas nibbles,

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December 19th - Rotary Club of Gillingham Christmas

Float, 6.00 - 8.30pm, Taswell Rd Henry St, Station Rd,

Macklands Way, William St, Ten Acre, Shorefields

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Diary 2019

December 25th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.30am,
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 11.00am, Christmas Day Ramble, Park and meet at the
 end of Nashenden Farm Lane, ME1 3TQ. Contact: Ade,
 01634 306405, adeballard@yahoo.co.uk
 December 25th - Christmas Day Service, Rainham
 Christian Fellowship, Waltham Road, Twydall,
 10.30am, All Welcome
 December 30th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Leisurely circular walk 5.5 miles / 8.8km, finish
 1.00pm. Meet at Newtonton carpark, very muddy walk
 and significant hills. Contact: Heather, 07887 750881
 December 30th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
 10.00am, meet Jim Gevaux 07807 896995 GR 016613
 ME13 7AG Guildhall, Market Place, Faversham for 5.5
 mile flat estuary walk via Saxon Shore Way. Dogs OK
 January 2nd - Bird Feeders and Bug Homes, Riverside,
 10.00am - 12noon and 1.00 - 3.00pm, accompanied
 children 5 - 12 years. £3 per child, book 01634 337432
 January 2nd - Trinity Friendship Group, Holy Trinity
 Church Hall, Twydall, 1.30 - 3.30pm. Join us for a chat
 with tea, coffee, biscuits and board games. Entry £1,
 contact Hands Gillingham 01634 577984.
 January 3rd - Fire Building and open fire cooking,
 Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 12noon and
 1.00 - 3.00pm. The whole family can learn basic bush
 craft skills. Bring sausages and marshmallows for a
 smokey lunch. £3 per person, book 01634 338191
 January 3rd - Wigmore Thursday Club, Social Meeting,
 (see 6th Dec).
 January 5th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 15th Dec).
 January 6th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
 meet Lindsay Floyd 07743 702049 Detling The Cock
 Horse Inn car park, for 3 mile walk along Pilgrim's
 Way and North Downs Way gradual climb & a steep
 flight of steps to descend. Dogs allowed
 January 6th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
 Moderate circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5km, finish
 1.30pm. Meet and park in Harrietsham Car park South

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of A20 may be muddy. Contact: Derek, 07768 448633,
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 January 7th - Medway Scrabble Club, 2.00 - 4.30pm, St
 Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, new
 members welcome, details 07523 124668
 January 8th - Fuchsia & Pelargonium Society, 7.30pm,
 Rainham School for Girls 'Exhibiting at Chelsea' -
 Susan Shaw, First hand experiences on the road to RHS
 Chelsea. All welcome, Ring 01634 852519 for details
 January 8th - Antique & Collectors' Club, 8.00pm, Club
 House, Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane
 'Wonderful Things - [The Treasures of Tutankamun]'
 ring 01634 851512 for more details.
 January 9th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, Quiz
 Night, (see 12th Dec).
 January 10th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Presenting
 court evidence - Jack Deans, (see 6th Dec).
 January 11.12.18.19.25.26 and February 1 & 2nd -
 Oasthouse Theatre, Rainham, Jack & the Beanstalk by
 Jack Homewood, Curtain up at 8pm. Saturday Matinees
 at 2pm & 5pm, Box Office on 0844 8793224 or on-line
 @ www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk
 January 13th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10am,
 meet Chris Morris 374923 07847828249 Aylesford
 Bridge Car Park for 5 mile flat walk Dogs OK
 January 13th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
 Capstone Farm Country Park, (see 2nd Dec).
 January 14th - Concert, Medway Organ & Keyboard
 Club, Organist - David Harrild, (see 10th Dec).
 January 15th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Burn's Night' -
 Inverted Crescent arrangement incorporating a candle/
 stick, (see 18th Dec).
 January 16th - Bird walk, Riverside Country Park,
 10.00am - 12noon, Join a ranger on a gentle walk to
 identify the most common birds seen or heard along the
 estuary. Adults only, £3. Ring 01634 337432 to book.
 January 16th - Bredhurst Garden Club, Melanie Gibson-
 Barton. Parks and Gardens of Flanders, Hyacinth Show,
 Bring and Buy Produce Stall, (see 19th Dec).
 January 17th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Postcards in the
 family - Bob Appleton, (see 6th Dec).
 January 18th - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group,
 (see 7th Dec).
 January 19th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 15th Dec).
 January 20th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
 Riverside Country Park, (see 9th Dec).
 January 21st - Medway Scrabble Club (see 7th Jan)
 January 23rd - Rainham Historical Society, 'Temple
 Manor and the Knights Templar' - Dr Jeremy Clarke,
 (see 12th Dec).
 January 23rd - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
 Hempstead Village Hall, Games Night, (see 12th Dec).

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