

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

JANUARY /
FEBRUARY 2019
NUMBER 550



The Oast Community Centre, Granary Close, Rainham was purchased by The Rainham & Wigmore Community Association in the early 1970s. Over the next years extensive fund raising projects (most memorably The Rainham Spectacular) and much hard work by dedicated volunteers converted this enormous building to the Community Centre you know. Nearly half a century on volunteers are updating the facilities and again appealing for your help. In October 1973 the front page of Action Forum announced a Public Meeting to discuss the proposals for the conversion of the Station Oast and appealed for help with fundraising, building skills and voluntary labour to complete the work on your Community Centre. We repeat this now! CAN YOU HELP? See page 3 for more information about the current project and contact details to offer your assistance.

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AF

Next Issue February 23rd 2019

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Editorial: Barbara Mackay Miller
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

2019 - It hardly seems possible, a sure sign of growing old! It seems only moments since we were preparing for fantastic parties to celebrate the turn of the 21st century and worrying about the 'Millennium Bug'. Now after nearly a fifth of the century has gone we celebrate in ever greater style and are still worrying, now, about the current potential disaster - Brexit. After a year of topsy turvy weather conditions in 2018 we have again confounded the forecasters with an extended unseasonably mild and dry period all through the Christmas holidays. Disappointing for those who 'dream of a white Christmas' but I'm afraid only a retreat abroad to colder climes will achieve that ambition now for the average Brit. Statistically we rarely have snow on Christmas Day. I do remember one dramatic year however, probably 1981, one of the few times we have gone away for Christmas. With three young children under 6 years of age we were to drive to Norfolk - after our shop closed on Christmas Eve - to spend the next few days with relatives. This was only shortly after the second Dartford Tunnel had been completed and before the M25 made it a quicker, easier journey. The snow began falling gently as I packed the car during the afternoon and continued steadily. With the foolhardiness of youth we set off and miraculously arrived after a fairly dramatic journey, but no real emergencies, until it came to getting the car off the road into the driveway of the Grandparents house. This took much pushing, digging and hard labour. As light dawned on Christmas Day we saw the extent of the snow drifts all around! Action Forum celebrates a special birthday this year, 50 years old. It was in March 1969 that Hamish launched a free advertising leaflet for every house in the Rainham area (10,000 at that time). Intended as a one off to promote a charity he was supporting 'Help the Needy' the four page leaflet was delivered door to door by volunteers and paid for by friendly advertisers. Having established the network he decided to continue the project as a monthly free distribution newsletter (he claims the first of its kind) and the rest is history as fifty years on I am writing the 550 edition which now has a print run of 20,250 copies but is still distributed by fantastic volunteers. If you would like to help see page 3 for the latest rounds available or if you are able to go outside your

immediate area it is always useful to have people willing to fill in as need arises (email af@thenet.uk.net or ring 01634 310011 but please mention AF as it is The Net office line and they can only take messages.) May we wish you a very happy 2019 and have a good month until we see you again at the end of February with the March edition. Happy New Year!

Correspondence

AGE CONCERN CENTRE Woodlands Road
Dear Editor

I am appealing to readers of Action Forum to help me find photos, personal memories or articles about the founding of the Centre in Woodlands Road. Begun, I think, in the early 70's. Simon Baker of Age Concern has already been in helpful contact with me

Thanks in anticipation

Hugh Pierce

Email hughpierce19@virginmedia.com

POPPY APPEAL 2018

Dear Editor,

The Poppy Appeal at Hempstead Valley was helped this year by our 4 lovely veterans; Parkwood Air Cadets; volunteers; plus knitters and sewers. Between us we managed to raise just over £20,000 which is fantastic. The Twydall Sewers donated a beautiful poppy duvet, raising £429 which was won by a very happy Diana Button. We also had a great response to our knitted poppies appeal, over 1300 donated, which allowed us to offer a wide selection of beautiful handmade poppies for sale. With many thanks to everyone, a great team effort. Happy New Year

Sandra - Poppy Appeal Organiser

01634 362863 sandracolyer@hotmail.co.uk

STATION OASTHOUSE

Dear Editor,

To update my letter re the Station Oasthouse in the November edition of Action Forum, a phone call from a former resident of Station Road, now living in Ringwood, whose name I could not get due to the bad line, told me his close friend was Tony Weller of Rainham whose father was manager of the hop oast part of the building during the hop drying season and later in the year manager of the agricultural, animal feed production in the other part of the warehouse. My brother Andy Major phoned to say one of his friends, Martin Wicks, who lived in Webster Road worked in the property after leaving school when hops were dried there and later other Wakeley items were produced. The Berengrave Lane side of the building was built first as a hop oast the Station Road side for corn and feedstuffs was added later. My thanks to both contributors for this information.

Yours sincerely

Alan Major

41 Heaton Road CT1 3PY 01227 459246

THE OAST COMMUNITY CENTRE

In the 1970s the Oast Community Centre in Granary Close, next to Rainham Station (over 90 years old at the time) was bought for the community by The Rainham and Wigmore Community Association. During 2018 with the help of lots of volunteers and supported by very successful fundraising schemes a comprehensive refurbishment and regeneration programme began for this incredible old building. We now have spaces suitable for sports or large gatherings, smaller rooms, a small office space, a bar and tearoom all available for hire. Parties, weddings and all manner of family friendly events have been held. Many people have kindly donated blue tokens in Tesco, where we were lucky to win the top award. This will go towards the plans for refurbishing the tearoom. A random act of kindness offered over the Christmas holidays by a local plasterer has enabled our Willow Room to be transformed. Our thanks go to so many people for their hard work and support during the past year. So...**New Year, New Start...we need you.** Back at the beginning, in the 1970s appeals for help and funds were made through Action Forum. Now, nearly 50 years on, we ask you to do the same again. Any memorabilia, anecdotes and photos are of interest to our history team. Please email history@oastcentre.org phone 01634 309137 or write to The Oast, Granary Close, Rainham ME8 7SG. Can you donate your skills - anything at all - not just hard labour. Do you have artistic or display talents? Would you like to join the committee, volunteer, help promote the centre, or share a facebook post? We need to raise money and awareness of the centre and we cannot do it without you. To make a donation email fundraising@oastcentre.org - to volunteer or if you wish to know more, email secretary@oastcentre.org Thank you from all of us at The Oast.

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VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Hands & Gillingham Volunteer Centre are looking for volunteers to assist for just a few hours each week with our services such as transport, befriending and gardening to assist the elderly and disabled. As a volunteer centre we also work with local and national charities/not for profit organisations to promote volunteering and opportunities. We host monthly community friendship groups, a lunch group and technology groups in Twydall and Rainham. If you would like to know more about volunteering or any of our services, please contact us on 01634 577984 or visit our website www.gillinghamvolunteercentre.com

HALF TERM ACTIVITY TRAIL

Riverside Country Park

Monday 18th February - Sunday 24th

Pick up your trail from the Visitor Centre and collect a small prize when completed. Fun for all the family. £3 per trail, book 01634 337432

PRINCE ARTHUR INDOOR BOWLS CLUB

Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham

Details ring 01634 281243 or see paribc.co.uk
BOCCIA a game of bowls designed for the disabled
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Volunteer distributors are needed for:

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Langdale Close

Solomon Road, Old Orchard, Russells, Chichester,
Gloucester Close

Oastview, Sheldon, lower part Mierscourt Road
Tilbury & Finwell, Wivenhoe, Cooden, Twyford

Upchurch

Part of Chaffes Lane

Wallbridge Lane, part of Oak Lane, Jubilee Terrace

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or ring 01634 310011 (please mention Action Forum)

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Carol, she could have been family!

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Diary 2019

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 12th 2019

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,
10.00am, meet Chris Morris 01634 374923
07847828249 Aylesford Bailey Bridge Car Park for 5
mile flat walk. Dogs allowed

January 13th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 5.5 miles / 8.8km, finish 2pm.
Meet Amazon and Tiger Pub, Harvel St DA13 0DE.
Contact: Ade, 01634 306405, adeballard@yahoo.co.uk

January 13th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Capstone Farm Country Park, 10.00am - 2.00pm, Meet
volunteer block, wear suitable clothing and footwear for
outside work. Ring 01634 338191 for more information
January 14th - Concert, Medway Organ & Keyboard
Club, 50th Anniversary year, Parkwood Community
Centre, ME8 9PN, 7.30pm. Organist - David Harrild,
details ring Brian Leonard 01634 234694

January 15th - GHS Floral Art Group, 7.30 - 9.00pm,
United Reformed Church (rear hall) Balmoral Rd, Gill,
'Burn's Night' - Inverted Crescent arrangement
incorporating a candle/stick, New members welcome,
01634 232998 or email kayebuss@btinternet.com

January 15th - RSPB Medway Local Group Talk,
Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, 7.30 -

9.45pm £4. Kenyan Safari: Birds and Animals - Brian
Gallop. Field Trips: www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway.
January 16th - Bird walk, Riverside Country Park, 10am -
12noon. Adults only, £3. Ring 337432 to book.

January 16th - Play and Chat. 1.30pm - 3.00pm. Parents/
Carers and pre-school children. Lots of toys. £1.50 per
family includes refreshments for all. St Paul's Church,
Parkwood, ME8 9PN. 01634 364388.

January 16th - The Evergreen Club for over 50s, Bredhurst
Village Hall, 2.00pm. Speaker from SERVE(Kent)/ tea
and chat, ring 01634 301031 or 365510 for details.

January 16th - Bredhurst Garden Club, 7.30pm, Village
Hall, Melanie Gibson-Barton, 'Parks and Gardens of
Flanders', Hyacinth Show, Bring and Buy Produce
Stall, Details John Fridd 01634 388028

January 17th - Wigmore Thursday Club, St Matthew's
Community Centre, 2.00pm, Postcards in the family -
Bob Appleton, for over 50s 01634 234712 for details.

January 17th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Quiz - Who is
this? All Saints' Church, Hempstead Road 2 - 4.00pm.
New members always welcome, phone 07583 343 782

January 17th - Play and Chat, 10.15 - 11.45am, Parents/
Carers and their pre-school children. Lots of toys. £1.50
per family includes refreshments for all. St Paul's
Church, Parkwood, ME8 9PN. 01634 365932

January 17th - Rainham Women's Institute meet 1.45 -
4.00pm, Wakeley Hall, Oast House Community Centre,
Granary Close. Visitors welcome, small charge per
visit. Contact Lynne 01634 234997 for details.

January 19th - Rainham South Councillors surgery at 3:16
Cafe Parkwood 10am - 12noon, no appointments.

January 19th - Medway Folk Dance Club, United
Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Rd, Gill, 7.30 -
9.30pm. New and experienced dancers welcome, with
or without a partner, information 366189 or 388546.

January 20th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet David Brown 07815106791 Penenden

Heath Car Park for 7 mile circular walk via Detling and
Boxley. 6 stiles. No Dogs

January 20th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisure Circular walk 7.5 miles / 12.1km, estimated
finish 2.15pm, Faversham to Hartley Ferry and back
ME13 7AG, TR015613, Contact: Tony/Ann, 01634
406634, faulknera075@gmail.com

January 20th - Volunteer Conservation Task Day,
Riverside Country Park, 10.00am - 2.00pm, bring your
own lunch and wear suitable clothing and footwear for
outside work. Meet at the visitor centre 01634 337432

January 21st - Medway Scrabble Club, 2.00 - 4.30pm, St
Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham, new
members welcome, details 07523 124668

January 23rd - Play and Chat, (see 16th Jan)
January 23rd - Wigmore Ladies, Howard Hall, Woodside,
Wigmore 2.00 - 4.00pm, new members welcome to this
cheerful group, just come along or ring 01634 388912.

January 23rd - The Evergreen Club - Rummage Sale /
Bingo (see 16th Jan).

January 23rd - Rainham Historical Society, 7.30pm start,
Millennium Centre, Rainham, 'Temple Manor and the
Knights Templar' - Dr Jeremy Clarke, Visitors
welcome £2 per visit, Contact Mrs Olwen O'Dowd
01634 263622 for more information

January 23rd - All Saints Women's Fellowship,
Hempstead Village Hall, 8.00pm, Games Night, for
details contact Rhonda Peck 07951 629444

January 24th - Play and Chat, (see 17th Jan)
January 24th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Cockney sing-a-
long - John and Peggy Scott, (see 17th Jan)

January 24th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, boards
games, tea and chat (see 17th Jan)
January 25th - Medway Geographical Society, 7.30 -
9.00pm 'Septimus Severus in Scotland' - Dr Simon
Elliott, Holy Trinity Church, Tyddall Lane, ME8 6TN,
Plenty of parking, Everyone Welcome, Students and
Children Free, Just come or ring 01634 572139

January 26th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10am
meet Stephen Manning 07444229721 GR 724675 ME2
2SS Cineworld, Medway Valley Leisure Park, for 5
mile Two Bridges walk. Dogs allowed

January 26th - Quiz Night, 7.30pm start, Carmel Hall,
Upton Lane, Sittingbourne ME10 1JB Tables 6 - 8, £5,
BYO Food, Drinks and Glasses Contact - Mike 01634
360906 Email - mikew16@blueyonder.co.uk

January 27th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5km estimated
finish 1.30pm, Meet Community Centre car park,
Paddlesworth Road, Snodland ME6 5BF, TQ696620.
Contact: Ade, 01634 306405, adeballard@yahoo.co.uk

January 27th - Indoor Boot Fair, Twydall Community
Centre, Beechings Way, ME8 6PZ, 10.00am - 2.00pm,
set up from 9am, 50p entry. Raising funds for the
upkeep of the centre. Tables available, £10 in advance,
free tea/coffee for stall holders. Contact Janet Duke,
07809 892883 or pinkdukebox@aol.com

January 30th - Play and Chat, (see 16th Jan)
January 30th - The Evergreen Club - Country & Western
Music with Tony Buckland (see 16th Jan).

January 31st - Play and Chat, (see 17th Jan)
January 31st - Hempstead Leisure Club, Talk 'Postcards'
Rosemary Deller (see 17th Jan)

January 31st - Wigmore Thursday Club, AGM, (17th Jan)
January 31st - BRATS Bredhurst Receiving &
Transmitting Society, 8.30pm, Parkwood Community
Centre, Rainham 'The GB3VHF and GB3UHF
Story' by Beacon Keeper Chris GOFDZ. All welcome.
www.brats-qth.org or email secretary@brats-qth.org

February 2nd - Quiz Night, 7.30pm, Holy Trinity Church,
Twydall, £5 each, bring your own drinks and nibbles,
ring 01634 377671 for details.

February 2nd - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 19th Jan)
February 3rd - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 7 miles / 11.3km estimated
finish 2.00pm, meet Wye Public carpark off

Churchfield Way, TN25 5EQ TR051468 Bring packed
lunch. Contact: Heather, 07887 750881

February 3rd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet John Trebill 01634 244045 GR 926454
TN27 0QS Pluckley, Smarden Road village car park, 4
mile walk, Stiles, No Toilets. Dogs must be on lead.

February 4th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 21st Jan)
February 5th - 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.

February 6th - Tiny Tots, Riverside Country Park,
10.00am - 12noon, Art & crafts for young children,
wear suitable cloths it could get messy. Accompanied
children 2 - 5 years, £3 per child, book 01634 337432.

February 6th - Play and Chat, (see 16th Jan)
February 6th - The Evergreen Club - Hoy/Bingo (16th Jan)

Continued on Page 11

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PLAY AND CHAT GROUPS

St Paul's Church, Parkwood, Rainham ME8 9PN.

Wednesdays January 16th, 23rd & 30th

February 6th & 13th, 1.30pm – 3.00pm.

Ring 01634 364388 for details.

Thursdays January 17th, 24th & 31st

February 7th & 14th, 10.15 – 11.45am

Ring 01634 365932 for details.

Parents/Carers and their pre-school children
welcome. Lots of toys for toddlers to play with.
£1.50 per family includes refreshments for all.

MEDWAY SCRABBLE CLUB

St Stephens Church Hall, Maidstone Road, Chatham
alternate Mondays

January 21st, February 4th & 18th, 2.00 – 4.30pm

New members welcome, details 07523 124668

QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 26th January, 7.00 for 7.30pm start
Carmel Hall, Upton Lane, Sittingbourne ME10 1JB

Tables 6 – 8, £5 per person

BYO Food, Drinks and Glasses

Net proceeds jointly for

Church off Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sittingbourne and

Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance

Contact – Mike 01634 360906

Email – mikew16@blueyonder.co.uk

INDOOR BOOT FAIR

Twydall Community Centre

Beechings Field, Beechings Way, ME8 6PZ

Sunday 27th January, 10.00am – 2.00pm

Set up from 9.00am, 50p entry

Raising funds for the upkeep of the centre.

Tables available, £10 in advance, free tea/coffee for

stall holders. Contact Janet Duke, 07809 892883
or pinkdukebox@aol.com

BRATS

Bredhurst Receiving & Transmitting Society

Thursday 31st January, 8.30pm

Parkwood Community Centre, Rainham

The GB3VHF and GB3UHF Story

by Beacon Keeper Chris G0FDZ.

Discussing the 144.430Mhz and 432.430Mhz
amateur radio beacons located at BT Fairseat on the
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QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday February 2nd, 7.30pm,

Holy Trinity Church, Twydall,

£5 each, bring your own drinks and nibbles

Ring 01634 377671 for details.

'ROBIN HOOD' by VICKY ORMAN

St. Paul's Drama Group 2019 Family Pantomime
Third Avenue Community Hall, 100 Third Avenue,
Gillingham. ME7 2LU (opp Robert Napier School)

15th, 16th & 23rd February, 7.30pm.

Also matinee Saturday 23rd, 3.00pm.

Tickets £7 Adults & £5 Children (16 & under) from
01634 852712 or **www.stpaulsdramagroup.co.uk**.

VALENTINE DANCE

Saturday 16th February, 7.30 – 1.00pm

St Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore.

Music by Rich Phillips,

Mixture of Ballroom, Disco, Line Dancing

Tickets £6, must be bought in advance.

Bring your own nibbles and drink.

Ring 01634 370492 or 01634 387425 and mention

Action Forum. All proceeds to Church Funds.

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Nature Notes

NATURE NOTES FOR DECEMBER

Just before Christmas, I visited Walland Marsh which, along with Romney Marsh, forms the land that juts, like a wide nose, into The Channel between Hythe in the north and Rye in the south. The shingle banks of Dungeness form the tip of the nose. There is a dividing line between the two marshes in the form of the Roman-built Rhee Wall, which ran along the line of the road between Appledore and New Romney. Romney Marsh is to the northeast of the Wall, Walland Marsh to the southwest. Romney Marsh has the villages with one of the fourteen so-called Romney Marsh Churches. Walland Marsh has no villages, just scattered and isolated farms and cottages, and country lanes with no signposts. If you are lost, you are probably on Walland Marsh. Having motored via Maidstone, Headcorn and Tenterden, on a quiet Sunday morning, I arrived at Appledore, an ancient town on the one-time cliffs below which the sea once lapped. My destination was the equally ancient town of Lydd, on the shingle of Dungeness and at the eastern edge of the Walland Marsh. Having crossed over the Royal Military Canal and the Ashford to Hastings railway line, I stopped near to what is one of the most photographed of the 'Romney Marsh' churches, that of St Thomas Becket, Fairfield, which is the smallest of the above group of churches. There is no village of Fairfield and the church is picturesquely situated on a remote site on Walland Marsh. It has no gravestones and no defined boundary, thus enabling the sheep and cattle to sit or stand in the shade of the church on a hot, summer's day. Having moved on, I came to the ancient Woolpack Inn, not yet open for business. I stopped to view, through my binoculars, a large bed of reeds which, in the winter, various species of raptors use as a communal roost. I could see a marsh harrier circling in the sky, but nothing else. The best time to visit a roost is in the early evening. Since the Woolpack Bridge over the White Kemp Sewer was under repair, I found a way round it with the benefit of my largescale map. The roads and lanes that I took in the direction of Lydd were raised above the surrounding land. They were laid on the top of mediaeval walls built to keep out the sea water of the estuary of the River Rother. These walls included the Hook and the

Midley and I stopped on the former to take in the views. To the northeast was that part of Walland Marsh that had been won from salt marshes in mediaeval times. The fresh water marshes to the southwest, in the opposite direction, were not created until Tudor times and later. For historical reasons, these newest of the reclaimed marshes were never settled with villages and churches, as was the reclaimed land of the Romney Marsh. On my map of the Walland Marsh there is nothing, to the southwest, within a four miles radius of where I stood, but footpaths and farm tracks; isolated farms; dykes, ditches and bridges; and sheep folds, sheep dips and sheep washes. In the winter it is a land of mist and mystery.

Long stretches of the lanes along which I drove are lined with hawthorn trees bent over by the prevailing winds. This year the trees have been heavily laden with red berries and this has attracted fieldfares and redwings from Scandinavia and blackbirds, probably from eastern Europe. These members of the thrush family were very nervous and, no matter how slowly I drove, they kept on moving ahead of me. I stopped to admire a female merlin, sitting quite nonchalantly, low in a tree. Luckily on a Sunday morning one meets very little traffic on the lanes in question. The tiny merlin would doubtless have come down from a northern upland to this southern marshland, for the winter, and also, I am afraid, for the fieldfares, redwings and blackbirds. Having passed over two ancient bridges with ancient names - 'Hogstye' and 'Ashentrees', I came across a group of eight adult and two immature whooper swans feeding on a field of winter wheat. Those whoopers that spend their winter down the eastern side of the country will usually have come over from Scandinavia or Russia, and not Iceland. In a nearby field of young plants of oil seed rape there was a long line of adult and immature mute swans, most probably all residents. Be they winter visitors or residents, farmers cannot be pleased to see swans eating their crops. As I was nearing Lydd, I was most surprised to see sheep feeding on the remaining stalks of fodder kale. I was not sure whether there was a shortage of grazing grass in an area where the flat marshland is being used for the growing of turfs for lawns, on quite a large scale, or whether the sheep were merely being fattened up for market. Within sight of the tall tower of Lydd parish church, poking

above the trees, I drove slowly passed a flock of rooks in a field strutting about in search of worms or other invertebrates. Had they been wood pigeons they would have flown off with large claps of their wings. But the rooks, one of my favourite farmland species, were clearly very relaxed. Generations of the birds have been born and brought up at Lydd. At 'The Marshlands', a big house overlooking Walland Marsh, there is a rookery in sycamore and other trees in both front and back gardens. I counted twenty-nine rooks' nests in one tree. There is also a rookery in sycamore and coppiced beech trees in Station Road. A rookery can be noisy in spring, but I would like to think that the close-knit community of Lydd are defensive of their rooks, even if they are not universally liked. I had thoroughly enjoyed my Sunday morning drive through the ancient countryside of Walland Marsh.

Joe Ennis

CALLING ALL CARERS

Calling all carers of children and young people. For some time now the Parish of South Gillingham (Bredhurst, Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore) has been running a drop-in centre for carers. A place to meet with others in the same situation, share experiences and gain information on issues of concern while enjoying refreshment and fellowship. The drop-in centre at St. Paul's Church, Parkwood is open to all, whether church members or not. Its purpose is not to evangelise but to care.

We are aware that almost all who attend are engaged in the care of older people, and so from January 2019 we are relocating to the Dobbies store at Rainham Mark hoping to be more attractive to those who care for children and young people (while also continuing to offer a warm welcome to anyone caring for those in older age groups). We are very grateful to Dobbies for allowing us to use their restaurant between 10.00am and 12noon every second Tuesday in the month (next meeting February 12th). We hope to provide fellowship and practical support to all ages. There is no charge for the session, but drinks and other refreshments can be purchased from Dobbies. If you are caring for anyone including a child or young person and would welcome an opportunity to meet with others in a similar position do please come and join us at Dobbies on any second Tuesday in the month. We look forward to seeing you.

Maureen Cannon 01634 235723

THE LONG JOURNEY

I was surprised to read my name in October 2018 Action Forum, in an article by David Wood, who referred to my journey on foot through the Americas. May I please first emphasise that I am so very lucky to have survived my grand dream; as among other dangers I was at one point much weakened and weighed less than six stone. The Long Journey was much more than is known in UK, it being the first comprehensive crossing of the Western Hemisphere by foot (or by other means).

The USA recognises extra-ordinary effort. To mark my crossing of the Americas they held a 'Meegan Day' in New York on the Brooklyn Bridge. I had the great pleasure to meet President Carter and also appeared on several of America's famous talk shows. Individual accolades were made. Daly Thompson, on ITV's World of Sport, gave me his own trophy saying 'George deserves it more.' There was a book, 'The Longest Walk' which has been published in several editions in the US, and receives excellent reviews on sites such as Amazon. There are translations in Japanese, Italian and now also in Arabic. To mark the Millennium I returned to Alaska for the last determined action for the 20th century. At 'Siqinnaatchiaq' - the winter festivities marking the return of the sun's rays piercing the long Arctic night, celebrations were extended to mark the unification of the most Southerly to the most Northerly settlements in the world. Elements of The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force were in attendance as John Bitters of the SAS parachuted down to meet my team and during the ceremonies, for the first time, a public apology was made (in the USA words) '... the cowardly killing of Indian women and children.' No small thing, you may agree.

Perhaps it was childhood imagination encouraged by tales from my father (then serving as a Royal Engineer) which first planted ideas of trekking and survival. Further encouragement came from the 4th Gillingham Sea Scouts as we completed the Kent Messenger 50-mile walk from Margate to Maidstone. My great connecting journey remains unique. How lucky I have been.

After talking to the splendid pupils of Fairview School I have been asked by another school to talk about Adventure - in Athens, Greece.

George Meegan georgemeegan@gmail.com

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Diary 2019

February 6th - Upchurch Horticultural Society AGM, 97
Chaffes Lane, Upchurch, starting at 7.30pm.

February 7th - Play and Chat, (see 17th Jan)

February 7th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board
games, tea and chat (see 17th Jan)

February 8th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, Twydall Evangelical Church, Goudhurst Road
ME8 6LQ 2.30 - 4.30pm. Water Divining - John Baker.
Tea/coffee available before meetings. Visitors £3 per
meeting. Details Val Barrand 07947 583327 email
lupusrufus@sky.com or website grlhs.org

February 10th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet John Williams 01622 764821
07977614033 GR 813408 TN17 2DD Frittenden, The
Street. Park near St Mary's Church for 5 mile walk
along roads, fields, tracks and grass. 10 Stiles. No Dogs

February 10th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 8.5 miles / 13.7km estimated
finish 2.45pm, Bluebell Hill and Peters Village, Park
close to St Mary's Church near the river. TQ716620,
Bring picnic lunch. Contact: Graham, 07989 753278,
graham.jenkinson@blueyonder.co.uk

February 10th - Volunteer Task Day, Capstone (13th Jan)

February 11th - Concert, Medway Organ & Keyboard
Club, Organist - Alex Payler, (see 14th Jan)

February 12th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'Valentine' -
Diagonal arrangement in a box, (see 15th Jan)

February 12th - Fuchsia & Pelargonium Society
Gillingham and District, 7.30pm, Rainham School for
Girls 'My Poetry' by a local lady Pamela Penfold. All
welcome, Ring 01634852519 for details

February 13th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Leisurely circular walk 6 miles / 9.7km estimated finish
1.15pm Meet car park just north of Bredhurst (free)
ME8 0LU, TQ800630 circular walk through the ancient
woods. Could be muddy if wet, pub at end. Contact:
Mike, cycling39@aol.com

February 13th - Play and Chat. (see 16th Jan)

February 13th - The Evergreen Club - AGM/ Bingo (see
16th Jan)

February 13th - All Saints Women's Fellowship,

Highways Inspector - Matthew Francis, (see 23rd Jan)

February 14th - Play and Chat, (see 17th Jan)

February 14th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Make and Bake
Sale (see 17th Jan)

February 14th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Collection of
subs, Beetle Drive, (see 17th Jan)

February 14th - Newington History Group, Methodist
Hall, Church Lane, Newington ME9 7JT, 7.30pm 'Kent
Remembered' - Colin Harvey, details 01795 842711 or
thelma@newingtonhistory.co.uk or call.

February 15th, 16th & 23rd - 'Robin Hood' by Vicky
Orman, St. Paul's Drama Group, Third Avenue
Community Hall, 100 Third Avenue, Gillingham ME7
2LU (opposite Robert Napier School) 7.30pm, & Sat
matinee 3.00pm. Tickets £7 Adults, £5 16 & under
01634 852712 or www.stpaulsdramagroup.co.uk.

February 16th - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 19th Jan)

February 16th - Rainham S Councillors surgery (19th Jan)

February 16th - Valentine Dance, 7.30 - 11.00pm. St
Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore, Music by
Rich Phillips, Ballroom, Disco and Line Dancing.
Tickets £6 only in advance phone 370492 or 387425
Bring own nibbles & drink, proceeds to Church Funds.

February 17th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 9 miles / 14.5km estimated
finish 3.00pm, National Trust Car Park (free) 2 1/2
miles south of Brasted. Leave A25 at Brasted (Chart
Lane). Car Park on the right. TN16 1QG, TQ469516
can be muddy. John W. FLAME451@hotmail.co.uk

February 17th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Chris Morris 01634 374923
07847828249, Capstone Country Park Lower Car Park
for 5 mile circular walk. Dogs allowed

February 17th Volunteer Task Day, Riverside (20th Jan)

February 18 - 24th - Half Term Activity Trail from
Riverside Country Park, Visitor Centre, small prize
when completed. £3 per trail, 01634 337432

February 18th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 21st Jan)

February 19th - RSPB Medway Local Group Talk, The
Long Spring - Laurence Rose, (see 15th Jan)

February 20th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am
Moderate Linear walk 7 miles / 11.3km estimated finish
2.00pm, Meet commuter car park just north of

Bredhurst ME8 0LU, TQ800630 Gradual uphill before
descent to Maidstone 130 bus back to Bredhurst from
bus stop G outside Boots King Street times 1.15pm or
3.55pm. Contact: Mike, cycling39@aol.com

February 20th - Wigmore Ladies, (see 23rd Jan)

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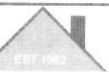
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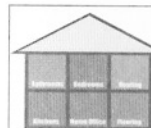
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Diary 2019

February 20th - Kite Making, Capstone Farm Country
Park, 10am - 12noon and 1.00 - 3.00pm. Accompanied
children 5-12 years, £5 per child, book 01634 338191.
February 20th - Bredhurst Garden Club, Jeff & Sylvia
Wagner, Phantasmagoria, Bring and Buy Produce Stall,
(see 16th Jan)
February 21st - Den Building and Fire Lighting, Riverside
Country Park, 10.00am - 1.00pm. £3 per person, book
01634 337432
February 21st - Bird Feeders and Bug Homes, Capstone
Farm Country Park, 10am - 12noon and 1.00 - 3.00pm.
Suitable for accompanied children aged 5 - 12 years. £3
per child, ring 01634 338191 to book in advance.
February 21st - Rainham Women's Institute (17th Jan)
February 21st - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board
games, tea and chat (see 17th Jan)
February 21st - Wigmore Thursday Club, In Praise of
higher beings - Colin Moat (see 17th Jan)
February 22nd - Medway Geographical Society,
'Geology, Landscapes & Natural History of the Canary
Islands' - Vicky Golding, (see 25th Jan)
February 23rd - Family Friendly Bingo Evening, Friends
of St Margaret's Church Rainham, Millennium Centre,
6.00pm start. Tickets £3 include one book of 8 games
from 379796 or Kay 230430, BYO Drinks and Nibbles.
February 24th - Medway Towns Footpaths Group,
10.00am, meet Chris Morris 01634 374923
07847828249, Bredhurst Commuter Car Park for 5 mile
pleasant country walk. Dogs allowed
February 24th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 6.4 miles / 10.3km estimated
finish 1.30pm, meet car park Common Road, Bluebell
Hill. ME5 9RG, TQ742621 Contact: John, 07749
760788, billingsjc@blueyonder.co.uk
February 24th - Indoor Boot Fair, (see 27th Jan)
February 27th - Play and Chat. (see 16th Jan)
February 27th - Rainham Historical Soc, 'Commonwealth
War Graves Commission' (see 23rd Jan)
February 27th - All Saints Women's Fellowship, 50 More

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Ways to Tie a Scarf - Helen Kendal-Tobias, (23rd Jan)
February 28th - Play and Chat. (see 16th Jan)
February 28th - Wigmore Thursday Club, Social. Film,
(see 17th Jan)
February 28th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Talk 'Amish
Community' Anne Catoor (see 17th Jan)
March 2nd - 'Greyhounds' Applause Rural Touring
Theatre, Bredhurst Village Hall ME7 3JZ, 7.30pm,
raffle, tea and biscuits, all proceeds for the
maintenance of the hall. Tickets £10 from Ann Keeble
01634 361263
March 2nd - Medway Folk Dance Club, (see 19th Jan)
March 3rd - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am, Leisurely
circular walk 6.5 miles / 10.5km estimated finish
1.30pm, Park Friars car park, Aylesford, ME20 7BX
TQ722 589 donations welcome. Contact: John/Lesley,
7801537317, lesley.fielding43@gmail.com
March 3rd - Medway Towns Footpaths Group, 10.00am,
Meet David Brown, 07815 106791 GR 526638 DA4
0JF Lullingstone Country Park, Castle Road (off A225)
Eynsford. Parking £2.50 S for 7 mile circular walk.
Terrain is hilly and undulating, may be muddy if wet. 3
stiles. 13 ascending steps. No Dogs
March 4th - Medway Scrabble Club, (see 21st Jan)
March 5th - Tiny Tots, Capstone Farm Country Park,
10.00am - 12noon, Art & crafts for young children,
finger painting and potato prints, please wear suitable
cloths it could get messy. Accompanied children aged 2
- 5 years, £3 per child, book 01634 338191.
March 5th - GHS Floral Art Group, 'St. Patrick's Day' -
Petite and Miniature arrangements, (see 15th Jan)
March 6th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 9.40am, Moderate
Linear walk 8 miles / 12.9km estimated finish 2.00pm
Meet Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre, free parking
and toilets ME7 3PD, TQ793633 for 130 bus leaving at
9.42am arriving at Maidstone East at 10.02. Walk back,
picnic lunch at Boxley. Mike, cycling39@aol.com
March 6th - Play and Chat, (see 16th Jan)
March 7th - Play and Chat, (see 17th Jan)
March 7th - Hempstead Leisure Club, Whist, board
games, tea and chat (see 17th Jan)
March 7th - Wigmore Thursday Club, SERV - Robin
Alexander, (see 17th Jan)
March 7th - BRATS Talk 'Secret Chatham' - Dr Philip
MacDougal (see 31st Jan)
March 8th - Gillingham & Rainham Local History
Society, Hadrian's Wall - Chris Wade. (see Feb 8th)
March 10th - Medway Ramblers Walk, 10.00am,
Moderate circular walk 7 miles / 11.3km estimated
finish 2.00pm, meet Ightham Mote car park next to
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