

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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A New School For Rainham!



It's not every year, or even every decade, that a new school opens in the Rainham area so we are pleased to include details of the school's plans and outlook from its first Principal, Mrs Millward.

“Sited on Otterham Quay Lane, Leigh Academy Rainham is a brand new, unique and highly inclusive mixed comprehensive secondary school, opening its doors to the founding Y7 cohort in September, 2021. This year the school will welcome 240 children, with 180 per year group added in each of the following years.

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Editorial

I have asked Elizabeth Poynter and Alan Stockey as new members of the Action Forum editorial team to say a few words about themselves as an introduction to you all.

Hamish

Elizabeth

In comparison to many of the people I read about in Action Forum, I am a relative newcomer to the area. I was born into two big Liverpool families before my father whisked us up to Scotland. After a few more family moves incorporating Norwich, Newcastle, Liverpool and Norwich again, I then headed to Durham for teacher training (despite a penchant to join the Air Force), taught in Hartlepool and met my future husband through a Baptist youth event.

On the sound advice of my mother, I moved South, began teaching at St Margaret's Infants as Miss Smethem, became Mrs Poynter, moved into Lower Rainham in 1997, continued at the school and had my first two children. I still have the wine glasses my Y1 class bought for my wedding in '97 and remember the wonderful baby gifts a different Y1 class bought when my son was born in 2000. After giving up work to concentrate on our children and church life, I inadvertently ended up leading the 'Friends of Twydall' Primary. This in turn led to me teaching and volunteering at Twydall Primary for a while until all three of my children had passed through the school and on to RMGS.

Nowadays my life consists of busy family life and active membership of our church, where my husband and I are the treasurers and I help run the toddler group, amongst other things. When we are not in a pandemic, I also take on characters from various periods of history during Education Days at Kent Life.

Action Forum has been a regular part of my life 'down South'. History has always fascinated me and to have something come through my door that introduced me to local history (and with photos!!)

was just amazing.

Even now, the history section and related letters are my first ports of call so I am excited to become a part of this long-standing local feature. My job will predominantly concentrate on compiling each edition.

Alan

Unlike Elizabeth, I was born within the sound of the bells of St Margaret's church at my parent's home in Tudor Grove and I haven't strayed too far over my sixty years living in Rainham.

My two brothers and I attended St Margaret's School, for me across three locations; firstly the Infants at the top of Station Road, then the pre-fab buildings in Maidstone Road and finally the Juniors in the main school on Orchard Street. It was at junior school in 1969 I had my first brush with Action Forum as a volunteer deliverer to all of Orchard Street. Like my elder brother Dave, I then moved on to Gillingham Technical High School (GTHS), now Rainham Mark Grammar School, followed later by my younger brother John. It is great to stay connected with old class mates via the Facebook pages for both these schools.

As a teenager I had Saturday jobs at Watson's Butchers on the A2, delivering meat to local customers via a bike with a big basket on the front and then Maidstone Road Co-op (maintaining a link to both my parents who worked for many years at the Co-op in Rainham).

I met my now wife, Melanie, at GTHS in 1977 and we married at St Margaret's church in 1981. This October we will celebrate our Ruby wedding anniversary. We have three daughters, all of whom have flown the nest, although not too far as two continue to live in Rainham with their partners and our two grandsons, Luke and Jacob. I am now retired from the commuting life in the City of London, where I worked for many international financial organisations, assisting with their data security and privacy programs. I am now an active member of U3A, leading their Medway guitar group and a member of the UK Soul Choir. I very much look forward to working as part of the Action Forum editorial team. I will be responsible for new content and searching out areas of interest.

If anybody else would like to join the editorial team they would be welcome.

Perhaps you see yourself as a roving reporter or dedicated researcher of Rainham in the past. Get in touch!

Leigh Academy Rainham

(cont.)

“When the school is at full capacity it will have approximately 1200 pupils on roll from Y7 to Y13, with pupils studying a suite of GCSE’s vocational courses and A’ levels. All 240 places have now been offered and are in the process of being accepted. We have a long waiting list and an upcoming appeals process. A fantastic team of 12 teachers has been recruited for this year, which will almost double in number in its second year and then grow proportionately with the intake over the next 4 years.

The wellbeing and success of each individual is at the heart of everything we do and our strapline of ‘Dream, Believe and Achieve’ reflects our strong, shared belief that there is no ceiling to what a student can achieve, regardless of ability and personal circumstances.

The school will offer a traditional approach to discipline and a broad, innovative digital curriculum, underpinned by the principles of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.

Leigh Academy is committed to working towards Green Flag status as an Eco School and will also pursue a journey to becoming an ‘International School’, hoping to work in partnership with other schools around the world.

The Baccalaureate Programme will be delivered to pupils from Years 7-9, preparing students with the knowledge and skills necessary for GCSE’s and A’ levels.

Lastly, the school plans to have a dog mentor joining them, named Brandy!”

We wish them all the best as plans and organisation continues apace.

Letters to the Editor

This is an invitation to all those fed up of not meeting their friends, playing bingo, getting a hot drink that you have not had to make yourself and having a chat with others. I am planning, with the permission of Mr Boris Johnson, to open in July the **Wigmore RVS Darby & Joan Club** again and to celebrate our 70th anniversary, as we were founded in 1951. All registered members are welcome to return to the Howard Hall, Woodside and anyone over the age of 50 can apply to join us. If you are interested or would like more information about a friendly and happy group of people please ring and leave a message should I not be around when you call. I look forward to greeting you back at our club.

Hannah Hendra, club leader.

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We also had readers providing information about the photo of Hempstead shown in the previous edition. See overleaf...

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The picture that you are showing on the May Action Forum edition is of The Flying Saucer, previously The Hempstead Working men's Club. My father was the first man in there as we lived opposite, and not because he was thirsty!!!! The inside was a big room surrounded by stuffed animals under glass and in the middle was a Snooker table. There was a picture of Queen Victoria over a fireplace, if my memory serves me, although she would have been dead by then.

Shirley Deacon

Hello there,

Just got the Action Forum through the door with the Hempstead Working mans club on the cover. My Great Grandfather John Sidney Spiller was the Chairman and my Grandfather Sidney John Spiller was the Secretary who sadly died in 1940 aged 38 with lung cancer.

In 1927, they bought a few plots that were being sold off and built the bungalows opposite, where my Mother was born and still lives and where I, myself was born.

When Mum was about 12, her mum, Dorothy Spiller, with her partner, Ernest Ashby, used to work the bar, and Mum's job was to collect and wash the glasses.

Since then there has been a lot of changes and it became the Flying Saucer in around 1952 (I think).

I grew up with the pub being outside the front door, with the noise of laughter (and the odd argument) coming from it's doors, but as most were locals, they all knew me and said hello. The old opening times of 11 till 3, then 6 to 11 applied.

Not sure about the car though.

The off licence was to the right end side of the building, the then hall was knocked down and made into the now car park.

We were never allowed in there, but my brother (Peter Collins) frequented it often with not far to stagger home! He sadly also died young at 40 due to cancer in 1999.



Sidney and John (from left)



Master Cabinet Maker John playing the cello



Hempstead Football Team with Sidney top left

Hope these are of some interest.

Kind Regards, Denise Carvas (nee Collins)

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Austin Seven Owners' Club

Hello and thanks for the latest magazine.

I always read it avidly, and have done since I moved back to Rainham in 1971.

I am the secretary of the Kent Centre of the Austin Seven Owners' Club (London), and as such have many friends across the county who are very experienced when it comes to identifying the Austins depicted in old photographs such as the Hempstead scene on the front of the May 2021 issue of Action Forum.

I initially thought the motor to be an Austin Seven, but there were certain things that didn't quite "fit". After consulting two of our club experts, the conclusion is that it is an Austin Seven, but not a standard model. This Seven has a special fabric covered wooden panelled body made by Mulliner, and would have been produced on a standard rolling chassis supplied to them by the Austin Motor Co. This model would have been shown in the Mulliner catalogue, and was available in 1927/28. This would have been an expensive option compared with the standard Seven, so only a few of these would have been produced. There has always been a group of motorists who want to be "different", and this was a way of having a nicer little 7hp car, more "refined" than usual, when commonly, the alternative would probably have been one of 12hp, with all the additional running costs that entailed. All the main car manufacturers in the UK were producing fabric bodies at the time, but they proved lacking when it came to durability, and the fad didn't last long. We are lucky enough to have some members who still own and run such cars, but they are now a great rarity – the cars, that is!

I hope you find this interesting, and if you would like to know more about pre-WWII Austins do let me know.

Regards,
Brian Austin

Riverside Country Park Forum

My daily wellness-plod regularly takes me through Berengrave Lane Nature Reserve and across the Lower Rainham Road to Riverside Country Park.

In 2020, after completing an online survey about the park, I was invited to join the Riverside Forum and have now attended the first two (Zoom-based) meetings co-ordinated by Medway Green Space and Medway Norse.

The last meeting (24/03/21) shared details of the recent planting programme along Motney edge, where 950 new plants have been added. The Riverside Bee project was also described, along with the creation of the Bee Garden, Wildflower Meadow and path.

A ten-year plan has been created for Berengrave Lane Nature Reserve, and whilst plans for the replacement of the lower boardwalk have been delayed due to site flooding, further public consultation is planned for later this year.

A summary of the planned volunteer session dates has been included in the Action Forum Diary and you can register interest via **Medway-countryside-service@ncsgrp.co.uk** or by calling the Ranger Team on 01634 337432. Please note you do need to register in advance rather than just turn up on the day.

The next Forum meeting is being held at **7pm on Tuesday 15th June, 2021** and you can register interest to participate in the Zoom meeting via the following email address:
yournew@medway.gov.uk

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Earth Day 2021 in Rainham

On April 22nd, Rainham celebrated Earth Day 2021.

Rainham Eco Hub celebrated in style, with residents involved in litter picks and schools learning how to have a positive effect on the local environment.

Classes were involved in activities ranging from how things grow to calculating our carbon footprint!

An eco squad for primary-aged children (4-11 years old) was launched, encouraging children and their families to work together to look after and protect the environment in Rainham.

Cozenton Park hung hand-crafted medallions for people to find.

Rainham Recreation Ground held a tree scavenger hunt.

Residents were encouraged to shop locally, walk, join community groups etc.

St Margaret's Church announced they have been awarded the Bronze Eco Award.

Medway Council's Recycling Team hosted a roadshow outside Rainham Library where the team explained how they take part in the national Terracycle scheme. It runs at each Medway Library/Hub - the Kids Food Pouch Recycling Scheme collects used baby food pouches of any brand, including any kids yoghurt pouches. All fifteen libraries and hubs have a recycling bin inside (normally near the children's section).

Proceeds from this recycling goes to a child bereavement support charity 'Holding On, Letting Go'.

Don't forget, whilst there you can also grab your kitchen caddy bins (free), liners (26 - £2) and dog poo bags (50 - £1.60)

The Recycling Team noted their support for Medway's reuseable bags (blue for cardboard/paper, white for glass/tins/ packaging).

You can order new reusable bags or get a new/replacement brown bin delivered via:

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Please don't use the clear, single-use plastic bags as anything other than overflow recycling. They are not bag liners and just create more landfill.

Guidance on how to recycle more specific items in Medway can be found in the handy A-Z Guide in Medway Matters or via:

[www.medway.gov.uk/directory/11/a-z of recycling](http://www.medway.gov.uk/directory/11/a-z-of-recycling)

Earth Day is a great way to highlight how we can all help make our town a better place. We would like to keep the momentum going. Anyone wanting to get involved or set up their own community group, please do get in touch via Facebook, or email: therainhamecohub@gmail.com

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Nature Notes

(Joe Ennis)

Now in Maytime to the wicket
Out I march with bat and pad:
See the son of grief at cricket
Trying to be glad.

A E Housman 1859-1936 (Author of "A
Shropshire Lad.")

At my secondary school we pupils were required to play cricket and rugby. Like A E Housman, I was never very fond of cricket. But, as time went by, I began to enjoy sitting for an hour or so watching any game of cricket I came across in my travels in the Kent countryside. Such a sojourn would give me the opportunity to take in the scenery, soak up the atmosphere and give the occasional clap for a ball well driven and a wicket well taken. I write below about three of my favourite pitches, those at Goodnestone, Leeds and Milstead.

Goodnestone is near Wingham, between Canterbury and Sandwich. It sits in a landscape of large open fields of cereals and sheep. The village consists of Goodnestone House, whose gardens are open to the public, a primary school, a village hall, a church (which houses the post office), a row of almshouses and a pub called the Fitzwalter Arms.

It is a typical estate village with an air of coherence and timelessness. Visitors to Goodnestone House can, if they wish, watch any cricket match in progress from a seat on the Lower Terrace. The pitch is on the edge of a parkland of oak, sweet chestnut and lime trees. House martins and swallows can be seen hawking for flies above the cricket field. The former nest under the eaves of the Georgian house and the latter on beams in various outbuildings on the estate. The persistent calls of young rooks can be heard at their nesting site in a nearby clump of sycamore trees. Refreshments can be had at the Fitzwalter Arms and in the Old Coach House after the payment of a modest entry fee

to Goodnestone Park Gardens.

The cricket pitch at Leeds, near Maidstone, is in the grounds of Leeds Castle and within the sound of the bells of St Nicholas' Parish Church. The turrets of the castle can be seen peeping through the trees in the valley of the diminutive River Len and spectators have a view, on the horizon, of the long line of the North Downs. Adjoining the pitch is parkland of oak, beech, sycamore and horse chestnut trees, in the shade of which sheep shelter from the heat of the day. Just within the boundary of the pitch is a large, old common lime which sprouts nests of side shoots at its base and around burrs on the trunk. Now that the common lime at the St Lawrence Ground at Canterbury has come down, the specimen on the Leeds pitch appears to be unique in Kent. Any ball which is hit into the tree and which fails to find its way to the ground is declared a six. On a pleasant May day, one can typically hear the calls of swifts as they chase each other around the tower of Leeds church and, from the direction of the parkland, the wing-claps of wood pigeons and the occasional "yaffle" of a green woodpecker. The loud calls of barnacle and Canada geese flying above the waters surrounding Leeds Castle can often be heard. Refreshments for spectators are to be had at the George Public House in Leeds village.

Milstead is a hamlet in the North Downs to the south of Sittingbourne. It is surrounded by coppiced woodland and cherry, apple and pear orchards. The woodland is actively managed by the Torrey Hill Estate which converts sweet chestnut poles into various forms of fencing. A by-product of this management is that, in the spring, the woods sport spectacular displays of bluebells as well as a good show of wood spurge, greater

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stitchwort, red campion and yellow archangel. Although newly created cherry orchards with dwarf stock now predominate in the area, a few old orchards, with standard trees, under which sheep graze, have survived. Such a combination, once common in Kent, is gradually disappearing. The cricket pitch at Milstead lies in a slight depression at the heart of the village and is surrounded by oak, horse chestnut, ash, sycamore and field maple trees. The cricket club was founded in 1857 and has a pavilion and a score-keeper's hut which are both thatched. As I sat on the boundary during one May visit to the pitch the predominant sounds, apart from the crack of leather on willow, were the calls of a few remaining immature rooks clinging tenaciously to the uppermost branches of a rookery next to the church of St Mary and the Holy Cross. The rookery was spread between a large, evergreen holm oak and an adjoining spinney of wych elm trees. A quintessential sign of spring was once an active rookery in the English elm trees of a village church yard. As a result of Dutch elm disease, that kind of scene is but a memory, certainly in Kent. But, at Milstead, one can still sit in a country church yard and listen to the sounds of a rookery in nearby elm trees, albeit wych elms rather than English elms. Visitors to Milstead Cricket Ground can obtain refreshment at the Red Lion Inn in Rawling Street, Milstead.

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June in the Wilder Garden

(Victoria Golding)

Gardening for a Wilder Kent advisor

What a season we are having! From no rain to speak of in April, to a May that was wet and very cold. Many of my plants are six weeks behind, so to talk about what will happen in June is crystal ball territory! The abundance of rain has given me a lushness that I don't normally see and I've been thinning my stone fruit so the branches do not break. I am pruning the perennials, (known as the "Chelsea chop", as this is usually the time of year for the Chelsea Flower Show). I'm even moving some that have outgrown their homes because the ground is so wet! I am mulching with some more of my sieved compost. I love seeing the little red worms that have digested all the shreds that help balance the heaps. If your compost looks slimy, you need more woody material and paper. If it is in a sheltered place, like mine, make sure it isn't too dry. At last I have seen Holly Blue butterflies. As we have both holly and ivy in our garden, we usually have a good population but land adjacent to us has been redeveloped for housing and good insect habitat removed. I feared our little outpost was not going to be enough, but maybe I was too pessimistic and it was the cold and wet weather affecting them. Flowering trees and shrubs are wonderful for pollinators. Try to cultivate a different shrub for flower all year round. Make a photographic record, month by month, to see when the seasonal gaps are.

Plant of the month

There is always room for another lavender. No room in the border? Get a big pot! "Gros Bleu" is the best for bees.

Job of the month

Did you try **No Mow May**? Try to keep it going in areas with wild flowers and patches of tall grasses. You could have grasshoppers later in the summer and wouldn't the children love that!

Visit one of our Wilder Gardens for inspiration.
www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens

I hope you have a lovely June, with lots of sightings of wildlife.

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They have recently announced their exciting virtual End of Year Celebration which has opportunities for all Medway musicians, KS1, KS2 and Secondary Schools and Academies, MMA Music Centre and Instrumental Ensemble members.

If you are a Medway musician they would love you to get involved. For full info visit www.medwaymusicassociation.co.uk/themedwaymusiccelebrationfestival2021

MMA will soon be announcing their plans for this years Summer Festival 2021.

For any enquiries about MMA's opportunities please contact

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Rainham Community Orchard

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Rainham Bereavement Friendship Groups O.A.V.S

We normally meet every Friday morning at the Millennium Centre for a cuppa. We help those who have lost their spouse or partner so come and make new friends who understand how you feel. At the moment we are keeping in contact and introducing new members to each other until we can meet again.

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Dates for the Diary

It is so good to see events starting to be re-arranged again! What a long time we have waited.

Don't forget, any organisation can request an entry in the diary - free of charge by contacting: diary@actionforum.co.uk

5th June 10.00 - 16.00 Tyland Barn

Introduction to Solitary Bees

Fees or donations apply and booking essential. Introduction to the ecology and identification of solitary bees, with a mixture of classroom and field sessions

6th June - Riverside Country Park volunteer Sunday

11th June - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group

Millennium Centre, Rainham Ring Julie 01634 364309

15th June - Riverside Country Forum meeting 7pm. Contact 'yournew@medway.gov.uk'

18th June - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group

Millennium Centre, Rainham Ring Julie 01634 364309

25th June - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group

Millennium Centre, Rainham Ring Julie 01634 364309

4th July - Riverside Country Park volunteer Sunday

1st Aug - Riverside Country Park volunteer Sunday

15th Aug - Berengrave Nature Reserve volunteer Sunday

Volunteer Distributors needed for:

Rainham Mardale Close, Wakeley Rd (Station Rd - Concorde Pub), Scott Ave, Sutton Close, Lower Rainham Rd (Berengrave - Pump Lane) Motney Hill, Aveley Court

Parkwood area Clavell Close

Upchurch Wallbridge Lane, Poot Lane/ poultry farm, Wetham Green/Ham Green

We also need emergency cover for sickness & holidays

If you can help please call Anne Neeves on 07791 585 998 for more information or email distribution@actionforum.co.uk (please include your phone number)

The Co-op Treats (cont. from May)

As told to Maggie Francis by the late Alan Major

The children with 'tickets' would sit in long rows across the grass at the Rec and volunteer lady members of the Rainham Co-op Women's Guild would walk along with large wicker clothes baskets filled with sandwiches, bread and butter, buns and slices of various different cakes. They would be followed by other lady helpers carrying long white enamel jugs of tea to be poured into the dozens of outward thrust cups and mugs.

When the children had finished eating, members' children could also have free rides on the swings, roundabout, coconut shies, hoopla and other side-shows. The children of the non-members had to pay for the privilege of sitting down to eat and enjoy the swing rides etc. The 'Treat' was aimed at being a perk for Co-op membership.

Penfold's Fair, with a magnificent roundabout and all the rides, was an attraction along with the side-shows at the 'Treat' and set up on the Rec. There were running races, egg and spoon and sack races for boys and girls whose parents had obtained tickets from the Co-op previously for them to enter. Races for adults were held after Tea or in the early evening, the winners receiving 'useful prizes'.

What would seem nowadays to be a somewhat amusing contest on 'Treat' day in the 1930s was to clean a silver spoon which had been made really black and tarnished. Alan recalls, 'The spoon, along with a yellow cloth and a tin of C.W.S. Silvo polish was laid out for each competitor and on the word 'go' the children started to clean vigorously. A time limit was set after which the judges judged for cleanliness and brightness. The prize? A big package of C.W.S. products - brass polish, silver polish, polishing cloths, blacking etc.!

Maypole dancing was another attraction in the 1920s with beribboned, white-dressed local girls trained by a Mrs Brunning whose father, Mr Bardon, was President of the Rainham Co-op at the time. It was such an exciting day and so enjoyed by the local population of Rainham and those living in Upchurch and Lower Halstow. Sadly Co-op involvement with the 'Treats' ended before the 1939 War but it was a fun day with crowds of lively people enjoying themselves.

An extra perk enjoyed by the local children of the Council School in Solomon Road, was on the Monday after the 'Treat'. As soon as they left their classes for dinner they raced to the corner of the Rec and on their hands and knees turned over every blade of grass, in the hope of finding dropped coins. Sometimes they were rewarded with pennies and halfpennies but just occasionally a shiny silver sixpence was found half trodden into the turf!

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