

ACTION FORUM

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NUMBER 573

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

First published
March 1969

*Will we see and feel another of these
by the end of the decade?*



In October 1987 a great storm hit the country bringing winds of over 90 miles an hour, causing damage to many rooves and bringing trees down, like these at Queendown Warren.
(See page 2 Editorial for more on climate change in Rainham)

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Editorial

“Green issues seem to be the topic of the moment and not wanting to be left out we are joining the bandwagon. Really though, it is not before time that we begin to take seriously the havoc we are wreaking on the world.”
Barbara Mackay Miller, April 1990.

Our recently-passed editor could not have been more prophetic in her Action Forum editorial over 30 years ago. It would be another six years before the first Conference of Parties (COP) took place and another 29 before the UK declared a climate change emergency in May 2019, shortly followed by Medway Council's own declaration in 2019. You may be forgiven for thinking that it doesn't feel like an emergency given the stark emergency measures that were put in place to tackle COVID19. Unlike COVID 19, climate change is a slow burn, so to speak, but similarly, it will be how each individual's behaviour alters that will combine to make a real difference.

The changes needed to reduce and delay the impacts of climate change will be equally unpopular and, perhaps, more dramatic but if the steep increases in domestic fuel bills are not sufficient to get us sticking our heads into the loft to check for recommended levels of insulation then I don't know what will. To meet UK commitments on climate change, to limit global temperature rises, much needs to occur in the next decade. We will need to start by turning back the clock in terms of setting the thermostat for our central heating, as well as think more about the clothing we wear indoors to keep out the winter chills. But it won't stop there, as we think about central heating systems and electric car legislation.

2

Over half of greenhouse gas emissions are impacted by our personal choices. Home energy and personal transport are the biggest contributors (about 23% each) followed by consumer choices over how we buy our food and goods (about 21%)*. Our individual family choices make huge differences.

Over the coming months, Action Forum will continue to focus on climate change topics, support Rainham Eco-hub in its local initiatives, and help to engage the community in support of Medway Council's detailed climate change action plans submitted in June 2021. We need to start making a difference today; the choice is ours but the future is our children's.

*www.designcouncil.org.uk stats

Letters to the Editor

Toe rags

Sir,

Ref: Action Forum Sept 21 & Oct 21.

Like most derogatory terms there are many explanations, here is another for 'Tow Rag':

'Tow Rag' was originally an old naval term. When sailors went to the toilet at the very front of a sailing ship, known as the head, there was a long piece of rope with a piece of rag tied to the end of it being towed along in the water. After the sailor had finished he pulled the rope out of the water and cleaned himself with the wet rag. (No toilet paper in those days). The rope with the rag was then dropped back into the water to clean itself as it was towed by the ship ready for use by the next sailor.

Having the toilets at the very front (the head) of the ship in those days is why in the Royal Navy the toilets are called 'The Heads'.

Tow Rag isn't a nice name to be called by.'

Taken from: Breverton's Nautical Curiosities, A book of the Sea by Terry Breverton.

Yours sincerely, Peter Fleming

More Prefab Memories

I have read with interest the stories of all the prefabs in Rainham and Wigmore but no one has mentioned the American ones built on

Maidstone Road and ending at the entrance to the Camp School. This school was set up in the huts previously occupied by POWs or the Army (I'm not sure who). The entrance later became Bettescombe Road.

I moved into No.137 together with my Mother and Father and baby sister in 1947. These American prefabs had very up-dated kitchens and bathrooms and an airing cupboard with fitted immersion heater. The sitting room had a coal fire but coal was very hard to get at this time.

Another group of these prefabs were built in a semi-circle behind us but behind them were nothing but cornfields.

We were very happy there, Dad safely back from Burma and a home amongst cornfields, orchards and fields.

Many years later Ballard built his Suntrap houses on the old prefab site and in 1963 my husband and I bought one - No.139. No.137 had already been bought!

Yours sincerely, June Bourner (nee Wingate)

Dear Editor,

Further to your subject on Rainham prefabs, I lived at 30 Mardale Road during the period 1956 to 1961.

My memories of the prefab were how modern they were compared to where we lived previously in Gillingham.

It had a Canadian-style fitted kitchen with a gas operated fridge, fold-down kitchen table and warm air-duct heating to the

rooms. There was also an indoor bathroom (a luxury) and reasonable sized garden.

My mother and I were reluctant to leave the prefab. She moved to the maisonettes on Wakeley Road and I joined the Royal Engineers.

In short I have fond and lasting memories of Mardale Road.

Yours faithfully, George Pickering

Closure of Barclays Bank Rainham Branch

Dear Sir,

It is with great sadness that we have witnessed the closure of Barclays Bank Rainham Branch.

We all started our Bank careers here in the 1970's and remember with great affection past Colleagues and Customers alike!

We are so pleased to say that we still remain friends after 50 plus years and meet as often as we can although two of us now live some distance away!

We know technology has been responsible for many good things but, we still value the Personal touch! We wish all of our past Colleagues and Customers good health and happiness in the future!

"Thanks for the memories"

Yours Sincerely,

Daphne Post (nee Barker), Margaret Fraser (nee Salmon), Carolyn McNally (nee Ives and formerly Mitchel), Val McClarty (formerly Collyer) and Janis Hammond

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Rainham, Twice!

For many years I have enjoyed reading stories of past times in Action Forum and have been tempted to script a few words but refrained due to my overseas place of birth. However, with two different experiences of Rainham, it struck me that there may be others who recall the early 1950's living and playing in Herbert Road (and in the local haystack which tended to catch fire I recall) where I was 'billeted' with grandparents on arrival from Bermuda in September 1950.

As a lad of nine I was introduced to Mr Rivers the Headmaster of the Camp School, just up the Maidstone Road, and placed in Mr Martin's class. I knew little (see letter from Mr Rivers on p5) but recall a few fights in the playground (one with a girl I am ashamed to say) and horrible school dinners. On the plus side, Mr Martin, who lived on a landing craft where Allens Yard used to be in Gillingham (now Fords and Autoyachts), noted my nautical background and took me in hand. He let me row his dinghy and generally pretend I was back in Bermuda. I kept in touch with him in the later 50's when we visited Kent each summer, by which time he had 'upgraded' to a motor torpedo launch, berthed at Otterham Quay. I still think of him today when passing the Three Sisters area – much changed from the 'brickworks era' with housing and the new school. During this first year at school in England we moved to Rock Avenue, Gillingham, where my family had purchased a house with a big concrete bunker in the back garden – great fun! To avoid changing school, I had to walk to St Augustine's corner and get on the

Pilcher's School bus which then meandered its way via an emerging Twydall Estate. I missed it one day in winter and had to get the normal bus which dropped me at the bottom of Maidstone Road in the snow. I attempted to walk to school but got so cold that I had to knock on a door near the end of Herbert Road. As I could no longer feel my hands or feet, and only breathe with difficulty, they took me in – Bermuda this was not!

KNOWN AS THE
CAMP SCHOOL

KENT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Head Master:
Mr. E. R. RIVERS.
Telephone:
RAINHAM 81618

Maidstone Road County Primary School,
Maidstone Road,
Rainham, Kent.
Date.....23rd July 1951.

The Headmaster,
Beach Road Boys' County School,
Litherland,
Liverpool, 21.

Dear Headmaster,

BRIAN HYDE.

The family of the above named boy is shortly removing to Liverpool and I understand that Brian will be entering your school after the summer recess.

For your information, therefore, I am forwarding some remarks which may assist you when placing him.

He is a bright boy and in spite of a rather sketchy education in Bermuda, he has made good headway since he came to this school on 25th September 1950. Brian's weakest subject is spelling but even so, I consider that he would have gained entrance to a Grammar School had he remained in this district, - he is certainly the alert type who would make the most of a Grammar School education.

His date of birth is 3rd March 1941. His Mother is an ex teacher and his home conditions are excellent.

Yours faithfully,
E. Rivers
Headmaster

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business.

No sooner had we moved in than my father was posted to the Liver Building in Liverpool so we all headed there, and me to another three schools.

Noting Mr River's comment, I got to a grammar school before joining The Admiralty in Whitehall – with shaky spelling, but armed with the robustness that Liverpudlians leave you with for life! I spent five years in the Admiralty Bunker, 'the Citadel', where I met my wife and arrived back in Medway, first in Luton Road and then the open countryside of Rainham and Lower Pump Lane.

I recall lambing activities at the end of Herbert Rd, playing in haystacks and acres of woods and many other delights. The short time at the Camp School was indeed a great time and I trust that any other Rainham readers who were also there would agree. The London working years saw the delights of rail and coach travel and Kings Ferry was established in Lower Pump Lane, when for several years their two old Volvos had more ice on the inside of the windows than the outside for the first few miles. Nevertheless, it was an excellent service, with a bottle of wine at Christmas!

Our sons passed through the Howard School and five great-grandchildren now hog the limelight.

Of course, nothing quite competes with the Bermuda years and the experience of crossing the Atlantic by Flying Boat (with Shorts Rochester), rail via the USA and Canada onto the grand four-funnel Aquitania, or crossing back via the West Indies on the Almanzora, an ex-troopship rust bucket – but what memories!

Yours, Brian Hyde

Community

Urgent

Action Forum needs volunteer help of up to half a day per month at its distribution hub. This ensures we get copies to our volunteer distribution team members on time.

If you can help, please call Anne on 07791 585 998 to find out more.

Free Trees for Rainham

This year Rainham Eco Hub set themselves an ambitious target - to get a 1000 new trees planted in Rainham, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.



After already receiving 600 pledges, now it seems that they will smash their target. By working with the Woodland Trust and another donor, the Hub has got its hands on 1000 tree whips.

Not only that, they will be giving them away to anyone in Rainham for free!

Available at the end of November for planting out, the whips can be planted as single trees or in groups of 3-6 plants per metre as a native hedgerow.

To apply for the trees all you have to do is contact the Eco-Hub directly on their Facebook page or email them at: therainhamecohub@gmail.com

STOP PRESS We have more offers of funding so need more places to plant trees in gardens, community spaces etc. The Woodland Trust's target is 50 million trees in the UK. How many of these should be in Rainham? See www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

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Auction of Promises - Lower Halstow

Friday 26th November
Lower Halstow Memorial Hall
7.30pm - £3 per ticket

Lower Halstow Poetry Committee is organising a fundraising event, with all profits being shared amongst village causes.

The Auction of Promises is a fun way of buying some amazing Christmas gifts. 

We have already received a few pledges including an evening meal for two, a basket of logs, help with a family tree and knitting to a pattern of your choice, oh and babysitting!!

Please consider making a pledge - everyone has a talent of some kind, be it gardening, driving, decorating, dog walking etc. and the more pledges we receive the more fun the event will be!

Contact:
carinaj65@outlook.com or 07899 951044

GTHS Reunion

For all former pupils of Gillingham Technical High School (GTHS) for a reunion.

There have been reunions for different year groups previously but an 'All-Years' event has been arranged.

Rainham Cricket Club,
Berengrave Lane, ME8 7NA
on Saturday 13th November 2021 at 7pm.

The cost is £5 and more details can be found on the GTHS Facebook group.

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We continue to meet for rehearsals each Friday at 8pm and would love to have you join us.

Rainham Evening WI Annual Craft Fayre

Saturday 27th November, 2021
St Pauls Church, Parkwood
from 9.30am until 1.00pm.

There will be craft items, cakes, jams and chutneys, plants, Christmas decorations, and wooden goods. An Avon rep. will be there, as well as a raffle and a tombola - and, of course, tea and cake!

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Nature Notes (Joe Ennis)

LEITH HILL

On our regular trips to Brighton, my wife and I get our first sight of the long line of the hills of the South Downs. The most recognisable is Chactonbury Ring with its beech trees standing prominently on the remains of an Iron Age hill fort. On our return journey, we can see, on the horizon, the massive bulk of Leith Hill, Surrey, the highest point in the south east of England, at almost one thousand feet. Some readers may be familiar with the Surrey Hills, if only from television. Box Hill was used by cyclists competing in the 2012 Olympic Games and, subsequently, both Box Hill and Leith Hill have featured in many cycle races. It may have been noticed that the cyclists often disappeared temporarily from our screens as they rode under tree after tree. This leads me to mention old reports of an exhaustive tree survey, using the latest aerial mapping technology, which revealed that there are around 280 million trees in England and Wales over three metres high. The results revealed that the highest counts of trees were not in rural areas but in suburban Surrey. The survey noted that thousands of Surrey's mature trees were in its high number of large gardens. An explanation for this phenomenon lies in the county's fairly recent history. Surrey was, for hundreds of years, the poorest and most sparsely populated of the home counties; its productive agricultural land being confined largely to the Thames Valley. In the 18th century, Arthur Young condemned Surrey's communications as the worst in the country. Its prosperity and population only began to grow as a result of the railways built through Surrey to the south coast in the mid-19th century. Stockbrokers, bankers, insurance brokers and other well-paid professionals, started to leave the smoke and congestion of London for the fresh air and open spaces of the Surreys Hills. They bought large plots of cheap land and had big houses built within outsized gardens. Writing in the 'Shell Guide to Surrey' of 1977, Bruce Watkin referred to trees planted in the early 20th century that were maturing alongside older woodland trees, with

trees scattered everywhere in the county. He claimed that the light green leaves of spring and the gold leaves of autumn from all these trees made Surrey the prettiest county in the country. Whether or not that is the case, it is now clear that Surrey can claim to be the greenest county in England at the height of summer.

Some time ago, we paid a visit to Leith Hill, partly encouraged by Bruce Watkin's reference to the prettiness of Surrey and partly because our daughter then lived in the area.

The hill is a prominent part of the Greensand Ridge that runs through both Kent and Surrey. Much of the ridge consists of heathland, or at least once did so. Heaths occur on poor, largely sandy soil and were originally created by woodland clearance. They are the habitat, among other animals, of reptiles such as adder, grass snake, slow worm and common lizard.

The main and readily recognisable characteristic of heathland is, fairly obviously, areas of purple heather. The common (Wotton Common) on which Leith Hill stands was stripped of its original timber, in Tudor times and previously, to meet the enormous demand for fuel by the one-time iron and gunpowder industries. Over subsequent centuries, constant grazing and foraging kept down the regrowth. However, secondary woodland has grown up in the last hundred years or so as grazing began to decline. We noted oak, beech, Scots pine, birch, rowan, whitebeam, holly and hazel trees. Some patches of heathland had heather (ling) and bell heather still in flower. Both species have bell shaped purple flowers which attract the bees. We also noticed bilberry bushes but other people had beat us to the berries. It was unfortunately too early to admire the golds of a Surrey autumn but during our very enjoyable climb to the summit of Leith Hill we spotted a stonechat on

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the top of a bush and heard the calls of a green woodpecker, a great spotted woodpecker and a nuthatch.

After a cup of tea and a cake at the small café within Leith Tower, we climbed the spiral staircase to the top of the tower, erected in 1765 and over 1,000 feet above sea level. From here we had views of London to the North, including Big Ben, St Pauls Cathedral, Wembley Stadium and The Shard. In the same direction we could also see the Chiltern Hills of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. To the east was Crowborough Beacon in East Sussex. To the west, Black Down, the highest hill in West Sussex. To the south we could see Ashdown Forest, the English Channel sparkling through the Shoreham Gap and the long line of the hills of the South Downs. Among them was the very familiar shape of Chactonbury Ring.

November in the Wilder Garden (Victoria Golding)

This is traditionally a month of colder weather, but I am beyond predicting as this year has been so mixed up. It is a time of planning for next year, though, when cold and rainy days can be cheered up by seed and plant catalogues and pictures on the internet.

We bought two plants of *Echium wildpretii* at the Wisley Plant Fair. These will be very tall, like the echium “Pride of Madeira” seen in seaside gardens, but with red, rather than blue flowers and loved by bees. However, their natural habitat is halfway up Mount Teide, in Tenerife, so they find our climate challenging. I am keeping one in the greenhouse this winter and planting one outside, just in case it works. The payback will be terrific if they survive. We are trimming and renewing ties to stakes,

trellis and fences, so that taller plants won't be damaged by the winter gales.

Plant of the month

Much of your gardens will be tidied up by now, but if, like me you are behind, check for self-seeded plants of forget-me-not.



There are often lots of single plants in clumps. These can be planted out along path edges, interspersed with groups of early bulbs. If you have big areas that haven't been weeded, cover them with something that will exclude light, like cardboard, and let the worms do the work for you.

Jobs of the month

As you might know, I am obsessed with the benefits of leaves, so keep gathering them up each time it is fine enough to get outside.

I had a good clean and tidy in the greenhouse, ready for all the tender things I want to overwinter, which was a good job to do out of the cold and wet.

Keep a dish of fresh water for passing mammals and hidey-holes for those that want somewhere safe to shelter. To make your garden more friendly for hedgehogs, check out the British Hedgehog Preservation Society's website

www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk

Remember to check bonfires before lighting and remind people with this poster.

www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/bonfire-night-posters/

Happy wildlife gardening,
(Kent Wildlife Trust Garden Advisor)

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Volunteers Needed

Making Miracles is a local charity supporting families through baby bereavement and trauma.

Can you spare a few hours to help at any of the bucket collections on:

4th Dec - Asda Sittingbourne

10th Dec - Asda Greenhithe

17th Dec Asda Kings Hill

Contact Becci on 07921 333003 or

becci@makingmiracles.org.uk

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Oast Community Centre Gigs

Careful Now Promotions are enjoying hosting live music at The Oast Community Centre.

Coming up this month is:

Friday 12th November – Broken Chanter

The gig starts around 7.30pm and tickets are £7 on the door or £5 for Early Bird and Student tickets, which can be bought online.

Further details are available at:

www.facebook.com/carefulnowpromotions

or carefulnowpromotions@gmail.com

Hope to see you there!"

Rotary Club Christmas Floats

10th Dec - starting at Charing House

14th Dec - starting at Taverners Rd

15th Dec - starting at Edwin Rd and Sylvan Rd junction

17th Dec - starting at Sunnymead and Woodlands junction

20th Dec - starting at Yeoman Drive

22nd Dec - starting at Eastcourt Lane and Broadway junction

24th Dec - starting at Charing House

All routes to start at 18.00 with assembly at 17.45, except for Christmas Eve, starting at 17.00 and assembling at 16.45

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Rainham Rec Bulb Planting Afternoon

20th November, 2021

1pm

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Dates for the Diary

Any organisation can request an entry in the diary (free of charge) by contacting: diary@actionforum.co.uk

8th Nov - Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls, Contact 01634 262214 (also 15th, 22nd, 29th, 6th)

9th Nov - Bredhurst Whist Club - 7.30pm Bredhurst Village Hall. Contact Chris (evenings) 07707 669915 (also 16th, 23rd, 30th)

10th Nov - East Medway u3a at Smallholders Club Ring 07816 159668 or visit www.u3asites.org.uk/east-medway

12th Nov - Upchurch Choral Society - 8pm at St Mary's, Upchurch. Contact suerossiter@waitrose.com or 01634 234780 (also 19th, 26th, 3rd)

12th Nov - Broken Chanter 7.30pm Community Oast - carefulnowpromotions@gmail.com

13th Nov - Ante-natal (£90 per couple) and First Aid (£40 per person) Book at: office@the139club.co.uk

13th Nov - Wine and Wisdom Evening 7pm for 7.30pm St Matthew's Community Centre, BYOD & snacks, £5 per person, teams of 6-8, Contact Tina: 01634 70492

13th Nov - GTHS reunion, 7pm, Rainham Cricket Club

14th Nov - Medway Ramblers Linton to Hunton Church meet at 10am, Linton Church car park (ME17 4AW), Contact John: 01634 232668/flame451@hotmail.co.uk

17th Nov - Wigmore Ladies - 2pm Howard Memorial Hall - 01634 388912

17th Nov - Woodland Workshop day at Riverside, booking essential - contact 01634 337432

18th Nov - WI, 1.45-4pm, Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Contact Lynne: 01634 23499

20th Nov - Rainham Rec Bulb Planting Afternoon, 1pm Bring your own trowel and meet at the Pavilion

20th Nov - Hempstead Christmas Fayre, 11-3 in Village Hall and All Saints Church, with grotto, prize draw, craft stalls, gifts, kids activities, cakes etc. Free Entry

21st Nov - Riverside Country Park Volunteer Sunday - 10am

23rd Nov - Carer's Coffee Morning, 10-12pm, Dobbies Garden Centre, contact Maureen on 01634 235723

26th Nov - Auction of Promises, Lower Halstow Memorial Hall 7.30pm £3 per ticket, 07899 951044

26th Nov - Medway Geographical Society hosts 'Lady and the Mountain' by Brian Laverick-Smith, Holy Trinity Church, Twydall Lane, ME8 6TN, 2-3.30pm Contact Lorna Bailey - 01634 572139

27th Nov - Upchurch Choral Society Concert, St Marys Church, Upchurch, 7.30pm 01634 234780

27th Nov - Rainham Evening WI Annual Craft Fayre St Pauls Church, Parkwood, 9.30am until 1.00pm.

6th Dec - Green Drinks (environmental networking) Manor Farm 7.30pm, therainhamecohub@gmail.com

Check out the Net online for up-to-the-minute events!

Riverside Country Park Event Dates:

1-day Woodland Workshop, Wednesday 17th November 2021

Christmas Wreath-making, Sunday 12th December 2021

Winter Wonderland, Monday 20th - Thursday 23rd December

1-day Woodland Workshop, Wednesday 19th January 2022

Winter Tree ID, Wednesday 26th January 2022

Booking is essential - for more details Contact the Visitor Centre (8am - 4pm) on 01634 337432

Word on the Streets

There are always a few volunteer vacancies, some temporary due to holidays or ill health, and some permanent due to the ever expanding nature of Rainham's housing.

Anne is currently looking for permanent volunteers for the following roads (the number in brackets is the number of houses in those roads):

Rainham - Hawthorne Ave (200), Harvey Rd (14), Roberts Rd, (61)

Upchurch - Wallbridge Lane (54), Bishop Lane (18), Church Farm Rd/Forge Lane (56)

Mierscourt - Parker Close (33), Goodall Cl (26), Barlow Cl (20), Sinclair Cl (21), Goldsmith Cl (14), Ferries Cl (39), Bond Cl (78 - no flats)

Contact Anne on 07791 585 998, if you can help on either a permanent or temporary basis.

Profits from Action Forum are always distributed between a number of charities. More recent recipients have been St Margaret's, St Matthews, as well as Tools with A Mission

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