

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow!



Hempstead Hill Jan/Feb 1987

We haven't had snow like this for a long time now but the impact on our daily lives at the time was quite enormous and the memories will stay for a long time! (see p4)

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yourself, perhaps by driving a few less miles and taking in the wonderful green spaces in our town instead.

Hunt through Action Forum's pages of activities and events and see what you might like to get involved with.

Happy Christmas and holiday season to you all, from all of us at Action Forum

Editorial

As I look at our cover picture of a snowy Hempstead Hill, it reminds me, more fondly than any other season, of simpler times and happy memories of Christmas's past and the holiday season. As a child, I remember hands stinging cold, gloves or mittens drying on steamy classroom radiators after gladiatorial snowball fights and the long icy slides on frosty ground that would have your mates whizzing past you in the playground. I recall it as a slow build-up, commencing only after the last of the fireworks had been heard or seen; an anticipation of once-a-year treats, and surprises that might be in store. It is now a more frenetic time for most families, squeezing into the calendar the many competing demands, deciding what, or who, can possibly be sacrificed from the schedule.

The Action Forum diary section also reminds me of the many Christmas Bazaars, church services, pantomimes attended, as well as the loose change added to buckets of those hearty folk manning the charity floats. We were lucky enough to experience these all again when our own children were small, and which are now on the horizon for the next generation of our family. I personally enjoyed the isolation caused by more severe weather and the opportunity to recharge the batteries in front of the TV, which now has a different connotation altogether.

As we move into the 'season of giving', please do what you can and spare a thought, a coin, a food donation, or a visit to those truly in need of your company. Above all be kind, to the environment - by planning for as little waste as possible, to those around you - by savouring their company and importantly to

Letters to the Editor

Toe rags

Dear Sir,

Having read about 'Toe Rags' in October's Action Forum, I would like to add my knowledge:

My grandfather Alfred Booty, worked in the brickfields at Otterham Quay for many years with his brother Jim. They both wore 'Toe Rags', which were cotton material wrapped around their feet instead of woollen socks. Socks held grains of sand, making their feet sore, whereas 'the rags' were much better as the sand could be shaken out.

I might add that his pub was 'The Three Sisters' and he lived at 13 Kent Terrace. During the war he was an Air Raid Warden in Solomon Road, Rainham.

Yours sincerely, Brenda A Davis

More Prefab Memories

Dear Editor,

Your Action Forum August edition was sent to me by my friend Mrs Anne Pearce and I found it both interesting and thought-provoking.

The photograph, taken outside numbers 12 and 13 Clematis Ave, deserved closer inspection. Although the picture isn't very clear, you can still see clean and tidy children wearing Clarke's sandals and hair ribbons in the girls shiny hair. Prefab housing was an intelligent solution to a post-war housing shortage. Post-war people had painful recollections of the depression in the 1930's and this gave them a strong work ethic and genuine appreciation of their jobs and homes. As children, even pre-school, we were all given standards and were very well-prepared for our lives ahead.

The children of the prefab community in

Wigmore all went to Hempstead School, which at that time was a very small village school, not at all like the huge school today. We all received a superb foundation education that took many of us on to attaining further education and excellent jobs. We had inspirational teachers like Miss Newton, Mr Jelly and our wonderful headmistress, Miss Webb, to name but a few. Bad behaviour was unheard of because we enjoyed school, whatever our abilities. It was entirely inclusive and nurturing.

All this sounds almost unrealistic. People had aspiration but they tended to believe that to get on you had to work hard, not think on a basis of envy, or the belief that world owed you something for nothing.

With desperate housing shortages at present, a modern equivalent to prefab housing may be a solution. Instead we have endless sprawling developments that are unaffordable to low income groups and to the young just starting out. These same badly-situated developments eat up Kentish farm land and do not solve the problem of genuine need. Replicating prefabs with good-sized gardens would not only recreate a great sense of community, but may well grow a future generation of children that grow up with the advantages Anne and I had and will be proudly telling Action Forum in the future. Thank you once again for the very interesting Editorial.

Yours faithfully, Patricia Kay.

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.

Christmas Waste Collection Changes

Your recycle and waste collection dates will change over the festive period. Find out more:

www.medway.gov.uk/wintercollections

***Please note If your normal collection day is a Monday/Tuesday, your last collection before Christmas is 20/21 December, followed by 4/5 January.**

There will be **NO BROWN BIN OR BULKY COLLECTIONS** from Thursday, **23 December** until **Monday, 10 January.**



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Under Snow Memories

(Gladys Payne)

It was my anniversary (Sunday 4th Jan 1987) and we were having lunch out. By mid-morning snow was coming down hard. We still went for lunch of course but, once back, my son and fiancée realised they needed to head straight home. A 45 min journey turned into a 2 hour trek for them and still the snow kept coming.

Blowing hard from the East, and with no barrier between the estuary and Lower Rainham, the light, powdery snow drifted heavily. We woke up to a stillness next day and pulled back the curtains to find snow halfway up the windows!

There was so much that for a long while it was impossible to leave the house; all our doors opened outwards! Inch by inch my husband, Bob, scraped through the morning to create space for the doors to gradually edge wider, much to everyone's relief.

But that was as much as could be done. We were cut off - nobody could get to work and it was too deep to walk far. The neighbours rallied together and the children had great fun. The seagull landing spread-eagled on the roof with a thud had less fun as it slid silently to the ground but soon recovered once warmed up in a box of straw in the shed.

On Thursday our neighbour heard Rainham Co-op had milk and bread. A sledge-run purchased provisions for us all and by the end of the week I was able to walk to check on my mother in Luton village.

The end result was Bob having to take the time as a week of holiday - how employment conditions have changed - but fun memories.

Climate Conversations

The start of urgently needed community engagement

On the 9th of November, Action Forum, along with representatives from Rainham Eco-hub, attended Medway Council's first community engagement event on Climate Change.

The event sought to engage the community and harvest ideas to support its Climate Change Action Plan. The plan has over two hundred actions over eleven streams of activity, some of which relate to the Council reducing the carbon footprint of its own estate, whilst more than one hundred other actions require engagement from residents, community and young people. Medway Council have already begun to visibly deliver on some of these actions and you may have noticed: replacement of older high energy street lights; installation of ultra-fast internet cabling to support home-working and electric vehicle charging points, which we now have in Rainham Station car park.

The intention is to follow-up the ideas gathered with a series of facilitated workshop events - see <https://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan>. Whilst the event is to be applauded, much more urgency is needed and the elephants in the room, e.g. over-development of Medway's green spaces, the council's influence over its suppliers and changes needed in household lifestyle choices, were carefully steered away from.

If you want to get involved locally in Rainham, come along to the Eco-hub's monthly Green Drinks, held sat the Manor Farm, 7:30, the first Monday of each month.



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Community

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Monday 20th – Thursday 23rd December
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Rotary Club Christmas Floats



14th Dec - start at Taverners Rd
Bettescombe, Elmstone, Arthur,
Herbert, Broadview.

Finish junction of Broadview/Maidstone

15th Dec - start at Edwin Rd/Sylvan Rd
Edwin (above Sylvan Road), Durham,
Maidstone, Lyndhurst, Marshall (above
Sylvan), The Platters.

Finish junction of Marshall/Sylvan.

22nd Dec - start at Eastcourt/Broadway junc
Elmfield, Featherby, Chilham, Eastcourt,
Allington, Broadway, Priory, Abbey,
Featherby, Hanway, The Chase, Chalkenden,
Broadway.

Finish at junction of Broadway/Eastcourt.

All routes are to start at 18.00 with assembly
at 17.45, except for Christmas Eve when we
will be starting at 17.00
and assembling at
16.45.

(Subject to roadworks,
covid and weather!)



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

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.

Following our announcement in the Nov
edition, we can confirm that 1600 trees have
been ordered and will be received by the end
of 2021. This is fantastic news and a huge
boost to the aim of greening up Rainham and
its surrounding neighbourhoods. Thanks to
all who have been involved.

Another 1000 trees were requested but,
unfortunately, due to the high demand we are
unable to accommodate those requests in
2021. We will continue to update you on the
status of the tree planting and more free
trees, we hope, will be available in 2022.

Anyone able to lead or assist the coordina-
tion of Free Tree requests in Rainham should
contact:

editor@action forum.co.uk

Happy Planting!!



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Coronavirus will not stop us bringing Santa round the streets this year, as we have done for almost 30 years.

We will be knocking on your door, so please be generous. Listen out for us and follow progress using our Santa Tracker on the Gillingham Lions Club Facebook page. If you wish to donate, we will have collection buckets, but you can also donate by text. We hope to see you on one of the routes below:

Wednesday 8th, Hempstead:- Barncroft, Almond, Magdalen, Lavenda, Birch, Plumtree, Medlar, Cedar, Kingsdown +

Thursday 9th, Hempstead:- Coppergate, Evergreen, Shepherdsgate, Honey, Lamplighters, Cobblestone, Horseshoe, Old Barn, Greenfinches +

Friday 10th, Kenilworth:- Kenilworth, Windermere, Sandown, Bransgore, Sunningdale, Wimbourne, Tanker, Gayhurst

Tuesday 14th, Fairview:- Fairview, Foulds, Primrose, Magnolia, Clematis, Norman, Wigmore, The Hazels, Woodside, Bredhurst

Wednesday 15th, Highfield:- Highfield, Benson, Derwent, Oldfields, Salisbury, Century, Nursery, Henley, Cheriton

Thursday 16th, Parkwood:- Campleshon, Wood, Queendown, Lineacre, Idenwood, Hallwood, Donet, Dixwell, Long Catlis, Fairfax, Foxburrow, Readscoft, Beke +

Friday 17th Parkwood:- Capel, Gunnis, Gladwyn, Culpepper, Conrad, Chipstead, Long Catlis, Hawbeck, Roper, Sedley, Deanwood

Monday 20th, Twydall:- Waltham, Elham, Lyminge, Bodiam, Sturry, Herne, Blean, Patribourne, Detling, Hawthorn, Begonia

Tuesday 21st, Twydall:- Staplehurst, Goudhurst, Ash, Leeds, Charing, Lynsted, Bearsted, Westerham, Minster, Crundale

Wednesday 22nd, Lower Beechings:- Eastcourt, Littlebourne, Bishopsbourne, Kennington, Brabourne, Kingsnorth, Thornham, Rolvenden, Ruckinge, Boughton

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Nature Notes (Joe Ennis)

ROOKS IN WINTER

From November, the skies across Britain start to fill with the remarkable sight of thousands upon thousands of rooks, jackdaws and crows coming in to roost at dusk.

The sheer size of the flocks in some areas is such that they have to be seen to be believed. Tens of thousands of these corvids gather in fields adjacent to their roosting woods on the Buckenham Marshes in Norfolk. A Cornish roost once recorded 2,500 rooks, up to 8,000 jackdaws and 200 carrion crows.

They will have flown from various feeding sites up to twenty five miles or so away though quite why the birds choose to gather in such vast numbers is not entirely clear. They do not huddle closely together for warmth and there is no need to protect themselves against night-time predators. However, it is thought that communal roosting and searching for food improves the chance of locating promising stubble fields and other sources of food.

On a late afternoon some time ago I visited Northwood Hill Nature Reserve at High Halstow on the Hoo Peninsula. The reserve, owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, has a commanding view over the marshes and the Thames. I drove to Dromhey Farm, the local HQ of the RSPB and just off the road between High Halstow and Cooling. The warden was our leader on a visit to the site of the rook and jackdaw roost in the reserve's wood. The weather was perfect – blue sky and very little cloud.

As the sun lowered over the North Downs we made our way to a clearing. Here there is a viewing point from which to observe the roosting of rooks and jackdaws in the winter, but also the nesting of herons, rooks and little egrets in the spring. We could see a small flock of jackdaws enjoying the warmth of the last rays of the sun. Out of sight, on the marshes, hundreds of rooks were no doubt gathering, like a seething black carpet, for one last feed before heading for the roost.

The glow in the sky turned from yellow to orange and to red and reflected on the crimson buds of the sallow trees and the golden leaves

of the oak trees. We heard the characteristic settling down calls of pheasants, blackbirds and wrens in the hawthorn scrub.

As we neared the viewing point, the red glow of the sun on the clouds had disappeared and the first of the rooks and jackdaws were approaching the roost. It was fairly easy to distinguish the two species, silhouetted as they were against the remaining light of the sky. Their calls, the “caws” of the rooks and the “jacks” of the jackdaws, were also distinguishable.

The rooks had undoubtedly been feeding in the marshes of the Hoo peninsula and perhaps also on the rubbish tips of Essex, the jackdaws in the orchards and arable fields around Cooling. As the birds arrived at the roosting site they began to circle above. The sky gradually filled with hundreds of birds calling excitedly and undertaking the most amazing aerobatics, pirouettes and loops. As more birds arrived, some began to drop into the wood, presumably to claim a favourable spot in which to roost. But just when it seemed that the flock had begun to settle down for the night, birds would arise from the trees and join the newcomers in the noise, movement and the excitement. In due course there was a build-up of over three thousand birds, according to the warden.

At the onset of night, the rooks and jackdaws tumbled out of the sky in well-ordered and well-managed manoeuvres, to sink into the deep, cold, black of the wood. By about 5 pm, after repeated settling and unsettling, the excitement had died down and all was quiet. The aerial manoeuvres of the rooks and jackdaws are not perhaps as awe inspiring as the synchronised performances put on by certain waders and by starlings. Even so, the warden suggested, and we all agreed, the display we had just seen was one of the most under-rated bird spectacles in Britain.

By March and the advent of the breeding

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season, the flocks will have dispersed to take up residence at their own nesting sites, leaving behind just those rooks hatched at Northwood Hill.

December in the Wilder Garden (Victoria Golding)

As the year comes to an end, it is good to consider what we can do to encourage wildlife in the more challenging months. Make sure you keep cleaning your bird feeders to halt the spread of disease and maintain good hygiene with any bowls and dishes you use on the ground.

Plant of the month

Remember your garden when decorating your house for Christmas. I am pleased that our Christmas tree in a pot has survived another year, despite being occasionally forgotten. It grew a little more this year and I will repot after the festive season and try to find a place in the garden where it doesn't keep blowing over in the wind! The practice of keeping the tree from year to year has meant that the tree has cost me only £6 each year and has prevented another six trees being cut down.

Twigs with berries can be added to your flower displays, together with any late garden flowers. It does feel good to lower our carbon footprint!

Job of the month

If you still have bee hotels outside, you can give the insects a better chance of survival by removing them from the damp to a dry, cool place, like a shed. The hotels that come apart are the best ones to have (a great present for someone) as you can remove the individual cocoons to a cardboard box, discarding any that have been predated. Try to keep the different types separately. You will also need to watch

out for them in early spring so they aren't trapped indoors.

Cocoons that have dried mud and sand round them are probably Mason Bees. (Did you know that the Red Mason Bee is the best pollinator of apples?)

The cocoons wrapped in leaves are those of Leaf Cutter Bees – did you notice some neat round holes in your rose or buddleia leaves this summer?

Once the cocoons are out of the house, brush the sections down so they are clean for next season.

Check out our online courses on Wildlife Friendly Gardening. They are held in the evenings on a variety of topics, including: 'managing garden pests in a nature friendly way' or 'building and maintaining a garden wildlife pond'. Just the thing for a winter evening: www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Happy wildlife gardening,
Kent Wildlife Trust Garden Advisor

A Garden Paradox - pesticides increase the number of pests

Left to its own devices nature usually arrives at a sensible balance between the species.

An infestation of, say, aphids results in predators moving in for a feast - ladybirds, earwigs, hoverflies and wasps. Pesticides kill both pests and predators. Aphids, however, have a much shorter life cycle than their predators, breed very quickly and re-establish themselves in much larger numbers long before their predators are back to control them. More spraying needed and more money for the chemical companies... Nature knows best!

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17 - 19th Dec 7pm Carols by Candlelight
22nd Dec 7pm 9 Lessons and Carols
24th Dec Crib Services at 2pm, 4pm, 7pm
24th Dec 11.30pm Midnight Communion
25th Dec 10.30am Christmas Day Service

Wigmore Evangelical, Durham Rd, Wigmore

14th Dec 7.30pm Christmas Carols with the BAE Brass Band
19th Dec 6.30pm Carol Service
25th Dec 10.30am Christmas Day Service

Granary Church, Oast Community Centre, Rainham

19th Dec 4pm Christmas Carol Service (including refreshments)
25th Dec 10.30am Christmas Day Service

Twydall Evangelical, Goudhurst Rd

19th Dec 10.30am Family Carol Service
25th Dec 11am Christmas Day Service

Rainham Christian Fellowship, Waltham Rd, ME8 6XE

12th Dec 10.30am Family Christmas Service
19th Dec 4pm Candlelight Christmas Carols

St Paul's CofE, Parkwood Shops

5th Dec 3pm Christingle Family Fun
19th Dec 3pm Nativity Family Fun
23rd Dec 5.30pm 9 Lessons and Carols
24th 11.30pm Midnight Communion

St Peter's CofE, Bredhurst

12th Dec 3pm 9 Lessons and Carols
17th Dec 5pm Camp Fire Carols
24th Dec 11am Crib Service
26th Dec 11am Communion

St Matthews CofE, Drewery Dr, Wigmore

18th Dec 5pm Traditional Carol Service
20th Dec 7pm Carols Among the Trees
24th Dec 3pm and 5pm Christingle
25th Dec 10am Christmas Day Communion

St Margaret's CofE, Lower Halstow

5th Dec 10am Christingle and Gift Service
19th Dec 10am Family Communion
19th Dec 4pm 9 Carols and Readings
24th Dec 1-3pm Quiet Christmas (warm welcome and a quiet cuppa)
24th Dec 5.30pm Crib Service for children
24th Dec 11.30pm Midnight Communion
25th Dec 10am Family Communion

Holy Trinity CofE, Twydall Lane, Twydall

19th Dec 4pm Carols by Candlelight
24th Dec 4pm Nativity
24th Dec 11.30pm Midnight Communion
25th Dec 10am Christmas Celebration (café- style)

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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

6th Dec - Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls, Contact 01634 262214 (**also 13th, 20th**)

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

7th Dec - Bredhurst Whist Club - 7.30pm Bredhurst Village Hall. Contact Chris (evenings) 07707 669915 (**also 14th, 21st**)

8th Dec - East Medway u3a at Smallholders Club Ring 07816 159668 or visit www.u3asites.org.uk/east-medway (**also 12th Jan**)

8th - 22nd - Gillingham Lions Club Sleigh Runs See page 7 for details

10th - 24th Dec - Rotary Club Sleigh Runs See page 5 for details

10th Dec - Upchurch Choral Society - 8pm at St Mary's, Upchurch. Contact suerossiter@waitrose.com or 01634 234780 (**also 17th**)

12th Dec - Christmas Wreath-making day at Riverside, booking essential - contact 01634 337432

15th Dec - Wigmore Ladies - 2pm Howard Memorial Hall - 01634 388912

16th Dec - WI, 1.45-4pm, Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Contact Lynne: 01634 23499

20th - 23rd Dec - Winter Wonderland at Riverside, Booking essential - contact 01634 337432

21 Dec- The RSPB Medway Local Group Talk, Parkwood Community Centre, Gillingham, ME8 9PN. 7.30 - 9.45 pm £4.00. Coastal Birds—Simon Ginnaw www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway

10th Jan - Medway Organ and Keyboard Club concert 7pm, Parkwood Community Hall, ME8 9PN, £7 refreshments and bar available - Phil on 07795 576294

15th Jan - Vintage/Designer/Quality Clothing Sale for charity, Bredhurst Village Hall, 1.30-4pm

18th Jan - Medway RSPB Local Group talk 'The Miracle of Bird Migration' by Mark James Pearson, 7.30pm, £4 Parkwood Community Centre, www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway

19th Jan - Woodland Workshop at Riverside, booking essential - contact 01634 337432

26th Jan - Winter Tree ID at Riverside, booking essential - contact 01634 337432

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to you all! Perhaps this is the year to introduce something new to your diary? Check the list above.

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

Riverside Country Park Event Dates:

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



'Merry Christmas, hearty thanks and best wishes to our distribution team behind the scenes, along with all those volunteers who deliver Action Forum each month. All your hard work, often unseen, is much appreciated.'

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):

**Mierscourt - Parker Close (33),
Goodall Cl (26), Barlow Cl (20),
Sinclair Cl (21), Goldsmith Cl (14),
Ferries Cl (39), Bond Cl (14)**

Contact Anne on 07791 585 998, if you can help.

If you are a volunteer distributor tell us your story by emailing the editorial team, editor@actionforum.co.uk

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More recent recipients have been St Margaret's, St Matthews, as well as Tools with A Mission

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