

# ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

JAN/FEB  
2022

NUMBER 575

First published  
March 1969

*Goodbye Kings Ferry commuters, thanks for the memories!*



This luxury coach featured in their 1973 Action Forum advert. Advertised as a 'British and European Travel Service', the accompanying text stated, '*for your private party try our quality personal service*' (read more on p7).

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members' individual journeys, to support increased biodiversity and a reduced carbon footprint, will be shared over coming months but do please contact the editor to tell us more of your own plans in this area, whether as a household, school, business or community. For now, the editorial team would like to wish you all a happy and safe new year.

Please note, as this is a combined Jan/Feb edition the next edition will be in March 2022.

## ***Editorial***

At the beginning of each year it is common to look forward to the year ahead, setting goals and making resolutions, but I would first like to look back!

This time last year we were less certain about our future health, given that a COVID-19 vaccine was still not widely available. Yet now here we are, largely double jabbed and "boosted".

New variants withstanding, it seems we are far less likely to be heading to intensive care once jabbed, whether for flu or COVID, which has to be comforting news.

Looking back even further, it is with great interest I read that significant archaeological remains have, yet again, been found in the heart of the town. Rainham residents may have noticed that 4 bungalows adjacent to the Manor Farm pub on the A2 at Rainham have been demolished to make way for a new retirement complex. What isn't obvious from the roadside is that remains dating back to the Iron age have been found underneath the houses and in the gardens.

These include very well-preserved salt production kilns (saltern hearths) and some evidence of round houses, as well as Roman artefacts. This could put the date on the earliest remains to 401BC, or approaching 2,500 years old! A full article will follow when the investigations are complete.

Looking forward, our household has started the year as we aim to continue, with greater focus on re-use and recycling and getting it right, starting with the increased waste from the Christmas period (see our 12 Wastes of Christmas on page 4).

Further pledges, and our editorial team

## ***Letters to the Editor***

### **Rainham Ladies Choir**

Good afternoon,  
 Thank you so much for advertising our choir throughout 2021. I can truly say that we have welcomed a few new members as a direct result of your publications. So - looking forward to 2022, please be kind enough to include the advert below in your forthcoming issues.

With grateful thanks and best wishes for a Happy New Year,

SP

### **WE'RE BACK!**

Rainham Ladies Choir begin their 2022 rehearsals from 10th January.

We meet each Monday from 7.30 at Rainham School for Girls (RSG), Derwent Way, Rainham, ME8 0BX which has a large rehearsal space with easy access.

Both the venue and our choir continue to be Covid aware and risk assessed.

New members are always welcome, so, if you can sing and would love to join our long established and friendly group of ladies, please contact us.

Phone: 01634 262214 or 01634 370797

Email: rlchoir@outlook.com or see 'RainhamLadiesChoir'

Facebook: rainhamladies.

**Obituary for John Austin**  
**(31<sup>st</sup> December 1934 - 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021)**

Many of Action Forum's readers will recognise John's name as a regular contributor to this magazine with his 'Memories of Rainham Past'.

In a long article in May this year he described his WWII experiences, including evacuation to Cornwall and subsequent recall to Rainham because of the primitive conditions in which he and his brother had been forced to live. But these paled into insignificance compared with the impression made by the formidable Mrs Barratt, who ruled the canteen at the former Council School in Solomon Road with an iron hand.

In July his topic was the walk there from Orchard Street School, listing the shops and businesses he and his pals passed en route, like the Blacksmith and the Bughutch, remembering with affection the local bobby P.C. Dunn who shepherded pupils across the busy A2.

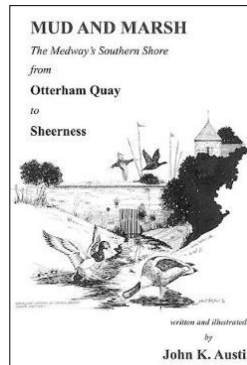
John's great love was drawing and sketching, and a couple of his illustrations have been printed in AF in the past. For thirty years he taught art and woodwork at a senior school in Gravesend, earning the love and respect of all with whom he came into contact, eventually rising to the position of Deputy Head.

Very much later he was invited to give some informal elementary drawing lessons to classes at Fairview Junior School, something



he, and they, much enjoyed.

Almost fifty years ago he began a project which was finally completed in 2019. This was to describe and illustrate the Medway Riverside from Burham to Sheerness, a major undertaking which resulted in a series of five books.



As he grew older we worked together, but we often met just to chat. He had a never-failing series of fascinating stories, which he told in his own inimitable way. I think John was one of the kindest and most courteous men I have ever met.

RAD

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## Climate Conversations

### 12 Wastes of Christmas - how did you do?

Christmas Waste	Recycling Method
1 Batteries	Library/Recycling Centre
2 Bottles & tops	White recycling bag if glass or plastic Corks in Black sack
3 Cans/Bottles	White recycling bag
4 Xmas Crackers	Black sack unless items specifically state otherwise
5 Cards/Envelopes	Blue recycling bag
6 Food Waste	<u>Food</u> : Brown bin <u>Plastic packaging</u> : local supermarkets
7 Gift Wrap	Re-use where possible then Black sack unless specifically stated otherwise
8 Used Stamps	Check-out 'My Shining Star' children's cancer charity (9a High Street, Rainham - weekday mornings)
9 Tinsel	Re-use where possible then Black sack
10 Xmas Trees	<u>Real</u> : If potted then save for next year otherwise next to Brown bin <u>Artificial</u> : Re-use if possible or Black sack
11 Unwanted Gifts	Check out 'Medway Random Acts of Kindness' on Facebook
12 Your waist	Hard labour Ho! Ho! Ho!

Christmas and the holiday season typically generate nearly double a normal month's worth of waste and have inspired this piece on the 12 Wastes of Christmas.

We hope this simple guide, taken from information on Medway Council's waste recycling website, will help you get it all right and significantly reduce the amount of waste incorrectly heading for landfill.

See:

[www.medway.gov.uk/directory/11a-z\\_of\\_recycling](http://www.medway.gov.uk/directory/11a-z_of_recycling)  
for any items not included here

### Monthly Eco Challenge

Last year one of our family Christmas gifts was a jar of eco tips - 52 easy ways to live more sustainably and reduce our impact on the world around us.

My family have loved working through them over the year, sitting round the table once a week and taking it in turns to randomly select a challenge from the jar.

We are through the jar now but I thought it might be fun to share them with Action Forum readers through 2022.

Can you meet the monthly challenge in your homes?

### January

*'Wherever possible, use a paper bag rather than a plastic one.'*

We re-use our paper bags for shopping on another occasion or to hold food waste for the brown bin.

They also provide 'brown cuttings material' in our home compost bin.

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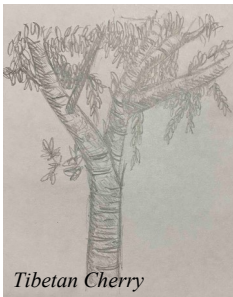
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## Community

### Tree-Planting around Rainham

The Friends of Rainham Recreation Ground are extremely pleased to announce that we have planted four trees within the playground of our park as part of the Queen's Green canopy scheme. The scheme is setup to encourage communities to plant trees in honour of the Queen's platinum jubilee and to help fight the climate emergency.

The four trees include a Liquidamber, a Tibetan cherry, and a Japanese selkova.



Tibetan Cherry

Stuart Bourne, chair of the group, says 'This is a very exciting day for us. Since the group was formed over a year ago, it has been our aim to plant more trees in the park, especially in the playground, to provide shade for the children during our hot summers. Thanks to the hard work of our team, we finally achieved our goal. It's only fitting that we use one of the trees to honour Her Majesty, who shares the same beliefs as our group.'

The group would like to thank everyone who

The fourth tree is a magnolia called 'Elizabeth', and was chosen and planted in dedication to the Queen's jubilee and in honour of all her years of long service to our country.



'Magnolia 'Elizabeth'

contributed to our fundraising, and especially the Arnold Clark Community Fund which provided a substantial amount to the goal. We would like to also thank the team at Medway Council, who helped plan the Planting, and Medway Norse who provided the trees and skilled workers to plant them.

### Upchurch Tree – Planting

Upchurch Parish Council has planted an English Oak tree at the Recreation Ground to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

The well-established oak, from grower Majestic Trees, was planted on the Oak Lane side of the recreation ground on 9th December, close to where one of the two Lime trees by the beacon stood previously. Both of the lime trees had become diseased and unfortunately, had to be removed recently. A commemorative plaque will be added later, in time for next year's jubilee celebrations.



Oak Leaf



Poplar Tree

The Parish Council is liaising with a local arboriculturist and Lawrence Merton at Westmoor Nurseries regarding a planting scheme to replace the Poplar trees along the Chaffes Lane side of the recreation ground. The row of poplars also became diseased and had to be removed recently.

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## 'Treasure Island'

by Ben Crocker

January 14.15.21.22.28 & 29

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To help brush away those January blues why not come along to Rainham's very own theatre as the Rainham Theatrical Society present their annual pantomime.

After the pandemic forced the group to cancel the panto last year they are hoping this years 'Treasure Island' will help bring some fun and laughter to Rainham.

A madcap pirate adventure from start to finish will have all the ingredients of a traditional pantomime with comedy, music and of course audience participation! Come along and find out if the dastardly villain Long John Silver meets his match when faced with the ladies of the Smugglers' Cove Women's Institute? Will Seadog Sam and Seaweed Willy manage to save the day and allow Jim Hawkins marry his true love Jenny Trelawney.

There is only one way to find out if good triumphs over evil....book a ticket now!  
Box Office on 0844 8793224 or on-line at  
[www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk](http://www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk)

## Kings Ferry London Service (from p1)

Sadly, Kings Ferry ceased commuter coach services to London, Christmas Eve 2021, though it was probably inevitable with work-from-home advice being reinstated in November following 2 years of reduced passengers commuting. While limited numbers on the rail network led to a govt bail-out, this wasn't an option for a private coach company like Kings Ferry.

When Canary Wharf opened in Docklands in the early '90s the Kings Ferry service was one of the few ways to reach it from Medway - London Underground had not yet been extended. Pickups around the local area allowed commuters to reach London without a drive to the station and the commuter car park built near Bredhurst enabled others to use the service too.

Set-up by Peter O'Neill in 1968, Action Forum's Hamish Mackay Miller recalls visiting their base at Hillview Yard, opposite The Harrow in Lidsing in the early '70s to arrange advertising. The adverts proudly stated that they were winners of '1974 Coach of the Year' offering a 'British & European Travel service'. By the '80s, Kings Ferry had moved to Lower Pump Lane but, with expansion came the logistics problems of larger coaches using the narrow lane. When the Medway Tunnel/A289 opened early 2000 they moved again, to Eastcourt Lane.

Bought by National Express in 2007, they continued operating under the Kings Ferry brand and have confirmed they will continue to provide private hire and contract coach services.

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## *Nature Notes* (Joe Ennis)

### **TRAVELLING THE NORTH DOWNS**

I am no longer able to ride or drive but when I was mobile, I liked to visit the North Downs after Christmas, South of Sittingbourne, as a means of getting some fresh air and a change of scenery. The previously-published Nature Notes that follow are an account of the last time I was able to do so:

The villages and hamlets of the Downs sit in an ancient landscape of woods, small fields, narrow lanes and mediaeval churches which are at the heart of rural, sparsely-populated, downland parishes whose boundaries were settled before the Norman Conquest and have hardly changed since. This countryside, despite its antiquity, is not in decay. On the contrary, its fields are in use growing fruit and arable crops and grazing beef cattle, sheep and riding horses. Many of its woods are actively managed for timber. The beauty of the Downs is perhaps more evident in Spring or Autumn but they still have appeal in Winter; once the leaves have fallen, views of the Downs obstructed in summer open up.

I set out on a cold but sunny day. Through Hartlip and Stockbury, I then crossed over the Stockbury Valley and took a narrow lane to the hamlet and parish of Bicknor, which sits on a high plateau of land devoted to the growing of top fruit. It is claimed by the fruit industry that we have the best climate in the world for growing apples and that English apples really do have the best taste. As I motored through the orchards, I came across a mixed flock of fieldfares and redwings, members of the thrush family that come to this country in the winter from Scandinavia. They feed on fallen fruit but also on hawthorn, holly, rowan and other berries and invertebrates such as worms and leatherjackets.

I headed for Hucking, in what has always been a remote area, although it was once linked to the Weald of Kent by a drove road for the movement of animals between summer and winter pastures. The hamlet is reached along miles of single-track lanes which become very muddy in winter. Meeting a tractor in the

middle of nowhere involves reversing an interminably long distance!

There is a diminutive Norman church at Hucking and the area around the hamlet retains a traditional mediaeval Kentish pattern of small farms within a single parish. The church, some nearby cottages and a George VI red postbox are signs that this remote spot is the heart of a local community. Hucking can be one of the coldest places on the North Downs as the southern boundary of the parish runs along the top of the steep escarpment. Here the Downs rise to over 600 feet above sea level and place names such as "Cold Blow" and "Cold Harbour" are an indication of the bitterly cold winds that sweep up from the Weald in winter. Buzzards can often be seen quartering the skies above the grassland at Hucking, preying on rabbits, young hares, voles and other small mammals. They are now recolonising the downland haunts from which they disappeared in the 19th century as a result of persecution by gamekeepers.

In due course, I headed for Torry Hill via Wormshill, where Jersey calves are reared at Yew Farm and pedigree Red Sussex cattle fattened at Manor Farm. I drove narrow lanes that ascend and descend the sides of steep, dry valleys. Beech woods cover the steepest slopes and sheep graze on the open chalk downland. In winter, the woods on the North Downs can sometimes be silent places, however, one can occasionally come across a mixed flock of great, blue and long tailed tits searching for insects, or disturb a flock of chaffinches feeding on fallen beech masts. With my eyes on the road ahead, I caught only a glimpse of wood pigeons; oak and holly trees alongside the road indicated they were in search of acorns or berries. I also noticed the fluffy, silvery fruits of 'old man's beard' on the hedgerows.

I eventually reached the Torry Hill Estate

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which occupies a flat upland with views over the Isle of Sheppey. It consists of parkland, arable fields, cherry orchards and woods. In the parkland, beef cattle and sheep grazed among the beech, oak, lime and other trees; rooks and jackdaws searched in the grass for worms and other invertebrates. Most of the cherry orchards consist of modern, dwarf stock but a large, traditional orchard of standard trees has been retained.

In the summer I met an elderly man who was living in a caravan in this orchard for the duration of the cherry-picking season. One of his jobs was to keep the rooks, blackbirds, wood pigeons and starlings off the crop. He would fire his shot gun at 9am and dusk which would usually keep the birds away both day and night, he claimed. The estate has acres of coppiced woodland under management, timber from which is made into fence posts and chestnut palings. Rolls of the latter are exported to countries bordering the North Sea where they are used to stabilise sand dunes. Eventually heading for Sittingbourne and home, I had enjoyed some well-needed fresh air driving through a countryside, not only ancient, but still supporting thriving horticulture, agriculture and forestry.

## ***Happy New Year in the Wildlife Friendly Garden***

(Victoria Golding - Kent Wildlife Trust)

In the colder, shorter days it is easy to turn your back on the garden for the comfort of warmth inside. But some of the pleasures of life come from a snatch of nature, the thin song of the robin or frost on a spider's web.

Use your phone to take a picture that can become a seasonal screen saver to give you greater connection with the natural world

outside our door.

There is pleasure from routine, so remember the importance of regularly feeding birds, but also that they need clean feeders, tables and bird baths. When we encourage birds with the food we offer, the concentration of different populations can spread diseases between them but there are animal-friendly disinfectants that you can use to combat this. Even with rain, keep water containers filled, clean and ice-free. It is difficult if you have pigeons using the bird bath. They have particularly oily and dusty plumage, so the water needs changing on a daily basis. Keep a plank or pole in your pond to break any ice that can cover it, as that will exclude air and harm any animals within.

### Plant of the month

Aren't house plants great! So many are killed by overwatering, so learn what they need to maximise the pleasure they can give. I'm particularly fond of the Christmas cactus and have had a couple for several years that give a pop of colour just when we need it.

### Job of the month

Spend some time in 2022 getting to know moths. Our gardens provide habitat for these insects that are such an important part of our ecosystem. They have different needs during the four stages of their life cycles, so although it is fine to provide nectar for the adults, they also need food and shelter in the earlier stages of their lives. Start with day-flying moths as some are large and brightly coloured, making them easier to spot and identify. Kent is home to some rare moths.

Find out more at: [butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/conservation-projects/england/kents-magnificent-moths](https://butterfly-conservation.org/our-work/conservation-projects/england/kents-magnificent-moths)

Enjoy the start of the new year!

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## *Famous Upchurch People*

David Wood

Over the centuries many Upchurch residents have become well-known within the village, and a few have gained fame farther afield.

### The King's Carpenter

Hugh Herland became the first recorded Upchurch resident to gain widespread fame. Living in Upchurch from 1378 to 1391 he became chief carpenter to Richard II and designer of the hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall, the largest medieval timber roof in Northern Europe. Considered a masterpiece, this became his greatest achievement.

He also completed work at Rochester, Leeds and Winchester castles, the Tower of London, Canterbury Cathedral and the tomb of Edward III's wife, Philippa of Hainault, in Westminster Abbey.

Herland initially worked with his father William, also the king's carpenter, but on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1370 the king rewarded Hugh with 'pesage of wools' in Queenborough (which established him as a member of the merchant class) and also with a tenement in the City of London.

Herland's wife Joan also came from Upchurch but the couple eventually moved to Kingston in Surrey.

Herland died in 1405 but a stained glass window featuring him exists at Winchester College Chapel.

### The Crackerbarrel Actor

Actor, James Robertson Justice lived in Greylag, Ham Green during part of WW2

after getting wounded. A big man with a beard and a booming well-spoken voice, he was also highly-educated, with two doctorates.

Being interested in nature and a keen ornithologist, Justice soon settled and was often accompanied by naturalist and wildlife TV presenter, Sir Peter Scott as he ventured onto the saltings for bird watching. He drank in The Crown, where he was considered an extrovert and always had an audience. He periodically walked around the peninsula dressed in a kilt playing the bagpipes, bathed naked in the river with lady friends from London and openly bathed in a tin bath in his garden. The village children called him 'Crackerbarrel' because he appeared in media advertising said cheese.

However, he got into trouble with Sittingbourne Magistrate's Court for breaking blackout law. Village gossip said he was a German spy after a torch was spotted flicking on and off from the bedroom window of Greylag at night and Justice received a caution.

After Upchurch, he gained fame as an actor in the popular 'Doctor in' films. He also appeared in other films: Moby Dick, Scott of the Antarctic, The Guns of Navarone and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Justice taught Prince Charles falconry whilst living in Scotland becoming a personal friend of Prince Philip. He was also rector of Edinburgh University and stood as a Labour candidate for North Angus and Mairns in the 1950 General Election. A blue plaque bearing his name is attached to the front wall of Greylag at Ham Green in memory of him.

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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](mailto:diary@actionforum.co.uk)**

14th/15th Jan - Treasure Island panto, Oasthouse Theatre, (see p7)

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

17th Jan - Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls, Contact 01634 262214 **also 24th/31st**

18th Jan - Bredhurst Whist Club - 7.30pm Bredhurst Village Hall. Contact Chris (evenings) 07707 669915 **(also 25th)**

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](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway)

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

19th Jan - Wigmore Ladies - 2pm Howard Memorial Hall - 01634 388912

20th Jan - WI, 1.45-4pm, Rainham Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, Contact Lynne: 01634 23499

21st Jan - Upchurch Choral Society - 8pm at St Mary's, Upchurch. Contact [suerossiter@waitrose.com](mailto:suerossiter@waitrose.com) or 01634 234780 **(also 17th)**

21st/22nd Jan - Treasure Island panto, Oasthouse Theatre,

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

28th/29th Jan - Treasure Island panto, Oasthouse Theatre,

2nd Feb - Bredhurst Whist Club - 7.30pm Bredhurst Village Hall. Contact Chris (evenings) 07707 669915 **(also 8th, 15th, 22nd)**

4th Feb - Medway Organ and Keyboard Club 7pm Parkwood Community Hall, ME8 9PN Organist, Andrew Nix, concert of light, popular, classical music, undoubtedly including romance! £7 per person Refreshments and bar available - 07795 576294

7th Feb - Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls, Contact 01634 262214 **(also 14th, 21st, 28th)**

7th Feb - Green Drinks (environmental networking) Manor Farm 7.30pm, [therainhamecogroup@gmail.com](mailto:therainhamecogroup@gmail.com)

9th Feb - East Medway u3a at Smallholders Club Ring 07816 159668 or visit [www.u3asites.org.uk/east-medway](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/east-medway)

14th Feb - Upchurch Choral Society - 8pm at St Mary's, Upchurch. Contact [suerossiter@waitrose.com](mailto:suerossiter@waitrose.com) or 01634 234780 **(also 11th, 18th, 25th)**

15th Feb - Medway RSPB Local Group Talk 'Streaky and Proud - Larks, Pipits and Wagtails' by David Darrell-Lambert, 7.30pm, £4, Parkwood Community Centre [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway)

16th Feb - Wigmore Ladies - 2pm Howard Memorial Hall - 01634 388912

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

### **Riverside Country Park Event Dates:**

1-day Woodland Workshop, Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Winter Tree ID, Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

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

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### ***'Happy New Year to you all'***

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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](mailto:editor@actionforum.co.uk)

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