

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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Riverside 'English Festival' 2022



Come and join us on Saturday 16th April, 2022 down at Riverside Country Park. There will be much to see and do - bands, stalls, competitions, funfair, nature activities, children's entertainment. The list is endless!

(photo credit - Tony Peake)

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Editorial

I found it thought-provoking at this month's Green Drinks (1st Monday of the month at Manor Farm) to listen to a home energy consultant (aka 'Green Doctor') talk about the backdrop to the current energy crisis, the significant price rises expected from April 1st, and discuss the important things we could be doing to help ourselves (see more on page 4). The 'Green Doctors', part of Groundwork South, are a charity which offer free consultation calls (contact them on 0800 233 5255), advising on staying warm, saving money and using less energy.

I remember, as a child growing up in the sixties, living in a house which originally had a coke-fired hot-water system, supplemented by an immersion hot water cylinder with a strapped-on insulation jacket, and a coal fire in the lounge. There were no radiators, many blankets on the beds, bed socks and hot water bottles and, in winter, ice forming on the inside of the windows. A lot was done to keep the heat in the main living room, including a heavy door curtain and draft excluder, and we always wore jumpers inside the house unless it was summer.

Some of these older technologies are inexpensive ways of keeping the gas and electricity bills down but one of the key messages given by the consultant was to stay on the standard variable-rate energy tariff for the near term, rather than being tempted to lock into a new fixed-rate tariff, which could be much more expensive. They also recommended joining the Priority Services Register if you have particular issues, such as a disability, certain medical conditions, or had a recent close bereavement

to receive priority attention in times of emergency. For those with access to Facebook, the Green Doctor talk, (about 90 minutes), can be replayed from the Rainham Eco-hub page as a livestream recording.

It is also great to see the significant interest in KCC's 'Solar Together' scheme we featured in last month's edition, with over 8,000 homes across Kent and Medway registering interest before the closing date on March 15th. With all that interest in solar, roll-on the brighter and warmer days of spring and summer and hopefully a sunny one for the English Festival being held at Riverside Country Park on 16th April, and a reminder please - leave nothing there but your foot-prints.

Finally, look out for local 'Earth Day' events you can support over the following weekend (from the 22nd April), and if you care about air quality in Rainham, do check out Rainham Eco-Hub's anonymous online survey (page 4).

Letters to the Editor

Bredhurst, The Street, Yew Tree Cottages

Dear Editor,

I visited Bredhurst church yesterday and met with the local vicar and some of the volunteers working on the grounds in the church yard. I was making enquiries for research into my family history namely, 'The Brooks' family, who lived in Yew Tree Cottages, The Street, Bredhurst from around 1800's through to at least the mid-20th century.

I have seen the war grave for Frederick Brooks in the church yard, looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission... my wife's great uncle (and brother to Charles Albert Brooks - our direct relation).

From the 1901 census there appeared to be more Yew Tree Cottages than there are today and from a comparison of maps it looks like two of the original cottages may have been demolished and redeveloped utilising the full extent of the grounds available.

The volunteers at the church suggested I contact Action Forum for help me with my

ancestral research, both in terms of The Brooks family and/or The Yew Tree Cottages. Any help or advice is greatly appreciated.
Many thanks, Colin Greaves

Six Wastes of Easter

Dear Editor

In follow up to your brilliant 12 wastes of Christmas, it would be wonderful to see the six wastes of Easter!

As the council collect recycling from the kerbside every week, it's really easy to make sure we recycle as much as possible:

- Cardboard egg packaging – blue bag
- Plastic egg insert – white bag
- Foil wrapping (scrunched into a ball) – white bag
- Easter cards (no glitter) – blue bag
- Easter flowers – brown bin
- Scrapings/peelings/bones from an Easter meal – brown bin

And, if you are recycling cans or plastic bottles, please crush them (it stops them rolling around in the sorting process) and leave the caps on bottles, as they are small and the laser machinery find them difficult to see.

I hope these 'top tips' may encourage anyone who may be unsure how to recycle, that it's easy to do, and so much better for the planet

than putting waste in black sacks.

Wishing you and all at Action Forum a happy and peaceful Easter,
Julia H

Education Opportunities for Rainham

Dear Editor,

I noticed with interest that Baroness Barran and a local MP visited Medway UTC during the establishment's careers fair this March.

We have such a good range of educational opportunities within Rainham, but the UTC often appears overlooked. I have read many articles in Action Forum where people look back fondly on the memories, teachers and skills acquired with these more practical and technical opportunities.

My son successfully attended RMGS but, on looking at post-GCSE options, was really taken with what a technical college had to offer. He thrived in the mixed programme on offer (taking a BTech in Engineering), gained valuable work experience with local firms and went on to gain a 3 year BAE apprenticeship.

The careers fair had various companies attending and it just shows how important it is for our young people to be offered opportunities for future jobs markets, particularly now, with the huge shortage in engineering and construction skills.

Yours faithfully,
R Poynter

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Climate Conversations

Green Drinks Special

It is a fact that even though modern new-build houses come with greater insulation, there is still the need to focus on what more can be done to keep down spiralling fuel bills.

Many houses built in Rainham after WW2 will have been built without double glazing, had little or no loft/floor insulation and no cavity wall insulation (over 30% of heat loss is through walls) so understanding which order to address improvements in (if you have the funds) could be really important.

The Green Doctor talked about some basics, including the significant impacts on health if the home is not maintained between 18-21C (especially for older folks) and the sometimes fatal implications of living in sustained temperatures of less than 16C. There was also some great sharing from the audience of lower-cost hints and tips followed to eke out fuel budgets, the top 10 of which I have listed below. You may have heard some before but it's always worth repeating.

- Get a book from the library (online books available) on home energy conservation and become an expert in your own home.
- Change to low-energy light bulbs - the cost could be repaid within a year.
- Get draught excluders to keep cold air from coming in under the doors.
- Fit a curtain to the main front door.
- When cooking with saucepans, keep the lid on as it uses 90% less fuel.
- Get an insulation jacket for the hot water tank (if you have one).
- Get a slow cooker and batch cook your

- meals – far less energy used comparatively.
- Check out benefits or grants you might be entitled to and ensure you apply for them.
- Check out your home's Energy Performance Certificate rating (EPC) and consider the guidance contained on how to make your home more energy-efficient.
- Do fit a carbon monoxide detector/alarm close to your boiler, or anywhere you burn things. Carbon monoxide is a silent killer with no smell.

Air Quality in Rainham – A survey of community views

Since we included details of the ability to register for air quality alerts at www.kentair.org.uk, Rainham has had two further moderate air quality days, with the subsequent health warnings for those vulnerable with heart and lung conditions or suffering with asthma.

Researchers suggest that over a quarter of all new asthma cases in children are as a result of poor air quality so Rainham Eco-hub has prioritised **air quality** as its key theme for 2022. Please help by completing their anonymous survey on how air quality affects your household at www.menti.com survey code **4361 3559** and we will report on the findings in our May edition. Their aim is to get 2,000 responses, and please note, the survey code will only be valid until the 7th April 2022.

April Monthly Eco Challenge

'Get a stainless steel water bottle so you are not tempted to buy plastic bottle drinks when out and about'


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Community

Rainham Ladies Choir

We begin learning a new repertoire this month to take us through 2022 and 2023. With current worldly situations as they are it is more important than ever to feel part of something special. The phrase "SING MORE, SING TOGETHER" sums up what our choir does.

So, if you can sing and want to learn an interesting and varied selection of songs, come along and join us. We'd be delighted to welcome you to our friendly, enthusiastic choir. As always, we remain Covid aware.

We meet each Monday from 7.30p.m. at Rainham School for Girls (RSG), Derwent Way, Rainham ME8 0BX.

Phone: 01634 262214 or 01634 370797

Email: rlchoir@outlook.com

Facebook: rainhamladies

****STOP PRESS****

Medway Council have been given government funding to improve air quality in Medway and they plan to launch an anti-idling campaign in Rainham to encourage motorists to switch off their engines when they are not moving.

Watch this space!

Overcome, Achieve, Prosper

Join us every Tuesday from 12-2pm at St Margaret's Church for some 'active and well-being sessions'.

Run by The Body Coaches, we welcome anyone wanting to come along to socialize, whilst experiencing some light exercise and health education. Especially perfect for those 50+.

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Earth Day

As we approach April, you might start to think of family and the personal pledges you can make in the period prior to Earth Day on Friday 22nd April.

With greater focus on the sustainability of our planet, Earth Day is internationally celebrated by an estimated one billion people in nearly 200 countries, to encourage us to protect the planet from things such as pollution and deforestation and, for us in Rainham, protection of our green spaces. By taking part in activities, like picking up litter and planting trees, we're making our world a happier, healthier place to live.

Look out for Earth Day activities in our local schools and Rainham's 'Big Spring Clean' litter pick during April, which many of our local schools are supporting.

Simply take a picture of the litter you collect locally and post it on the Rainham Litter Heroes Facebook page.

Do let us know what you got up to celebrate Earth Day.

St Margaret's CofE 'Walk for the Earth'

Join us at 10am on Saturday 23rd April.

We have two starting points:

- bottom of Edwin Road, walking towards St Margaret's Church, Rainham
- under the Medway sign at the top of Seymour Road on the the A2, again walking towards St Margaret's Church, Rainham

The walk is open to all ages and we welcome you to bring your own poster/banner/placard with your own individual message on.

Both walks will meet at the church where we will be open for light refreshments.

Come and join us!

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An 'Hour Record' Challenge

Rob Crockett is a young Rainham resident and serving police officer. An active 26 yr old, Rob's done a number of challenges and fundraising events but this next one is rather different, and particularly special.

At midday on Wed 13th April, at the Olympic Park Velodrome, Rob will take up the challenge to raise money for **Parkinson's UK**. This is a well-known challenge apparently! In a nutshell, Rob has 60 mins to see how many laps he can complete, following the black line around the track. Too fast and he'll burn out before the hour, too slow and he will lose valuable time. He can't stop and start and there's no time for fluids - it is total emersion in the task before him.

A lot has already been sacrificed to cover the hire of the velodrome, a specialist indoor bike and training sessions in London, not to mention much time and energy.

So why cycling? Why this challenge? Why Parkinson's UK? Why now?

Rob played rugby through St Margaret's and Howard school but multiple head injuries resulted in a warning to find an alternate sport. He became hooked on indoor cycling and reading many cycling autobiographies showed this 'Hour Record' as a highlight for many of his heroes.

As for the charity, Rob watched his grandad suffer with the effects of Parkinson before dying of it 5 yrs later.

As a little boy it affected him deeply to see this grandad who played football with them reduced to requiring support to do anything. Rob knows how debilitating the disease is and wants as much funding available as possible for further research. The charity is grateful for his support.

But there's another, deeper reason. Wearing the leather jacket that belonged to his grandad, Rob told me how he has struggled to cope with losing a beloved grandad this way, at such a pivotal time in his life. His grandad never got to see him through high school or become a mechanic and then a Medway police officer. This challenge feels like a chance to achieve something his grandad would be proud of, and an opportunity for closure on the mental anguish that has nagged away at Rob. Surely that resonates with many of us?

His JustGiving page online is open for anyone who feels able to contribute, and will remain open until Oct. But the velodrome viewing gallery is also open for free public access to anyone who fancies a trip out that day! Rainham Station to Stratford International, with a short 5 min walk to the velodrome, and you too can join Rob's Rainham family and friends in cheering him on!

It's the Easter holidays - why not take the kids somewhere different, and make a difference?

www.justgiving.com/Robert-Crockett

We'll keep you posted on how he does.

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Nature Notes (Joe Ennis)

SNIFE NATURE NOTES

In 1956 work began on turning flooded sand and gravel pits near Sevenoaks, into a nature reserve that subsequently became the first of its kind in Britain. The work was inspired by two (father and son) retired GPs. Sapling trees of alder, willow, birch and oaks were set and it is now difficult to believe that almost every tree growing on the reserve was either planted or has descended from one that was. Managed by Kent Wildlife Trust, the reserve is on the north side of the A25 between Bat & Ball and Riverhead and has year-round interest. The visitor parking charge at Sevenoaks is £2.50 but there is wheelchair and buggy access to all five lakes and most of the nature trails as a whole and in the 'Nature and Well-Being Centre' there is a café with views over the West Lake.

In Spring, the main interest of the Reserve falls on the small birds (such as warblers) that come to this country to breed in our woods alongside residents such as robins and wrens that also breed there. Spring visitors such as sand martins begin to arrive over the lakes at the reserve as early as March, followed in April by swallows and house martins and in May by swifts. They are all attracted to the lakes by the insects flying just above the surface of the water. Most of these hirundines feed there for a while before moving further into the country. The songs of chiff chaffs and blackcaps can also be heard throughout the woods of the reserve from early spring onwards.

In Summer, one can usually hear the characteristic song of the reed warbler in the forest of Norfolk reeds among which the bird nests. Great-crested grebes can be spotted on the biggest lakes, either with a couple of stripy youngsters in tow or being carried on a parent's back. At the Carter Hide, if one sits patiently, one may be lucky enough to see or hear a kingfisher. On my last visit I was not lucky, but did watch the comings and goings of young herons at two nests in trees, on an island of nearby Snipe Bog Lake. The youngsters had squirted white excretions over

the side of their nests, making them very noticeable.

Peacock, brimstone, speckled wood and other butterflies are present on the reserve in Summer; twayblade, common spotted orchid and bee orchid can be found in bloom and dragonflies and damselflies skim over the lakes.

In the autumn fungi come into their own. Fly agaric with their crimson caps, can be seen among the silver birch trees, spectacular displays of scarlet elf caps may be found on moss-covered, fallen willow trees and Jew's ear fungi are commonly found on branches of old elder trees. The Sevenoaks reserve seems to be popular with children at all times of the year as a place to let off steam but in the autumn it is a fantastic place to collect leaves, nuts, twigs and other specimens of natural history.

Winter is the best month to view, from the café, various small birds on a feeding station, such as blue, great, coal and long-tailed tits, greenfinch, goldfinch and chaffinch and great-spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and siskin.

From the Tyler Hide overlooking the East Lake, I usually saw, on any winter visit, lapwing and ducks such as gadwall, shoveler, teal and widgeon congregating on some low-lying islands. The birds would have left their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere and eastern Europe for the less cold weather of this country. Less noticeable, might have been a group of snipe which are stockily-built waders with boldly-striped plumage and very long bills. In due course, should any be there, they would probably have departed at the end of winter to breed on the moors of Northern England. Smaller birds that I sometimes spotted were tree creepers looking for insects or grubs in the cracks and crevices of oak trees. If one kept still and quiet the birds could be quite tame. By contrast, any siskins disturbed

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feeding on the seeds of alder or birch trees would take fright and flight quite readily. The reserve's pamphlet describes it as a peaceful place and I would not disagree with that, be it spring, summer, autumn or winter.

April in the Wilder Garden

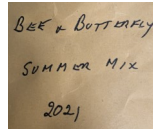
(Victoria Golding)

This is such an exciting time of year. We have frogspawn in the pond, the first of the seeds planted last month in the greenhouse are starting to show unbelievably small seed leaves and we have blackbirds in the garden, throwing compost about and enjoying the invertebrates they are finding.

But we spend our lives looking ahead, and the garden is no exception.

Plant of the month

Now is the time to bring out a pair of big flowerpots or planters to put either side of your front (or back) door. Fill with peat-free compost and choose a plant for immediate and lasting impact like the perennial wallflower, "Bowles Mauve". Scatter with a wildflower mix. If your door is in shade, there are mixes for woodland flowers. In a very short space of time you will see the seedlings emerge, soon bringing bright colours and a mix of flower shapes that will be ideal for pollinators.



If you have had daffodils in pots, transfer them to the back of a border, water and put compost round them so they can feed the bulb for next year and the leaves can die down naturally.

Clean the pots and store ready for the next pop of impact or replant as a beautiful Easter gift. So much better than chocolate. (I can't believe that I just said that!)

I was horrified to see some lovely pots, complete with dead plants, going into "recycling" the other week, when someone else would have loved to have them. I felt very ashamed of myself when I realised that my radishes had come from Senegal. I'm buying a packet of seeds this weekend and hope to have a succession over the year. I really can't justify the air miles on such a simple salad crop:

Pineapple, yes. Radish, no.

We can each keep making the changes to make a difference.

Job of the month

Keep planting to have variety for the late summer. Take inspiration from other people's gardens. We have a programme of Open Gardens, both very beautiful and wildlife-friendly. Book at:

www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens

Our team will be there to give advice.

Happy Gardening,
Victoria

Kent Wildlife Trust, Voluntary Advisor



Kent Wildlife Trust Zoom Workshops

Our Zoom workshops have been so popular that we are repeating some of them, so if you missed out the first time, please try again at: www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens

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Having appreciated receiving Action Forum fairly regularly ever since its first appearance, I was very happy to help distribute it when I retired.

It had pages of useful information about local services and tradesmen, and gave dates of fund-raising events, local organised walks, concerts and similar entertainments.

There were regular Nature Notes, and often extracts from Gillingham Borough Council Minutes, where these related to this area.

There might be a feature about some local personality or place. And there were ALWAYS appeals for volunteers to help run youth groups, join clubs and so on.

But there are several things a new distributor rapidly has to learn about their 'round':

- Last House

Which is the last house in a road? Some semi-detached houses are in different roads, or may be set diagonally across the corner of two different streets.

- Gates

How do they open? Does one lift a latch, a hook or a loop of string? Unbolt it? Push hard?

Check before entering that there isn't a dog eager to repel strangers or, alternatively, one wanting to greet you with its muddy paws upraised!

Always remember to close the gate on your way out.

- Letter boxes

Where are they? Round the side of the porch? On a post largely hidden by a bush?

Perhaps just the space left by omitting a brick from the boundary wall?

Is a box at the usual waist height, or do you have almost to kneel down to reach it?

Occasionally one needs to be at least 6'6"

to push AF through.

Bearing in mind that copies must be put all the way through the letter box, some flaps can be

vicious and want to hold on to your finger (gloves can be a wise precaution) and sometimes there can

be a dog waiting below ready to catch any post...

- Hazards

Beware of the owner's hanging baskets, especially if just watered!

Dodge the prickly shrubs and, after rain, the ankle height grass next to the path.

I hope all that hasn't put you off!

Delivering Action Forum offers plenty of exercise and fresh air and, perhaps more importantly, may be a source of news and help to many of its recipients, especially those without Smartphones or access to the Internet.

It has always maintained a positive outlook and is still often greeted with obvious pleasure when handed over in person to a householder who is washing a car or tending their front garden.

(to be continued...)



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Dates for the Diary

Request an entry in the diary (free of charge) contact: diary@actionforum.co.uk

1st April - Upchurch Choral Society - 8pm at St Mary's, Upchurch. Contact suerossiter@waitrose.com or 01634 234780 (also 8/22/29)

1st April - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, AM, 01634 364309 (also 8/22/29)

BRATS - for anyone interested in Radio Communication www.brats-qth.org

4th April - Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls, Contact 01634 262214 (also 11/25)

4th April - Green Drinks (environmental networking) Manor Farm 7.30pm, therainhamecohub@gmail.com

4th April - Rainham Community Choir, 7pm, Rainham Oast Community Centre (also 11/25)

5th April - Rotary Club of Gillingham, Upchurch Golf Club, 1pm, keithjackson23@hotmail.co.uk or 01634 852712, new members always welcome (also 12/19/26)

5th April - Sunbeams toddler group, 1.45pm, All Saints Church, Hempstead, Contact sjcross13@outlook.com

5th April - Bredhurst Whist Club, 7.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall. Contact Chris (eve) 07707 669915 (also 12/19/26)

5th April - Medway Concert Brass, Hempstead, Contact manager@medwayconcertbrass.uk or 07517 350158 (also 12/19/26)

5th/6th April - Medway Towns Bands, Hempstead Infant School, mail@medwaytownsbands.uk or 01474 745318 (also 12/13/19/20/26/27)

6th April - Upchurch Horticultural Society - 7.15pm, 07703 339290 or upchurchhortsoc@gmail.com

7th April - Crafty Friends 6.30pm, Rainham Oast Community Centre, 01634 234235 or wilsons2@aol.com (also 14/21/28)

8th April - 'A Universe from Scratch', 7.45pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, MidKent Astronomical Society, £3, Contact: membersec@midkentastro.org

11th April - Medway Organ and Keyboard Club 50th Anniversary Concerts, 7pm/7.30pm start, Parkwood Community Centre, £7, phil.burt@ntlworld.com

12th April - Kent Classic & Sports Car Club, Three Mariners, Lower Rainham, 01634 362612

13th April - free guided walk of Conyer Creek, 9.30am www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway

13th April - East Medway u3a at Smallholders Club, ring 07816 159668 or visit www.u3asites.org.uk/east-medway

13th April - Rainham Chess Club - 7.30pm, Rainham Oast Community Centre, robspringett@yahoo.co.uk or 07890 938544 (also 27th)

20th April - Wigmore Ladies - 2pm Howard Memorial Hall - 01634 388912

20th April - Rainham Flower Club, Bredhurst Village Hall, 7pm, contact 01634 307855/01795843180

21st April - Rainham WI, 1.45pm (open from 1), Cricket Club, Berengrave Lane, ME8 7NA, small fee, Contact Lynne: 01634 234997

21st April - Bredhurst Garden Club 'Plants and Crime' bring and buy product sale, 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, contact 07791 781910

22nd April - Medway Geographical Society on 'The Faroe Islands', 2pm Twydall Church Hall, 01634 572139 or lorna_bailey576@hotmail.com

23rd April - Earth Day Walk , 10am, organised by St Margaret's Church, Rainham

24th April - Rainham Community Litter Pick - collect rubbish near you, take a photo and post on the Rainham Litter Heroes Facebook Page.

27th April - Rainham Historical Society talk, Dean Caston on 'R.A.T.S', 7.30pm, Millenium Centre, 01634 389919

27th April - Medway Woodturners, Bredhurst Village Hall, 7pm, howardoverton123@btinternet.com or 01634 231479

28th April - Rainham & District Dollhouse & Miniaturist Group, 7.30pm, Howard Memorial Hall,

Check out the www.thenet.uk.net/events for up-to-the-minute events.

Word on the Streets

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If you are a volunteer distributor we would enjoy hearing about your experiences: editor@actionforum.co.uk

Urgent

Action Forum needs volunteer help at it's distribution hub to ensure copies get to our volunteer distribution team on time.

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

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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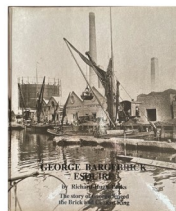
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