

# ACTION FORUM

JULY  
2022

NUMBER 580

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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## ***Editorial***

My goodness, I feel like I have blinked and it is almost the end of the school year.

June has rushed by and in the midst of it we have celebrated Her Royal Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and worked through a random mix of beautiful sunshine, strong winds, a heatwave and torrential rainstorms!

Hundreds of our youngsters have spent hours of their time studying and revising for exams which are now almost finished. After such a difficult few years of school life, I hope those students can now relax a little. They have done all they can and, no matter the results, they will have many precious memories to carry forward onto the next stage of their life journeys.

After pre-reading the article on p4, I now find myself bus-spotting - a new hobby I must admit. When you find yourself trying to take a photo of bus registration plates whilst stationary at traffic lights you know a corner has been turned! But I have also loved reading about the various Eco work being done by our future 'movers and shakers', alongside the sterling work of Rainham Eco-hub and the growing band of residents who see they truly can make a difference, little by little. Whether that be turning off gadgets to attend an evening of beautiful music, wander around inspirational local gardens or simply join others for a cuppa (p5), we are all able to do just a bit to make our busy lives more sustainable and more joyful, appreciating each other and what we all contribute within our streets and communities.

Enjoy reading this month's Action Forum. We look forward to hearing from some of you as we find out all you are up to in July.

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

### **Coronation Day Memories**

Dear Editor,

I was pleasantly surprised to see the Action Forum front cover (June 2022) photograph of the Herbert Road Coronation Day Street celebration. I was born in 40 Herbert Road in 1945. My father and stepmother purchased a small black and white television set so that we could watch the live broadcast of the coronation in 1953. I have no idea how they were able to afford such a luxury at the time. I have a dim recollection of a street party in Herbert Road around that time. I got told off, as I managed to consume a large amount of trifle that did not stay down for very long! There was another coronation celebration and this took place in the Rainham Recreation Ground beside the railway line. The children present enjoyed a time of entertainment and a tea party. We went home with the specially decorated porcelain mug and tea plate that we had used that day. We were also presented with a newly minted (and very shiny) shilling coin displaying the Queen's head. I am not sure if it was dated 1952 or 1953, perhaps another reader will be able to remember more clearly.

Rev. Graham M Trice

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ..."  
[Romans 1:16]

### **Eco Schools**

Dear Editor,

I was interested in reading about local Eco-schools in the June edition. However, how about walking children to school instead of taking the car?

We are in an area where the parents park where they like ("it's only for a few moments"), sit with engines running for up to 30mins., have radios blaring out, and leave litter (cigarette ends, sweet wrappers, coffee cups). If parents have got time to get a "nearby parking spot" they must have time to walk.

Incidentally, the school say it is nothing to do with them, and the police say they do not have the personnel to deal with it. It is chaos on

dustbin collection day and we had an incident where an emergency ambulance had trouble getting through because of the way people had parked.

Anon

### Eco-Schools continued

Dear Editor,  
I have enjoyed reading about the work going on at the different schools to provide children with opportunities to engage with issues of sustainability and various projects. I wonder how the different schools we read about in Action Forum approach school trips?

My wife works at a local attraction, regularly used by school groups. There is still an ongoing policy for the majority of schools whereby lunch is brought in a disposable bag. All water bottles, cutlery, foil, food and paper bags are thrown into a black sack at the end of lunch. The idea behind this is so the children are not encumbered with the bags but at what cost to the environment? The link between theory and action is immediately lost and we reinforce that sustainability doesn't matter on days when it is inconvenient.

We have gained some new kitchenware as a consequence (!) but with such good practices going on within each school, could these not also be extended to school trip days?

Yours,  
Russell Poynter

### Maidstone Road Practice Patient-Participation Group

Dear Editor,  
We have recently met to discuss next steps for our practice. They may be of interest to people in the area:

The Practice is now in a major 'catch up' programme following the Covid pandemic. Those who are diabetic or have respiratory issues, dementia and mental health will be contacted by the surgery to make an appointment.

This will also include general health checks for cardio, weight, diabetic and cholesterol.

Regarding kidney tests, patients are now receiving "MINUTEFUL" Kidney Test Kits via Royal Mail.

If patients do not have a smartphone or iPad, then they should contact the surgery to receive a sample bottle and one of the nurses will send it off.

Covid 19 - Vulnerable patients and those over 75 years will be contacted by NHS to make an appointment for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Booster (4<sup>th</sup> Jab) 6 months after the date of their last (1<sup>st</sup> Booster).

**If any patient would like to join the Participation Group, then please contact Ray Kemsley – email:**

**[raykemsley@btinternet.com](mailto:raykemsley@btinternet.com)**

**The group meets 4 times per year**

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## Climate Conversations

### 'It's Smokin!!'

Well, that's what my wife and I both thought as we travelled behind a double decker bus heading out of Rainham. Sometimes a really smoky vehicle just stands out from all the others.

Given that Rainham High Street is part of an Air Quality Management Area (designated in Medway Council's Air Quality Management Plan 2015) and traffic through the town is noted as the primary contributor to poor air quality, I took time to find out how to report the vehicle (GN04 UDU in case you see it smoking too!).

I initially reported the vehicle through Arriva's own online customer complaints. Next, I wrote to our local councillor, who quickly passed my concern to the Medway Council person responsible for public transport relationships.

This vehicle has done more than 1 million kilometres over its 18-year life; more than three times the distance to the moon but an investigation of the bus showed it had passed its MOT and Arriva stress it is safe and legal to be on the road.

Unfortunately, the bus in question is a Euro III emissions standard - sixteen times more polluting re particle pollution (black smoke) and ten times more polluting in terms of nitrogen dioxide emissions than the latest Euro VI buses. Over half of the buses in the Arriva fleet, which travel through Rainham, are these Euro III buses.

The Medway Bus Improvement Plan (2021-

2026) highlights a plan to renovate the fleet over the said timeframe but in the meantime, I seemed to be getting nowhere regarding either my concerns about this particular bus and its poor emissions or more specific vehicle replacement dates as we move towards 2026.

Finally, I have discovered that you can report a smoky bus or lorry to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

To do so, go to:

[www.gov.uk/report-smoky-vehicle](http://www.gov.uk/report-smoky-vehicle).

You need to record the registration, route number, where you saw it, the time you saw it, and the company name.

Shockingly, a recent Rainham Eco-hub survey of bus traffic through the High Street, during the busiest school-travel times, measured that approximately 40% of buses travelling through Rainham (provided by both Arriva and ASD) are the older Euro III category. Removing just one dirty vehicle at a time will vastly improve the air our children breathe as they walk and cycle to and from school.

Take a look at Eco-hub's new 'Rainham Clever Breathers' Facebook page for all things air quality in Rainham.



### July Monthly Eco Challenge

*'Can you go a whole week without any ready meals or takeaways?'*

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## ***Community***

### **Wigmore Open Gardens Weekend 2nd and 3rd July, 2022**

Fifteen gardens will be opening this year, over the weekend.

Organised by St Matthew's church, there are gardens of all types and sizes to visit over the two days; three of which have never opened before.

Admission is by programme, which costs £6 (or £1 per garden if people only want to visit a few).

Refreshments & ploughman's lunches will be available, as well as plants and other items for sale. Everyone is welcome to enjoy a great 'value for money' weekend.

Details of gardens are available:

[www.facebook.com/stmattswigmore](http://www.facebook.com/stmattswigmore)

or

[www.achurchnearyou.com/church/9899/news/77060/wigmore-open-gardens-weekend](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/9899/news/77060/wigmore-open-gardens-weekend)

Programmes can be ordered in advance from me by email: [paul@bellerby.me](mailto:paul@bellerby.me) or by phone: 01634 387328 (please leave a message).

### **July 16th - Sunrise to Sunset Walk**

Paul Dennington was diagnosed with Prostate cancer last year. On 16th he is walking a 47.5 mile loop around Hempstead and Wigmore - 1 mile for each thousand men diagnosed with this cancer each year. It should roughly take 960 minutes - 1 min for every man that dies each month.

Watch out for him on the day to help spur him on and support him financially using this QR code.



See more in a future edition.

### **The Old Barn Orchestra Summer Concert 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2022**

St Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore

Starting at 7.30pm, the programme has the Jubilee Overture by Weber, which features our National Anthem, four Slavonic Dances by Dvorak, a Beethoven overture ("Coriolan") and Schubert's Unfinished Symphony.

(The orchestra performs in both Medway and Maidstone)

Tickets are available on 01634 376979 or 07808 068881.

### **A Place of Welcome in Wigmore**

The Parish of South Gillingham has opened a 'Place of Welcome' at St. Matthew's Church, Drewery Drive, Wigmore.

'Places of Welcome' are drop-in centres where anyone can come for a cup of tea or coffee and some company.

There is no charge, and in addition to the free refreshments, they offer hospitality and friendship as well as being able to provide local information.

Although situated in a church they are open to people of all faiths and no faith and regardless of where they live; in fact anyone and everyone.

Our Place of Welcome is open every Thursday morning between 10.00 a.m. and 12.00 noon. St. Matthew's Church is situated in Drewery Drive, Wigmore, Gillingham, ME8 0PD.

If anyone would like more information they can ring Geoff Hufton on 01634 234712. Or simply turn up. As the name indicates, they will be most welcome.

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## Rainham Eco-Schools

This month we feature another local Eco-School.

### Hempstead Juniors:

Our Eco School's initiative has been running for ten years and we have been lucky to have achieved so much with such a supportive headteacher and staff members.

Every year, the children apply to be an Eco Committee member either by letter or from a speech to their class peers presenting the actions that make them a valuable class representative. Meetings are held 6 times a year. Children take minutes and future actions are voted upon from ideas and objectives in the action plan.

Biggest achievements:

- Annual Easter litter pick at our local park
- Every class has their own litter picker, collection bucket and food waste caddy
- Organic waste collection from class caddies, staff areas and school kitchen
- Pond to increase biodiversity and used to link to the curriculum
- Heritage apple tree planting
- 75 trees to be planted
- Successful Earth Day 2021 with every child planting a seed and litter picking
- All children making a COP26 pledge to be displayed on a tree
- Staff earning Eco Ambassador badges for 3 pledges
- KM Green Schools Nature Conservation Finalist
- Gardening Club – own allotment, herb

- garden, bug hotel, bird feeding and recording, wildlife area, bulb planting
- Pride in Medway Award - Community Service Finalist
- Kent Wildlife Trust 'Wild About Gardens' Bronze Award

Next projects include:

Planting a native Spindle Tree grove, growing potatoes, planting fruit trees, seed bombing for a wildflower meadow, harvesting rainwater for watering plants and for animals to drink, being a hub for refilling, recycling and reusing.

Children naturally want to protect living things, whether it is a plant or an animal and, being a school that actively encourages this, supports them in their emotional development.

Socially, they are aware of the impacts their actions have locally and nationally therefore becoming responsible global citizens also. Throughout the year, our meetings grow with more eager Eco warriors and increasing green ideas bouncing off the walls! It has been fantastic to see former pupils carrying on with their environmentally-friendly Actions, with many joining us on our annual litter pick for Earth Day demonstrating the positive impact this initiative can have on the next generation.

A huge thank you to Kerry Briffit for all her work compiling these articles.

**We would love to hear from any other schools who would like to share what they are doing - get in touch.**

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## *Nature Notes* (Joe Ennis)

### DUNGENESS

Dungeness, between Folkestone and Hastings, forms the largest shingle formation of its kind in Europe. Over six hundred species of plants survive on the shingle - a third of all the plants found in Britain. For this, and other reasons, Dungeness has been designated a National Nature Reserve. This may surprise some of those who visit the most popular part of the reserve, the part that juts out into the English Channel known as the Dungeness Estate. Visitors cannot have failed to notice that the Estate is home to two nuclear power stations, from which emanate two lines of pylons, two light houses and a number of wooden cottages belonging to fishermen and weekenders and served by strings of electricity cables strung between poles.

Following his first visit to Dungeness, Rob Hume, the one-time editor of RSPB magazine "Birds," wrote that he was surprised, almost shocked, by the shambolic state of the place. He referred to ramshackle shacks, rusting oil tanks and containers used as sheds by the owners of fishing boats.

On the other hand, the late Derek Jarman, one-time painter, theatre designer and filmmaker, who created a famous garden around his wooden cottage at Dungeness, considered the place to be "magical". He was fairly relaxed about the untidiness (as I am); he considered that Dungeness had an "otherworldly" atmosphere. He wrote that it was unlike any other place he had ever been to and that the light at Dungeness was extraordinary.

Jarman considered that Dungeness was at its best in the golden light of summer so it was, therefore, on a sunny day in a June, that I made a visit to the Estate.

I had intended to keep an eye open for certain characteristic flowering plants of the shingle: sea kale, gorse, sea pea, viper's bugloss, red valerian and wood sage. Sea kale, a member of the cabbage family, is one of the largest and most striking of all maritime plants and, in the few places where it occurs in quantity, as at Dungeness, it dominates the foreshore. With domed sprays of white flowers and fleshy, blue-green leaves, its extremely long roots can reach the fresh water deep under the shingle. In the past, the new shoots of the plant were eaten as a delicacy but, these days, conservation bodies actively seek to protect what is a relatively rare plant. At Dungeness, it can be seen from the wooden walkway, across the shingle near the Britannia Inn.

The flowers of gorse bushes splash Dungeness with a rich, golden-yellow colour from January onwards and provide nectar for bees emerging from hibernation. Jarman claimed that, on a hot day, the honeyed smell of the gorse could be almost too strong. The botanist, Richard Mabey, in his "Flora Britannica", wrote that gorse is one of the most sensual of plants, its flowers smelling of coconut and vanilla. I accept that the scent of the gorse is fragrant but cannot recognise the smell of coconut or vanilla. I either have a poor sense of smell or a lack of imagination! The seed pods of the gorse can often be heard cracking open on a hot, summer's day. Branches of gorse were used in the past, in bread ovens, where they burned with a fierce heat.

The sea pea forms dense mats on some shingle beaches and was once fed to cattle. Bunches of the deep purple flowers eventually fade to blue and are succeeded by pods containing large seeds. It grows on the shingle at Dungeness near to the new lighthouse.

Viper's Bugloss prefers dry soils and grows extensively among the wooden cottages on the Estate. It has blue and purple flowers with

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long red stamens and the fruit resembles an adder's head. Drifts of the plant can put on a spectacular display of colour and bees have a passion for the nectar of the flower.

Red Valerian, also seen growing on the bank of Chatham Hill, brings a splash of colour to the verges on the Estate, ranging from deep red through to white. The plant's habit of nodding happily in the wind, plus its fondness for maritime areas, probably explains one of its local names of "drunken sailor".

Also found on the verges is Wood Sage, a low growing perennial of the mint family. Its green-yellow flowers are favourite source of nectar for bees.

Naturally, there is more to Dungeness than flowers and bees. There are two pub restaurants, a fresh fish shop, an RNLI lifeboat station, one of the best miniature railways in the country and an old light house allowing views from Beachy Head to South Foreland. Visitors should overlook its 'shambolic' state .

## *July in the Nature-Friendly Garden*

(Victoria Golding)

Following on from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee **Queen's Green Canopy** initiative, we must think carefully about the trees we want to plant and where we plant them.

We think our own gardens are the safest place to plant, but as we move on, we should all think of the needs of those who will live in our property one day. Will the tree we plant today be in the right place if someone wants to extend our house, or will it have roots that may cause foundation problems or fall on the house in a storm? These factors will mean that a new person might take action to remove our tree before it reaches maturity.

Perhaps establishing a mixed hedge of native

shrubs and trees would be more beneficial in the long term. Simple native plants will make a boundary that is impervious to people, but give access to wildlife.

I am going to plant alder buckthorn in my hedge as that may encourage brimstone butterflies to our area. I have also long wished for a crab apple, so those will be our tree contributions this year, which we will plant in autumn.

Our hedge is encouraging caterpillars, this year especially the Spindle Ermine Moth. It did strip the flower and foliage, but the caterpillars are a favourite food for blue tit chicks. Now that season is over the new foliage is starting to grow again and the tree has fulfilled its function in the food chain.

### Plant of the month

This time of the year is about keeping more pollinator-friendly plants in the garden.

Visiting an open garden to get more ideas of what is blooming now is a great thing to do. Choose those plants that the bees are favouring.

Our favourite, salvia, comes in many forms and colours, with the advantage that you can take cuttings to increase your stock for next year. Plant Michaelmas daisies for later in the year.

### Job of the month

Start collecting seed as it ripens to help next year's garden to be even fuller of flowers and interest.

Find out more about planting jubilee trees:

[www.queensgreencanopy.org](http://www.queensgreencanopy.org)

Happy Gardening!

Victoria

Kent Wildlife Trust, Voluntary Advisor



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## Lidsing

(by AJ)

Seen on the front cover of this edition, Lidsing is a hamlet of 13 houses adjacent to Hempstead, Lordswood and Bredhurst dating back nearly 1000 years and only accessed by rural country roads.

A massive development, called Lidsing Garden Community, has been proposed comprising 127-hectares of, predominantly, agricultural land which lies within the jurisdiction of Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) at its furthest northern boundary with Medway Council. The main access road to the proposed development is a new spur road to Junction 4 of the M2, to be built on farmland in Bredhurst which is in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This spur road would need to be elevated significantly, causing even greater impact on the AONB with light and noise pollution.

Council tax will go to MBC, but all services and facilities will be provided by Medway Council, who strongly oppose the scheme.

The first public consultation was held in Dec 2020. 1700 objections were made to MBC specifically regarding the Lidsing Garden Development.

In its formal response to MBC, Medway Council strongly objected to the proposals due to impacts on transport, the environment, sustainability, green and social infrastructure, risk of settlement coalescence, landscape impact and harm to Purple Hill SSSI and the Kent Downs AONB.

In October 2021, despite the 1700 objections, MBC Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee (SPIC) voted to proceed with the draft Local Plan and referred it to a Full Council Meeting. They approved the Local Plan with 26-23 votes.

The second public consultation ran for 6 weeks until 12th December 2021. There were 2260 submissions with a large majority of approximately 1000 objections relating to Lidsing Garden Community. The remaining objections were split between other proposed sites within the plan.

In March 2022, despite being presented with a 3500-signature petition urging MBC to remove Lidsing from the plan, the SPIC voted to submit their draft Local Plan to an independent Government Inspector who will assess the plan for 'soundness' and 'deliverability' at an Examination in Public, probably to be held in Autumn 22.

This development will affect **everyone** in the Action Forum delivery area, with its impact on services and traffic levels.

The 'Against Lidsing Garden Development' team are now fundraising for £26,000. This money will allow them to hire experts to continue their fight! Grave flaws in the Local Plan have been noted but it now needs professional legal representation.

Our area has seen huge development over the last ten years but this is extreme. There is a Go Fund Me page setup to help reach the target.

Every little helps so please donate and share the page <https://gofund.me/ffc2dc4c>

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1st July - Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, AM, 01634 364309 (also 8/15/22/29)

1st July - Medway Model Club, all ages, Holy Trinity, Twydall, 7-10pm, contact [kimmmary18@hotmail.com](mailto:kimmmary18@hotmail.com)

2nd July - Wigmore Open Gardens - see p.5 for details

2nd July - Upchurch Horticultural Society Early Summer Show, 2pm, rear of 97 Chaffes Lane, Upchurch

2nd July - Old Barn Orchestra, 7.30pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Wigmore - 376979/07808 068881

3rd July - Wigmore Open Gardens - see p.5 for details

3rd July - Afternoon Tea at St Michael and All Angels Church, Hartlip - 3-5pm (every first Sunday until Sept)

4th July - Crafty Friends 6.30pm, Rainham Oast Community Centre, [wilsons2@aol.com](mailto:wilsons2@aol.com) (also 11/18/25)

4th July - Green Drinks (environmental networking) Manor Farm 7.30pm, [therainhamecohub@gmail.com](mailto:therainhamecohub@gmail.com)

5th July - Oast House Community Choir, 10-11.30am, Rainham Oast Community Centre (also 12/19/26) £5, Bob Carling on 07800 522724

5th July - Knit and Natter 12-2pm, Rainham Mark Social Club, ME8 6YX, bring your craft and come and chat

5th July - Medway Concert Brass, Hempstead, contact [manager@medwayconcertbrass.uk](mailto:manager@medwayconcertbrass.uk) (also 12/19/26)

8th July - 'Our Island Universe, the Milky Way Galaxy and its place in Time and Space', Bredhurst Village Hall, 8pm, [www.midkentaastro.org.uk](http://www.midkentaastro.org.uk)

9th July - Friends of Riverside Primary Summer Fayre, 11-2pm, free admission, contact [forpschair@gmail.com](mailto:forpschair@gmail.com)

11th July - Medway Scrabble Club, 2pm, St Stephen's Church Hall, Chatham, new members welcome, contact [eamonday9@gmail.com](mailto:eamonday9@gmail.com) or 07523 124668

11th July - Rainham Ladies Choir Summer Concert, 7.30pm Rainham School for Girls main hall, refreshments provided, Contact 01634 262214/01634 370797rlchoir@outlook.com

11th July - Medway Organ and Keyboard Club 50th Anniversary Concerts, 7pm/7.30pm start, Parkwood Community Centre, £7, [phil.burt@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.burt@ntlworld.com)

13th July - 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 July - Kent Classic & Sports Car Club, Three Mariners, Lower Rainham, 01634 362612

15th July - Rainham Historical Society Vintage Essex Excursion to Thaxted, 01634 366276 for details

16th July - Sunrise to Sunset loop for Prostate Cancer (see p.5 for more)

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

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

21st July - Rainham WI, open from 1pm, Berengrave Cricket Club, contact 01634 234997

21st July - Bredhurst Garden Club, Stephen Harmer talk 'Arts and Craft Movement and it's Gardens', also a bring and buy produce sale, 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, contact 07791 781910

22nd July - Medway Geographical Society, 2pm Twydall Church Hall, contact 01634 572139 or [lorna\\_bailey576@hotmail.com](mailto:lorna_bailey576@hotmail.com)

24th July - Indoor Boot Fair, Twydall Community Centre, Beechings Way, 10-1pm, 50p entry, £10 per table, 07809 892883 or [pinkdukebox@aol.com](mailto:pinkdukebox@aol.com)

27th July - Medway Woodturners, Bredhurst Village Hall, 7pm, [howardoverton123@btinternet.com](mailto:howardoverton123@btinternet.com)

27th July - Bee ID workshop, Riverside Country Park, 10am, 01634 337432, booking essential

28th July - Wooden Animal Making, Riverside Country Park, 10am, 01634 337432, booking essential

29th July - The Craig Telescope, Bredhurst Village Hall, 8pm [www.midkentaastro.org.uk](http://www.midkentaastro.org.uk)

30th July - Rainham Historical Society Excursion to Winchester, 01634 366276 for details

**2-29th July** - Rainham & District Dollhouse & Miniaturist Group, display at Rainham Library, ME8 7LR, during normal library opening times

**21-30 July** - Oasthouse Theatre presents 'A Ghost Train', 8pm, [www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk](http://www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk)

Lower Halstow short mat bowls club, every Mon 2-4pm, every Wed 7.30-9.30pm 01795 842376/[glenyslovell@hotmail.com](mailto:glenyslovell@hotmail.com)

Hempstead Valley Short Mat Bowls Club, contact Joy on 01622 693101

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