

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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Her Majesty The Queen (1926 - 2022)



The final, beautiful tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the North Chapel (or Lady Chapel) in St Margaret's Church during the official period of mourning.

(photo courtesy of Alan Stockey)

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Editorial

The sad passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, on September 8th seemed more stark to me with the very rapid passing of the baton and made so much more real with the singing of "God save the King" at the service the very next day.

I did however, fondly reminisce over the earlier life of the queen with the fabulous montage of photographs inside St. Margaret's Church. The floral tributes outside, the candles, music and condolences book were really beautifully done.

Regardless of one's personal views of the Royal Family, it will take the country, its institutions and ourselves some time to absorb the changes.

Many it appears will await the completion of a portrait of King Charles III, which will, once signed off by the King, be used for the image on coinage, banknotes and stamps. History suggests that the full transition may take a few years as there are apparently 4.7 billion bank notes currently in circulation!

New post boxes will eventually bear the Royal Cypher CIIR, but are very unlikely to replace existing ones as there are, apparently, numerous examples around the country of our prior king.

Royal warrants, 'By appointment to' contained on much packaging, from breakfast cereal to sausages, have typically become void on the death of the grantor, but can continue to be used for up to two years.

All in all, however the changes are signposted to us, I will still fondly recall the portrait of our late queen looking down over us at assemblies in the hall at St. Margaret's CofE Junior School.

Letters to the Editor

Hopping Surprise!

Dear Editor,

I had the great pleasure and wonderful surprise of seeing a photo of my late grandmother Daisy Roper (1914-1989) and my late mother Eileen Masters (nee Roper) (1942-2011) on the front page of your recent publication.

I had not previously seen a copy of this photo before and was wondering how you located it? I was also wondering if there was any way I could purchase a copy of the photo?

With kind regards,
Andrew Masters

Hopping Surprise - Doubled!

This month's local publication of 'Action Forum' features my grandmother and auntie on the front cover. I lost my Nan when I was 13 and my aunt passed a few years back. Miss them both but it was a real surprise and very lovely to see them in this picture.

Lee James

Rainham Station

(part of a longer letter commenting on the history of Medway railways)

Dear Editor,

In the August issue of Action Forum there was an article on Rainham Station through the years by AJ.

... At one time there were 9 stations within what is now "Medway"; 7 had different names during their life. Some had the name changed almost before the paint had dried from the previous name change.

The line between Faversham and Strood took no more than two years to construct. It involved 18 miles of track bed, around 49 bridges (road over rail or rail over road), 3 tunnels, 6 stations and the river bridge, all done with picks, forks, shovels, hand carts and horse drawn carts! No 20 ton dump trucks, no diggers scooping a ton of earth per bucket load, no cement mixers for all the bricks that were laid, no 500 ton mobile cranes or tunnel-boring machine.

I suspect that it would not be done any quicker today despite all the mechanization!

Kenneth Collyer

Proposed Hempstead Development

Dear Editor,

A further development of 200 houses is being promoted for the fields at the top of Hempstead Road (Broomfield Farm). This is within Medway Council's boundary but as yet, formal planning approval has not been sought.

Further to Marian Marshall's letter in September's Action Forum, I am struck by the need for continued coordinated action by the wider communities impacted. Just because it is not at the top or bottom of our road doesn't mean the continued erosion of open space and agricultural land won't have consequences for the wider community. Traffic levels, waiting times for medical and dental appointments, school places, air quality and erosion of wildlife habitats are all at stake. At this stage, the developer asked for comments on their proposals, to gauge the level of support and concern. The date for this has now passed but it is worth reminding readers that if and when formal planning applications are made, they are reviewable online via www.medway.gov.uk and once an online account is established you can search for details and make any objections known. Planning objections do have real impact - far

more than petitions, which consume significant coordination effort. Objections are heard at the relevant Medway Council Planning Committee meeting at which planning applications are scheduled to be heard.

I urge everyone to take the time and effort to set up an account and become familiar with the way planning applications can be searched and objections lodged.

Yours,
Alan Stockey

Hopping Memories

It is amazing how many hops are still growing in the hedges of the fields and orchards that used to be hop gardens. They are about ready to be picked. What a good starting point for a school wanting to feature more local history - the Sept cover photo and some hedgerow hops!

When we bought our house in 1972 the field behind was a hop garden. It later blew down in a gale and in 2008 we and our neighbours bought a strip of the field to extend gardens. This year a hop plant suddenly appeared in the middle of my raspberries, grew vigorously and now has fruit. It was probably in the hedge we removed in 2008 and has remained dormant ever since.

Hamish Mackay-Miller

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Climate Conversations (AS)

Anti-Idling Project - volunteers needed

Over the course of the next 9 months, Professor Tim Hopthrow, and colleagues from the University of Kent, will be working in partnership with Medway Council to study motor vehicle idling at busy intersections in Rainham.

They are keen to work with Rainham residents and members of the Rainham Eco-hub to collect data on idling behaviour and design and test new signage. They are looking for volunteers to take part in data collection as well as assisting with designing signage. Data collection will happen for 1 hour, three times per day, Tuesday to Thursday, during the testing period and will be organized into small teams operating on a rota.

To find out more please, come and meet Tim and his colleagues at the next Green Drinks being held at Manor Farm PH on Monday 3rd October from 7.30pm. If you are interested but cannot make the meeting, please email alanstockey@gmail.com or check out the Rainham Clever Breathers Facebook page.

Clever Breathing

Would any of our local GP Practices, Practice nurses or health clinics across Rainham help us raise awareness to air quality issues in Rainham and the health advisories associated with the worst pollution red and purple days?

The Rainham Eco-hub is working with the Medway Council Environmental Protection Team to improve understanding of the links between air pollution, asthma and inhaler

dependence.

We have been supplied with awareness cards from www.kentair.org.uk suggesting patients or parents subscribe to the free air pollution email alerts. Contact alanstockey@gmail.com

Rainham Tree Wardens

A Rainham Eco-hub Tree Warden Network is being proposed, comprised of local resident volunteers, performing an important service by keeping a close eye on the wellbeing of, and any damage to, trees in our neighbourhoods.

For example, if a tree is showing signs of illness or disease an early warning can help experts so that action can be taken to quickly help it recover.

Rainham Eco-hub is committed to improving the condition and the number of appropriate trees in our town and understands the importance of not just planting trees but caring for them too, especially in dry weather. Medway Council Planning Department Head, Dave Harris, noted the important amenity value of trees as part of the town's good mental health and the benefit of raising Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) to ensure mature trees are not lost.

To express interest in becoming an Eco-hub Tree Warden please get in touch: therainhamecohub@gmail.com



Oct Monthly Eco Challenge

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Contact 07775 461573 or email
secretary@breatheasymedway.co.uk

Autumn at St Matthew's, Drewery Drive

Film Afternoon

St Matthew's, Wigmore re-launched it's monthly Film club and 26th October is the next session.

Join us for light-hearted entertainment, watching an art heist - 2pm

The film is free and refreshments are available afterwards for a nominal fee.

Thursday Club re-start

We meet weekly at 2pm in the Community Centre with a full programme of speakers and entertainers.

Our Place of Welcome 'drop-in'

This continues to meet every Thursday morning between 10am and 12 noon. Completely free of charge, this offers the opportunity for refreshments and a chat. All are welcome.

For more information on any of these contact Geoff on:
01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

Murder Mystery Charity Evening

The Rotary Club of Medway presents 'Hi-De-DIE', a Murder Mystery performed by Alternate Shadows Theatre Company.

Join us for an evening of fun - wine, dine and solve the crime!

**October 14th @ 7pm
Gillingham Golf Club,
Woodlands Rd, ME7 2AP**

£24 per person, including a 2-course meal

Contact: lindaarnold2226@gmail.com

Bredhurst Art Group

We are a small, friendly group of amateur artists of mixed abilities who meet at Bredhurst Village Hall on Thursdays.

If you would like to join us, 1 - 3.15pm contact Barbara on 07974 205656.

UPCHURCH CHORAL SOCIETY

Rehearsals have resumed on Friday evenings at 7.45pm in St Mary's church.

On Saturday 26th November we hope to present a concert of seasonal music at St Mary's.

A spring concert is also planned for 2023.

We are a four-part choir and sing all manner of things with the help of our conductor, Marius and our accompanist, Janet.

If you enjoy choral singing, do come and join us! For more information contact our secretary Sue Rossiter on:
01634 234780 or suerossiter@waitrose.com

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Bygone Rainham (George Painter)

I have lived in Rainham for 65 years, since the age of 26! Along with my dear wife Iris, we have seen lots of changes since 1957, in what was once a village! I remember relatives saying 'What are you moving out there for?' We did not all have cars in those days so it was a 7d. (3.1/2 p) on the No.2 Chatham Traction Brown Bus from Chatham to Rainham. Trains were still steam to Rainham Station and further down to the Coast! However, Rainham Station did boast a cosy waiting room with a coal fire during the winter months - very much the small country village station. Electrification changed all that!

That was the beginning of Rainham's growth. The first large housing estate built was on the former Longley's Rose Nursery bordering Berengrave Lane and very handy for the now electrified station. For those wishing to buy these new houses there was no option to pick and choose, you had to take what became available! There was a massive housing shortage after WW2 for both private and Council-built housing - a need that still exists today. The price of these houses ranged from about £1,745 to £2,200 (!) but bear in mind that the average weekly wage was between £6 to £8, paid in a little brown envelope. Most did not have bank accounts in those days. It was years later when wages were paid direct into the bank on a monthly basis!

As for Station Road in those early days - the Railway Pub was very popular though no

meals of course, perhaps a bag of crisps with a blue wrapper of salt, or on a good day, a cheese roll! Tufton Road corner saw Griggs, the little general store and across the road, Ludlam's where you could buy 2oz. of ham painstakingly cut off the bone by Mr Ludlam. Up the road was Wilkins the Hardware shop where you could buy loose nails, paraffin and all those odds and ends for a bit of house decorating! Opposite was a Butchers Shop and, on the corner, Arnold's the Greengrocer. At the top of Station Road there was, what to us in those days, a large Grocery Co-op Store with the Co-op Butchers opposite. You could drop your little red book of weekly requirements for delivery and were trusted to call in a couple of days later to pay!

Just below was the beautiful stone-built Village School, demolished for a new Co-op Store, now Wilko's. Rainham was very much dominated by the Co-op and the Co-operative Department Store, with its Community Hall, just around the corner opposite the Church!

Rainham has grown massively since but has always been great for various organisations and pastimes within in the Community and it has been a pleasure for me and my wife to have belonged to a number! Rainham Horticultural Society is now in its 139th year!

Now with modern communication technology the Community is being brought together with a number of action groups striving to improve our environment! Well done to all those concerned in their efforts to make our town an even a better place than when it was developing those growing pains in the 1950's! Proud to live in Rainham!

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Nature Notes (Joe Ennis)

MAUDE NATURE NOTES

One September some time ago, I visited Saddlescombe Farm on an Open Day. It is owned by the National Trust and is situated in acombe between The Devil's Dyke and Newtimber Hill, two well-known landmarks on the South Downs north of Brighton. The farm is a unique example of a traditional downland farm and its buildings date from the 17th century onwards. The National Trust aims that the buildings be preserved but that the farm continue as a mixed, downland farm with the necessary modern agricultural machinery. It consists of 450 acres, some arable and the rest grazed by sheep and cattle. Maude Robinson was born there in 1859, the youngest of eight children. She wrote of her childhood in a book "A South Down Farm in the 1860s". Maude recalls that her father kept sheep and also grew corn and root crops. He owned some 900 Southdown sheep, which were divided into three flocks, each with a shepherd carrying a polished crook, and a shaggy, cross-breed dog, which was more of a guard dog than a herder of sheep. The flocks were 'folded' on uncropped arable land at night, so their droppings would fertilise the soil. During lambing, the shepherds would live on the Downs in huts on iron wheels and the sheep were sheared by an itinerant gang of shearers. Maude's father had up to eight oxen, which pulled the ploughs, harrows, waggons and carts. Each oxen team of two or more was controlled by a man and a boy, both with the help of a long hazel wand. Grass for hay was cut by scythe and corn by a "swop hook," quite different to a sickle. The corn was then threshed by flail on the polished oaken floor of the two threshing barns.

Maude wrote that she and other children had the unrestricted run of the South Downs around her home and a stranger was seldom seen unless the Brighton Harriers swept by, with their livery of dark green coats or the Southdown Foxhounds, with their red coats making gay spots in the landscape. She and her friends used to lie on their stomachs and watch the many creatures pursuing their lives in the smooth hill turf. She remembered a beautiful golden-green beetle, grasshoppers and ants with their peculiar business-like gait, bustling about in search of food for their community. There were multitudes of snails in the grass, the chalky soil enabling the snails to grow their shells, many of which were gaily-striped and very pretty. There were burnet moths of dark metallic green with scarlet spots. Butterflies abounded, including chalk hill blues, fritillaries and coppers. Every thistle flower and lavender scabious had a butterfly or other insect on it.

Kestrels could be seen, poised in the air over a ridge where the little land lizards, a favourite food of these hawks were plentiful. They also preyed on the swarms of short-tailed voles and field mice which were destructive of the crops and even ate the peaches on the garden wall. Her eldest brother was once bitten by an adder when he put his arm down a rabbit hole to see if a wheatear's nest with its pale blue eggs was there. The right side of his body turned as black and blue as if he had been beaten. His father subsequently offered sixpence for every dead adder. Rooks were a plague, she wrote in some exasperation. They dug up her father's freshly-grown wheat and maize. Skylarks were numerous and the local population was reinforced with huge flocks from the tundra of northern lands during the winter. Hoards of larks arrived in the autumn and devoured the first tender shoots of the newly grown wheat.

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Later in the year, quails, summer visitors, could frequently be heard in the standing wheat, calling softly. Less welcome were the house sparrows that descended on the ripening corn like a swarm of locusts.

Maude wrote about botanists, “from a distance”, coming to see the downland flowers and she used to show the visitors where to find them. There was the purple devil’s bit scabious; the dark blue, round-headed rampion; the star thistle; the beautiful blue meadow clary and twenty species of orchid, including the tiny green musk orchid. The dainty, wee moonwort fern could be found by those who searched for it humbly on their knees. Rising above Saddlescombe Farm is Newtimber Hill which, according to the National Trust, has one of the finest examples of chalk grassland flowers in the country. This is undoubtedly where Maude came across the purple devil’s bit scabious, the round headed rampion and other flowers more than one hundred years ago. They are still there. She died in 1950 aged 91.

Oct in the Wilder Garden

(by Victoria Golding)

Usually, we look back at the season and plan for next year between November and January. After the season that is just finishing, I think we need to change our planning and planting and be doing that now.

If we get our trees, shrubs and perennials in the ground now, their roots will get stronger and deeper and be more resilient when dry periods come. I have seen that it is the newer plants that have struggled or died this year.

The extreme temperatures may not come again next year, but we will probably get most of our rain in downpours. Spring bulbs are currently available and most can be planted now, the

exception being tulips, which don’t like sitting in the soil.

Our focus should still be on water storage and water saving. I now keep a two-handled bucket in the kitchen to collect the waste water from the kettle, along with the water from my hot tap, which runs cold for a long time before being at a temperature suitable for washing up. That is water that is going on the garden, rather than down the drain.

Plant of the month

This year I grew the tall white Tobacco plant, *Nicotiana sylvestris*, from seed. Through neglect, it didn’t get going quickly, but is still in flower, looking fabulous.

Next year I will grow fewer plants of each variety then swop them with the other Garden Advisors, as well as having some for our plant sale tables at our Open Gardens.

Job of the month

There are so many jobs for me this month! I haven’t coped with the heat and the sun has driven me inside, when rain hasn’t.

Now the soil is less hard, as we have had some rain, I am working on ensuring the shrubs that have survived are in good condition to face whatever next that we have to come. Rain of frogs, anyone?

Our Autumn/Winter programme is full of timely workshops on diverse topics, from ‘Hedgehogs’ to ‘Gardening in a Changing Climate’ and ‘Managing Pests in a Nature-Friendly Way’. Have a look and book on:

www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Happy wildlife gardening,
Victoria
(Kent Wildlife Trust Garden Advisor)



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Community cont...

Wigmore RVS Darby & Joan Club

We recommenced in September after the summer break and will now meet every Monday afternoon at the Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside between 2 and 4, welcoming anyone over 50 years of age.

You are very welcome to come along for the afternoon, play bingo, chat and make new friends.

Interested, give me a phone call for more details on 01634 362662, Hannah Hendra.

The Inner Wheel Club of Gillingham
RACE NIGHT
for our charity of the year 'Sheerness RNLI'

Friday March 3rd 2023
at Upchurch River Valley Restaurant.
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Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Teas

Millenium Centre, Rainham
3.30 - 6pm
Sunday 9th October
Sunday 23rd October

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We look forward to greeting old and new friends again this year.



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If you simply have too much to handle then perhaps you might think about taking your surplus along to the **Gillingham Street Angels**. They can use it all to rustle up tasty meals for those who are in need and less fortunate.

Their food preparation base is:
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Monday to Friday, 9am - 1pm
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For more information, contact:
tracy@thestreet-angels.org

Just a little goes a long way!



In the latest minutes from a Riverside Forum meeting, it was revealed that volunteers had contributed almost 700 hours between them during May, June and July this year!
That is a staggering amount but it allows the park rangers to get so much more done at the beautiful sites we have around Medway.

If you are able to help at all then volunteer sessions run every Thursday and Sunday from 10-2. Simply phone the parks team for a quick chat about it:
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Dates for the Diary

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

6th Oct - The Thursday Club, Community Centre, St. Matthews, Drewery Drive, Wigmore from 2pm Penny Harris will present 'Halfway up Kilimanjaro'. Geoff on [01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:01634234712@geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk)

8th Oct - Hospital Radio Medway will be holding a Charity Quiz Night at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Twydall, ME8 6JU, 7.30pm, £5 per head, tables of 6-8. Bring own drinks and nibbles. Call Eunice Norman on 07964 283976

9th Oct - Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Teas, see p.11

10th Oct - Medway Music Club, Jon Smith will be playing live, 7.30pm, Parkwood Community Centre, refreshments/bar, £7 entry. phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 077955 76294

13th Oct - The Thursday Club, Guide dogs with Phil Shorthouse

14th Oct - East Medway u3a Meeting at Wigmore Smallholders' Club ME8 0JG, 2 - 4pm, 'Dementia Envoys' talk, Members free, Guests £2.

Contact Sue Cook at sueu3acook@outlook.co

14th Oct - MKAS Tribute to Peter Parish and Chris Sherwood, 8pm, Bredhurst Village Hall. After numerous cancellations and delays, we pay tribute to two prominent members of our society who sadly passed away in 2020/21. Visit our website: www.midkentaastro.org/events

14th Oct - Medway Rotary Club Murder Mystery Evening, 7pm, Gillingham Golf Club, Woodlands Rd, ME7 2AP, £24 pp, including a 2-course meal, lindaarnold226@gmail.com

16th Oct - Indoor boot fair, Twydall community centre, Doors open 10-1pm, refreshments available, 50p entry, Tables £10, Contact Janet Duke on 07809 892883 or pinkdukebox@aol.com

18th Oct - RSPB Medway Talk, Community Centre, Parkwood, ME8 9PN, 7.30-9.45pm, £4, 'Wild Turkey' by Martin Davis, www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway

20th Oct - Bredhurst Garden Club, 'Through the Lens, from the Heart' by Glyn Bareham, 1.45 pm, Howard Memorial Hall, Bring and Buy Produce Stall, Annual Subscription £10, Entrance Fee £1, Visitor's Fee £2, Lesley Wainwright - 07791 781910

20th Oct - The Thursday Club, History of aviation in Kent with Guy Bartlett

23rd Oct - Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Teas, see p.11

23rd Oct - Ancient Woodlands Walk with Medway Ramblers, leisurely 6 miles/9.7 km, starts 10am, Meet at car park just north of Bredhurst (free) (ME8 0LU, TQ799628) Circular walk, short break at Bredhurst Church, pub at end. Terrain: Woodland and possibly muddy lanes, Estimated finish time: 1.15pm, leader: Mike P

26th Oct - 'Queen Elizabeth II: Long to Reign over us' by Dean Caston, Entry 7pm, £3, Refreshments, Rainham Historical Society, Millennium Centre, 01634 263622

26th Oct - Film Afternoon, St Matthew's, Wigmore, 2pm, geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

27th Oct - The Thursday Club Social

28th Oct - 'History of the local area', 2pm, Medway Geographical and Local History Society, new members welcome, Holy Trinity Church, Twydall, Contact: lorna_bailey576@hotmail.com/01634 572139

28th Oct - Family Space Night, Bredhurst Village Hall, 8pm, Evening of talks and displays about astronomy and space with hands-on activities for the younger children. Come and learn about Space, Astronomy and Rockets and, weather permitting, go outside to look at some interesting astronomical sights through the telescopes. Visit: www.midkentaastro.org/events

29th Oct - Annual Craft/ Gift Fayre for Great Ormond Street, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside, ME80PN 10.30 till 12.30, Good selection of stalls including cards, jewellery, hand knits, Xmas decorations etc. All welcome, Stalls still available, Contact Paula 07930 595856

29th Oct - Friends of St Margaret's Church Quiz Night, Millennium Centre, Rainham. Prompt 7pm start, tables of eight, £5 per person, booking essential, bring your own food and drink. Contact 01634 230430 or 230183

Bredhurst Art Group, Thursdays, 1.00-3.15pm, contact Barbara on 07974 205656.

Wigmore RVS Darby & Joan Club, Monday 2-4pm, Hannah Hendra on 01634 362662

Rainham & District Dollshouse & Miniaturist Group, last Thurs of month, 7.30pm, Howard Hall, Wigmore, 01634 264295 or rainhamdhkent@gmail.com

Lower Halstow short mat bowls club, each Mon 2-4, each Wed 7.30-9.30, 01795 842376/glenyslovell@hotmail.com

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

Medway Model Club, each Friday 7-10pm, all ages, Holy Trinity, Twydall, contact kimmmary18@hotmail.com

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

Word on the Streets

Thanks to all who have enquired about or picked up new routes, also to those who have covered holidays and illnesses.

If you are interested in helping out - even just temporarily, please do get in touch with Anne: **07791 585 998**

If you are a volunteer distributor we would enjoy hearing about your experiences:

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