

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

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Rainham Brickfield Finds



At one time, the Lower Rainham Road looked very different than it does now, with brickfields and cement works along the river.

Did you have relatives who worked on the Rainham Brickfield - if so, perhaps they were one of the men who found Roman artefacts amongst the dirt? (see p11 for more)

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Editorial

My grandson's declaration that the conkers I had found were part of his treasure (along with acorns and chestnuts) and then keeping hold of one in his little hand all day has been delightful and a nod to more innocent autumn pastimes of my own childhood.

I vividly remember, probably at around the age of nine or ten, cycling out to Hartlip with two mates as the trees by the church had given up their treasure to older boys throwing sticks up into the trees to knock them down. A lady came out of her house in the village, led us to a paddock beyond and gave us a bag each to fill, probably sufficient to share with our entire class, maybe even the entire school! Bragging rights to possessing a sixer (a conker that had won six battles) were in my dreams probably but I never succumbed to giving the conkers special treatments (I understand baking them or soaking them in vinegar assured a harder shell and therefore longer life). I think my dad or older brother might have helped thread them onto leftover strings from the onion sets, ready for battle to commence.

I also remember carving out swede lanterns, as pumpkins weren't so much a thing back in the sixties, and how hard it was to remove sufficient flesh to get a small candle inside and cut the gruesome face without severing an artery.

If you and your family succumb to the pumpkin madness this year, then do try out our suggested recipe for 'Pumpkin Mac n Cheese' on page 11, and please do remember that all leftovers go into the brown bins.

Autumn is, I think, my favourite season, with the warmth of the sun still sufficient to bring

cheer, the golden delights of the leaves changing colour and bulbs already starting to poke through, heralding the colourful bulbs of the next year.

Letters to the Editor

Re: Lidsing Garden Development

Dear Editor,

Re Marion Marshall's letter in the Sept edition, the rules and regulations surrounding Planning Applications are many and manifold and are heavily weighted in favour of developers. The council is NOT all-powerful and MUST always adhere to the rules. If it doesn't, developers can appeal to the Secretary of State who will scrutinise the reasons for a refusal and if the rules have been ignored an appeal will be granted, leaving the council with a legal bill of tens of thousands of pounds.

Medway Council is strongly opposing the Lidsing development, not on behalf of the residents of Lidsing, but because the 5000 new inhabitants will avail themselves of Medway's facilities, schools, doctors, hospitals etc. whilst all the council tax revenue will end up in the coffers of Maidstone Borough Council.

Medway can only refuse a Planning Application if it infringes the Planning Rules - the proposed development at Pump Lane being a case in point. For the other estates that Ms Marshall cites there were no infringements of the rules and, as a result, they all proceeded.

All councils have been set a target by the Government to build tens of thousands of houses before 2035. The 2000 at Lidsing ticks a box for Maidstone Council but it is Medway residents who will suffer as a result.

Maidstone is not alone in building on the boundary with Medway. Swale Council are doing likewise in Lower Rainham, near to the Three Sisters. Whilst blatantly unfair, it is within the rules, unfortunately. All Medway can do is 'Strongly Oppose'.

Yours faithfully,
 Rob Tinsdale

Prostate Cancer - Marathon Update

Dear Editor,
I hope this finds you well?

I am writing, slightly belated I'm sorry, to thank you for the three consecutive features in Action Forum. Whilst it's hard to tell if anyone donated as a result (I do get some anonymous donations) it certainly helped raise awareness. Not only did I get a few friends say they'd seen it but the final feature was passed on by his dad to a young man called Matt Clewes in Southampton whom I played cricket with locally when he was a teenager. Turns out he was very touched by what he read and as he works as a volunteer presenter on Voice FM he managed to get me my first ever live interview the night before the south coast marathon!

My prostate cancer fundraising for the summer has passed £5100 (including my wife who walked the 3rd marathon with me) taking the total since June 21 to just over £31,000!

Thanks again for your wonderful support, I wish you all the best.

Paul Dennington

Riverside Country Park Forum Invite

Dear Editor,
Rainham residents are warmly invited to the Riverside Country Park Forum.
The Forum was formed in 2020 to give the public an opportunity to hear about the work

of the park rangers and the council's green spaces team at the country park, Berengrave Lane Nature Reserve and Bloors Community Woodland. There is an opportunity to ask questions and put forward your own ideas and suggestions to the team. We also have nature updates, presentations and most recently we had a history walk before the meeting. As Chair of the Forum, I extend the invite to all residents who would like to come along to our next meetings:

Autumn 2022

Monday 21st November 6-7pm starting with a presentation from Birdwise then 7pm-8:30pm for the meeting.

Spring 2023

Monday 20th March 6pm-7pm for a Ranger-guided walk and 7pm-8:30pm for the meeting.

Please email YourNew@Medway.gov.uk or call 01634 566475 to register your place.

Best wishes
Martin Potter
(Councillor for Rainham North and Forum Chair)

Rainham Community Orchard

Dear Editor,
We had a lovely apple picking afternoon at the Orchard this year and just wanted to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who so carefully tend the plot throughout the year.

Many thanks, The Poynter Family

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Community

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The Brook Theatre in Chatham
2:00pm on 29th and 30th October
7:30pm on 28th and 29th October.

Tickets are available from the box office
(01634338338 or medwayticketslive.co.uk)

A Three Towns Theatre Company Production

Another Great Oasthouse Gig

Another evening of wonderful music is planned for Saturday 5th November at the Oasthouse Community Centre.

ME REX are a London-based four-piece 'heart-on-sleeve-cuties' performing their own brand of indie-pop. Support comes from returning heroes Holy Reptile, who some may remember as Love Reptiles before moving from Medway to Bristol.

Tickets are £8 and can be bought in advance or on the door, which opens at 7.30pm. Music starts around 8.15 and all ages are welcome.

Facebook.com/carefulnowpromotions or by emailing carefulnowpromotions@gmail.com

Medway Scrabble Club

Join us alternate Mondays - St Stephen's church hall, Chatham.

Contact Eamon on 07523 124668

Autumn at St Matthew's, Drewery Drive

Free Film Afternoons

Refreshments are available afterwards for a nominal fee.

Thursday Club

Weekly at 2pm in the Community Centre, with a full programme of speakers and entertainers.

Place of Welcome 'drop-in'

Every Thursday morning between 10am and 12 noon. Completely free of charge, refreshments and a chat.

For more information contact Geoff on:

01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

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.

We now have a number of streets that need volunteers moving forward:

Parkwood

Roper Close (32), Thorpe Walk (44), Sedley Close (no flats) (40), Rowbrocke Close (28), Rycut Close (50), Plomley Close (35), Hardinge Close inc Sienna (15), Howbury Walk (24)

Hempstead

Lamplighters Close (91), The Paddocks (14), Honeysuckle Close (8), Claridge Court (7)

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Community cont...

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Come along for the afternoon, play bingo, chat and make new friends.

Phone Hannah Hendra for more details on 01634 362662.

The Inner Wheel Club of Gillingham

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for our charity of the year 'Sheerness RNLI'
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Big Green Day

St Margaret's Church is hosting 'Rainham's Big Green Day' and it will take place on November 19th between 10-2pm.

On the day we will have talks from various local groups who want to share what you can be doing at home and in your town to help with the cost of living.

It will also go a long way to everyone being more environmentally-friendly.

Stands, activities and local schools.
Activities for all the family and it's FREE.

Got a veg and fruit glut this autumn?

To all gardeners harvesting the bumper crop produced this summer:

If you have too much to handle take your surplus along to **Gillingham Street Angels**. They can use it to rustle up tasty meals for those who are in need and less fortunate.
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St Peter's, Bredhurst Christmas Fayre

Sat 3rd Dec, 12 - 2pm

St Matthew's, Wigmore Christmas Quiz

Sat 3rd Dec, 7.30pm start

More details in our next edition!

Upchurch Choral Society presents

"Jubilate"

Saturday 26th November 2022

St Mary's church Upchurch, at 7.30pm.

Entry £10, under 18s free.

Interval refreshments will be available, courtesy of The Friends of St Mary's.

Our concert will include Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and other seasonal items. In addition, our soloists for the evening will be the group Sonare, who recently gave a stunning concert in St Mary's.

This concert will be dedicated to the late Frank Osborne, who sang with our choir for many years with a delightful Tenor voice.

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Nature Notes (Joe Ennis)

EMMETTS NATURE NOTES

One October some time ago, my wife and I visited Emmetts Garden, near Sevenoaks which is owned by the National Trust. The garden occupies a prominent position on the Upper Greensand Ridge which sweeps in a great horseshoe round the brim of the Kentish Weald. The Trust claims that Emmetts is the highest garden in Kent and in the garden is a magnificent Wellingtonia tree which stands at some 125 feet in height and is the highest tree top and landmark for miles around.

The garden suffered considerable damage in the Great Storm of 1987. Many large oak and beech trees were lost. Readers may remember scenes on television, or in newspapers, of trees lying across each other like skittles at a bowling alley. Just a few oaks and a lone, massive beech tree were still standing. The Trust has, however, carried out an extensive replanting programme and there is now little trace of the effects of the storm.

The leaves of the sweet chestnut trees in the adjoining Scards Wood had turned yellow by the time of our visit. The wood is the habitat of nuthatches, tree creepers, jays and great spotted wood peckers, among other birds. There was a chill in the air and a smell of autumn. We paused at the viewpoint that opens up among the trees in the blue bell wood at Emmetts and could see the shingled spire of Ide Hill Church; Bough Beech Reservoir; Crowborough Beacon; and Ashdown Forest in the Weald of East Sussex. In the garden itself we were able to admire a number of trees and shrubs of the acer genus which were resplendent in their various shades of red. We came across a handkerchief or dove tree which has showy white bracts in

May and reddish-brown fruit in October; it is a native of China. We were attracted to the candy-floss scent of the leaves of a tree commonly known as the "Burnt Toffee Tree". It is one of the genus of deciduous trees grown for their foliage and spectacular autumn colour.

Armed with a coloured brochure of the fungi to be found at Emmetts, we identified quite a number of them. In the South Garden and The Meadow, we came across fungi called waxcaps which are indicators of ancient grassland. Some had colours which made them readily identifiable and which brought a splash of autumn, such as butter, honey, crimson and golden wax caps. On the lawns we spotted a fairy ring fungus. It creates circles of dark, lush grass through the fertilising effects of the nitrates it produces. Some "fairy rings" can be several yards across and are centuries old. The fruity bodies, which appear from late summer onwards, have buff-coloured caps and stems. Some fungi are of a tough species which will survive long, dry periods.

Before it was created into a garden in the late 19th century, Emmetts was part of a common on which local people had rights, among others, to graze cattle and pigs. In the middle of that century the common was, however, enclosed and the commoners' rights were extinguished. Over 150 years later, in the absence of grazing, most of the former common outside the boundaries of the garden has become recolonised by bracken and by oak, birch and other trees.

In certain woodland areas of the old common the National Trust is actively promoting the growth of typical heath land plants such as heather and bilberry, by cutting back the invasive trees and other plants. Lowland heath is a very rare habitat, especially in Kent.

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Reptiles such as snakes and lizards thrive in such a habitat. We saw areas of original heath land by the side of the footpath which starts at the tea room and shop at Emmetts and leads to Toys Hill. There were bilberry plants but, unfortunately, whatever berries had ripened there by September, had been taken by October. Bilberries are good to eat raw but can also be made into jam and stewed in pies. Bees are attracted to the rich source of nectar in the flowers of heather plants, but we were also too late to see the heather in bloom.

We did, however, note a number of fungi which grow in the damp woodland undergrowth between the oak and birch trees. Three species grabbed our particular attention. Firstly, a large bunch of colourful sulphur tuft growing at the base of an oak tree. Secondly, a couple of fly agarics which are poisonous, but not deadly, and which have red caps with white markings. Finally, a group of penny bun boletus with large caps that resemble toasted tea cakes. They are very good to eat, have a nutty aroma and are much prized in France. They were also a reminder to us that it was time to retrace our steps to The Stable Tearoom.

Nov in the Wilder Garden

(by Victoria Golding)

How did you get on with your planning and planting last month?

All year round gardening is more important than ever, as we come to the end of a very challenging year. Try to find another space for a water butt to take full advantage of downpours. This extra chemical-free supply will help to keep your pond topped up.

Plant of the month

If you can do it this week, you can still have hyacinths to give as blooming Christmas gifts

by using pre-prepared bulbs. Search your cupboards for decorative pots.

Simple presents, like a marker pen for plant labels that is water and UV resistant can be a boon for your friends. I have really suffered by having all my plant labels fade before I realised it this year! What a mess I am in. Some new seeds bloomed without me ever being able to identify them. A collection of yoghurt pots with slivers cut from the bottom for drainage make ideal pots for small seedlings. A thoughtful, but no-cost gift.

Job of the month

Dividing perennials, traditionally a spring job, can be done now that the soils are damp. Put markers where you have replanted them if, like me, you forget by the time winter is over. If your compost heaps haven't rotted down, incorporate paper shreddings, mix and water, then keep a cover over them to keep the heat in.

Cleaning, reorganising and planning can make your inside space, (porches, sheds or greenhouses), havens for those times that you can't face the weather.

I am breaking with tradition in this article to ask you to write to your MP regarding the Government's plans to scrap post-Brexit environmental laws.

www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/write-your-mp

The Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB and the National Trust, as well as all environmental organisations are united in opposing this sweeping policy change.

We each work in our own space to enhance the benefit for wildlife, but we need the background of a benign and nurturing wider environment.

Happy Gardening!



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Climate Conversations (AS)

Rainham Eco and Community Awards

Last year, at this time, I attended the first Rainham Eco-awards, delighted then to cover the event for Action Forum and admire the efforts of those nominated and celebrated.

A year on, Saturday 8th October, St Margaret's church hosted a combined Eco-hub and Community Awards.

How special it was to be there with most of the Action Forum editorial team, nominated for a Community Award in their own right, as well as being personally nominated and winning an award for leading the Rainham Clever Breathers air pollution campaign (see Facebook if you want more details).

St Margaret's church was bedecked with pink and blue umbrellas in advance of Baby Loss Awareness Week, supporting the Rainham charity 'Making Miracles', and looked fantastic. The evening was topped off with a wonderful buffet, donated by regular Eco-hub supporter Spice Fusion.

There were too many nominations to name them all but well done to the winners: Rainham Litter Heroes; Rainham Community Orchard volunteers; Stuart Bourne; Rainham School for Girls; Against Lidsing Garden Development (who won 'Moment of the Year' for reaching their fund-raising target); TickTocks Coffee & Kitchen; June Buckingham for her signing choir, Tommy O'Hanlon, Leon Roskilly and Mutual Aid Road Reps.

I must also make special mention of Helen Smart at ThamesView Primary and Rainham Kennilworth Under 13's.

Leftover Hallowe'en Pumpkin Recipe

Alan's Pumpkin Mac n Cheese (serves 4)

1) Preheat the oven to 220C, gas mark 7. Toss 350g peeled pumpkin chunks (you can add sweet potato to make up amount if needed), a finely-sliced onion/large shallot, along with some rosemary, olive oil and seasoning.

Place in a large roasting tin in a single layer and roast for 25 minutes, stirring a couple of times until tender and slightly charred - don't let it burn.

2) While the pumpkin is roasting, bring a large pan of water to boil and add 250g of pasta and cook as per the pack's instructions. When just tender, drain and add to the roasted pumpkin mix, when ready.

3) Add in 50g of grated cheese of choice (stronger flavoured cheese is better) and 25g of toasted pine nuts for some crunch.

Now I like mine a bit sloppy and with a crispy top, so add a made-up sachet of cheese sauce, mix in with everything else then bake for a further 20 minutes.

When finished, given your oven is nice and hot and if there are no little ones around (!), open the oven door and let the kitchen benefit from the heat - every little helps.

Pumpkin seeds can also be roasted in another tray with a knob of butter, soy sauce, salt and garlic for a delicious munchy snack.

Nov Monthly Eco Challenge

'A paper coffee cup is rarely recyclable - take it home and put it into your brown bin for composting'

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Bygone Rainham (Jeremy Clarke)

From the brickfields... the Walter Collection at the Guildhall Museum

Although antiquarians have been carefully sifting the soil in the north Kent since the eighteenth century, the vigorous mining of our landscape for chalk, clay and gravel has turned up a far greater number of artefacts and contributed hugely to the richness of our local archaeology.

The position of the brick earth in Rainham, close to the line of the old Roman road, meant that its working in the nineteenth century led to a particularly impressive haul of objects. Many of these are entered in the inventory of the Rochester Museum as a 1912 donation from 'The Walter Family.' This must surely look back to William Walter, who was living at Berengrave through the middle to later years of the Victorian period.



Just under 100 of these objects are listed specifically as 'found in the Rainham brickfield on the Lower Road ...and chiefly from a Roman Cemetery.' This almost certainly consisted principally, if not wholly, of cremations.

Therefore, ceramics dominate the Walter Collection, although not all the objects are urns. There are also smaller containers, plates, cups and lids which must have been added to the graves either as part of the ritual of burial or had a special reference to the deceased.

Types of clay vary from the black burnished ware of the local potteries to reddish imported 'Samian.'



Amongst all the pots, a bronze steel-yard stands out.



This is a kind of balance which would serve to weigh items without the need of hefty counterweights – ideal maybe for an itinerant trader. It is almost complete, down to its calibrated scale, missing only the small ring that would have slid to balance the produce on its hook.

Today it serves as a tiny window into the life of a local individual nearly 2,000 years ago.



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Dates for the Diary

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

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.midkentastro.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

2nd Nov - Coffee Morning at St Michael and All Angels
Hartlip CofE, 10.30 - 12.30 (also 16th). Join us and reunite
with old friends - rogerandirene@btinternet.com

3rd Nov - The Thursday Club, Community Centre,
St. Matthews, Drewery Drive, Wigmore from 2pm
Mel Rose will present 'Finally Goodbye'.
Geoff on 01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

5th Nov - Oast House Community Centre gig - four-piece
ME REX, £8.00 in advance or at door, opens 7.30pm, music
starts 8.15pm, all ages are welcome.
Facebook or carefulnowpromotions@gmail.com

5th Nov - Rainham Evening WI Annual Craft Fayre, St
Paul's, Parkwood from 9.30am - 1pm. Craft items, cakes,
jams and chutneys, plants, Christmas decs, wooden goods,
jigsaws, cards and stationery, jewellery as well as a raffle,
tombola and, of course, tea and cake! Free entry and parking
For further information contact 01634 365303

6th Nov - Medway Ramblers Newington/Lower Halstow
Circular Walk, start 10.00, 8 miles/12.9 km, Walk features
in The Times' Britain's Best Walks. Moderate terrain (no
stiles), finishes 14:30 approx, free parking at village hall
(ME9 7JJ, TQ861647) or Newington Station, train option
from Rochester arrives 9.29am. Bring refreshments.
Contact: Heather - 07887 750881

9th Nov - East Medway u3a Meeting, Wigmore Small-
holders' Club ME8 0JG, 2 pm, talk by former Royal
Protection Officer. Members free, Guests £2.
Contact Sue Cook at sueu3acook@outlook.com

10th Nov - The Thursday Club, Community Centre,
St. Matthews, 2pm, 'Micky the Magician'
Geoff on 01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

11th Nov - Mapping the surfaces of Mars and the Moon -
Jans-Peter Muller, 8 pm, Bredhurst Village Hall.
www.midkentastro.org.uk/events

Check out the www.thenet.uk.net/events

12th Nov - Cats Protection Christmas Bazaar, 11 am –
3pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, ME7 3JZ, Craft stalls, Bric-
a-Brac, Handmade goods, toys, Christmas decorations,
Raffle, Refreshments. All children receive a free goodie
bag. Entrance £1 - Children go free!

14th Nov - Medway Music Club, Ian Griffin will be
playing live, 7.30pm, Parkwood Community Centre,
refreshments/bar, £7 entry. phil.burt@ntlworld.com or
07795 576294

15th Nov - RSPB Medway Talk, Community Centre,
Parkwood, ME8 9PN, 7.30-9.45pm, £4, 'Birds, their
nests, eggs and young' by Neil Phillips,
www.rspb.org.uk/groups/medway

17th Nov - The Thursday Club, Community Centre,
St. Matthews, 2pm, Melanie Barton Gibson presents 'Eva
Braun - victim or contriver?'
Geoff on 01634 234712/geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

17th Nov - Bredhurst Garden Club, 'Flowers in Folklore',
by Sophie Leathart, 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

19th Nov - Hempstead Christmas Fayre, All Saints
Church and Village Hall, 11am-3pm, gift stalls, Santa's
Grotto, White Elephant and Grand Raffle! Free Entry

19th Nov - St Margaret's Big Green Day, 10am-2pm

21st Nov - Riverside Country Park Forum, 6pm talk by
Birdwise, 7pm meeting.

23rd Nov - 'William Cuffay: Chartist (local man)' by Dr
Jeremy Clarke, Entry 7pm, £3, refreshments, Rainham
Historical Society, Millennium Centre, 01634 263622

24th Nov - The Thursday Club Social, Community
Centre, St. Matthews, 2pm, Geoff on 01634 234712/
geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

25th Nov - 'London's royal parks', 2pm,
Medway Geographical and Local History Society, new
members welcome, Holy Trinity Church, Twydall,
Contact 01634 572139/lorna_bailey576@hotmail.com

25th Nov - 'Interstellar Travel' by Will Joyce, 8pm,
Bredhurst Village Hall, visit: [www.midkentastro.org.uk/
events](http://www.midkentastro.org.uk/events)

26th Nov - Quiz Night, Twydall Community Centre, £7
pp (incl. sausage/veggie burger & chips), 6 per team, 7pm

26th Nov - St Margaret's Christmas Bazaar, 10am-2pm,
Millennium Centre

26th Nov - Upchurch choral Society presents 'Jubilate',
St Mary's, Upchurch, 7.30pm, £10, free for under 18,
suerossiter@waitrose.com or 01634 234780

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