

ACTION FORUM

OCT
2023

NUMBER 594

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

First published
March 1969

A little challenge for some of you...




This photo is of a class of girls at St Margaret's C of E School
Can any of our readers identify those in the photo, along with where it was taken and when?

On p12 you can find out more about another of our local schools in a shortened article.
The original longer piece can be found at 'rainham-history.co.uk'

(photo courtesy of Rainham History)

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	Copy date : Oct 16th, 2023
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Editorial

Well, the nominations are all in and by the time you receive your Action Forum for Oct we will be just days away from the Rainham Community Awards for 2023. The Action Forum team will be there as we have made some donations towards the organising and we will let you know how it went next month. All the local schools are competing for the new Eco School Shield and, with all the activities we have read about over the last year, it is going to be a difficult choice for the judges I fear!

I am also fascinated to know if any of you have spotted relatives or friends on the front cover of this edition. Perhaps you are even in the photograph so know exactly when and where it was taken. The St Margaret's School building has been both a secondary school and a primary school during its history and some of those pupils looked older than primary...

Regarding the letter at the top of the next column, I knew Belisha Beacons were named after the man who invented them, but my daughter and I were discussing whether there was a belisha beacon crossing on that section of the road? That led to us wondering what was on the land were Tesco's currently stands. The road is so busy now it needs the crossings and the lights but back then I don't know if it was busy at all.

But the nights are noticeably drawing in now. There is plenty in the following pages to keep you busy if you are looking for something new to fill some time. Have a look through and feel free to let us know how you found things if you try an event or activity out.

Happy Browsing!

Letters to the Editor

Hop & Vine/Belisha Beacon Pub

Dear Editor,

I viewed your cover photo of the Hop and Vine (August issue) with interest. Although the site is now a pizza delivery site and no longer a pub, the name of the former pub goes back much further.

In 1938 a new public house was built on the site and named the Belisha Beacon after Leslie Hore Belisha, Liberal cabinet minister for transport. In fact, the pub had a signed letter from Hore Belisha.

In the late 60s and early 70s the landlord was Chris, along with his wife Barbara Odhams. It was very much a local pub with three distinct bars catering for the local community. The lounge to the rear of the building was quiet and cozy with flock wallpaper. The saloon was lively with a very regular clientele and the main entertainment was shove ha'penny. Moving on to the public bar, the tables and chairs were wooden and less comfortable. This was mainly a male environment and darts was the game of choice.

It would be hard to imagine at this time that pubs would become restaurants but the Belisha did make one concession. In the corner between the public and saloon bar was a small electric oven. When things were quiet, a couple of pies went in the oven and the ensuing aroma aroused clientele and steak and onion pies suddenly became the order of the day. Darts nights in the public bar also included food when away teams were visiting. Barbara always put on a great show of sandwiches; ham on the bone or cheese and onion – always on white bread.

On Christmas Day the first drinks were on the house and I can remember streams of regulars walking down Edwin Road, up Hawthorne Avenue, and along from Twydall. I worked part time at the weekend in the Belisha Beacon in late 60s and John and I ran the pub late 60s/early 70s when the landlord was on holiday.

I hope this has sparked some memories.

John and Linda Taylor

Knights Stores (July edition)

Dear Editor,
I thought some of your readers may like a bit more info on Knights Stores. The article mentioned the shop was taken over by the Hills, Dick and Sheila. Dick had come over from South Africa and brought with him his wife, Sheila.

It was a return to Kent for Sheila who, as a young woman, lived at Hartlip Hill with her sister Daphne and parents. Her maiden name was Bourne but she married a South African (Ken Buckingham) and later emigrated to South Africa with their two children, Paul and Sharon. It was in South Africa she met Dick, after divorcing Ken. Sheila and Daphne were good friends of my parents, Gerald and Mary Lukehurst, and I am still in touch with Sharon and Paul. Sheila Hills died only a few months ago in Lynsted, well into her nineties.

Martin Lukehurst

Path to Queendown Warren

Dear Editor,
I walked through to Queendown Warren and beyond on Sunday. It was very nice to see that there is now a freshly cut gap in the mound of horse dung. The path is now open. Thank you for covering it as an issue.

From Rainham, we only have a few footpaths that do not force the walker to use roads so great to have the obstruction removed from

this one.

Best regards, Jim Briggs

2023 Poppy Appeal

Dear Editor,
We have a stall at Hempstead Valley the week before Armistice Sunday, raising vital funds to help those in our Armed Forces community. We would be very grateful for anyone who could help us knit poppies to sell. The pattern can be provided.

Many thanks, Sandra 07592 301151

Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Ltd

Dear Editor,
We have been restoring vintage aircraft of all types to flying and static condition since 1975, gaining much acclaim. The society received the Queen’s Award in 2010 and Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cornwall, now Queen Camilla, agreed to become one of the ‘Maps Chaps’ and a patron. Resident at Rochester Airport, volunteers come from all over Medway. Why not visit us in our new purpose-built hangar and watch restoration in action?

MAPSL has a vacancy for a volunteer with experience of Health and Safety procedures. This could suit somebody newly retired or a younger person wishing to further their experience. Contact us at: www.mapsl.co.uk

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Community

Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Teas

"We Serve" is the motto of Lions Clubs International and Gillingham Lions Club members look forward to serving you once again at our Harvest Tea Party in St. Margarets Millenium Hall.

Sunday 15th October is the date for your diary this year - from 3.30 until 6.00pm.

If you are elderly or lonely you would be very welcome.

To apply for an invitation simply ring Brenda on 01634 379062.
Transport can be arranged.

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

Sat 21st October - 7pm

The seafaring Folk Group 'Swinging the Lead' will be performing a concert at St. Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Dr.

A long-established group who perform regularly around the country, they will be bringing us a variety of sea shanties and other maritime themed folk songs. Lovers of groups like 'Fishermans Friends' will not want to miss this concert. Tickets (currently selling fast) are priced at £12.50 each which will include refreshments during the interval. It promises to be a terrific evening's entertainment.

For tickets, please phone Geoff on 01634 234712 or email geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

Sunburst Books

Have you walked down Station Road recently and looked at our latest window display?

Our volunteers have used their own flowers and plants, pots and tools including a small terrarium and books from our stock for novice and knowledgeable gardeners. Our gardening section includes books for building a pond, redesigning your garden, developing a wildlife area, guidance on garden pests, help with pruning your roses or growing vegetables.

If like me you have a glut of tomatoes or an excess of runner beans we also have a wide range of cookery books to help you create a new dish to try.

The bookshop is open Monday to Saturday 9.00am to 3.00pm and stocks secondhand adult and children's fiction, reference, biographies and self-help books. There are also DVDs, CDs, vinyl, jigsaws and board games...

Laura, Volunteer, Sunburst Books

Great Ormond Street Gift Fayre

We will be hosting our annual craft/gift fayre in aid of the Children's Hospital.

Saturday 28th October,
Howard Memorial Hall, ME8 0PN

It will run from 10.30 till 12.30
Stalls available for anybody interested.

Contact Paula on 07930 595856 and book the date in your diary.




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Community cont...

Friends of St Margaret's Quiz

Join us for our Quiz Night:

Saturday 7th October 2023
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Prompt 7.00pm start
Tables of eight, £5 per person
Booking essential:
Telephone 01634 379796 or 01634 230183

Bring your own food and drink
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We need volunteer deliverers for:

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Blackthorn Rd (50),

Upchurch

Poot Lane/Wetham Green/Susan's Lane

Parkwood

Howbury Walk (24), Hardinge Close (15)
Craddock Way (11), Readscroft Rd (14),
Chislet Walk (18), Conyers Walk (20),
Long Catlis 87 - 103 (9)

Hempstead

Ferndown Cl (20), Greenbank Cl (38),
Hickory Dell (68)

Sickness/holiday cover for all areas is required too.

If you are interested in helping out - even just temporarily, please do get in touch with
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Hospital Radio Medway Quiz Night

October 14th, starts 7.30pm, £6 Per Head,
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Nature Notes

October in the Wilder Garden

Did you plant any trees and shrubs last year?
How are they doing?

I had a go at a couple of blueberries and I have to admit they aren't very happy. This is a combination of forgetting them in a critical dry patch, problems with the fox digging in their area, (which is now a clear and present danger to my garden and sanity) and not enough compost and leaf mould.

I have an Andromeda in this acid area of the garden and that is on its last legs also. Time for another rethink.

I love the way Monty Don is so willing to admit defeat on some of his plans that go wrong. If it happens to famous gardeners, we can accept it will happen to us as well.

I have to say that I believe the weather forecast too often and this is a year when projected rain hasn't made its way this far east. If the garden is dry, water despite the forecast. Few garden plants die from too much water. House plants? That's a different story!

Plant of the month

My colchicums have been lovely this year, but fleeting through a prolonged hot spell.

At the time of writing there is no sign of nerine and amarine flowers, nor the autumn snowdrops. However, there are good buds on the early camellia, so we live in hope.

The star of this month is the flower and insects on the ivy. It always cheers me up to see ivy bees.



Job of the month

I've started to clean out my main border.

I have been lifting, dividing and growing on some perennials so will have some fresh plants that will give me a framework. I didn't grow wallflowers this year but I must have that hit of their scent so will bite the bullet and buy some plants.

As usual, we will be hosting our programme of online workshops through the winter months. Also, check out our downloadable leaflets at:

www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Happy Gardening and keep planning for a wildlife filled garden!

Victoria Golding
(Kent Wildlife Trust Garden Advisor)



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Cycle Ride 2 (roughly 10/11 miles)

It's been easy to feel worn down with all the housebuilding and traffic issues around Rainham but biking out of town I quickly find myself on the rural Canterbury Lane, speeding through the pools of light and shade of the tall poplar trees lining the golf course.

Across the road, a cycle path leads up through orchards laden with blushing pink apples. In winter, flocks of redwings and fieldfares will descend from Scandinavia to feast on fallen fruit. The 'chuck chuck chuck' of fieldfares, a handsome thrush with a slate-grey head, chestnut back and a bandit mask, can often be heard in town as flocks fly over St Margarets Church. Our fruit farmers are having a tough time so buy British where possible.

I cross the A2 at the Tuck Inn and head through the outskirts of Hartlip as flocks of starlings whistle and chirp in the hedgerows. A woolly bear caterpillar is crossing the road, all bristling indignation as I rescue him. These furry tiger moth caterpillars were once favourites of children, although they have declined in numbers with rising temperatures. The fur protects them from being swallowed by birds, who find the hairs irritate their throats and spit them out.

I park my bike beneath the 900-year-old yew tree in St Mary Magdalene Church, Stockbury. The ancient trunk is weather-beaten into pinnacles like stalagmites but the tree is bright with scarlet berries which blackbirds feast on, presumably immune to the poisonous black seeds within each sweet berry. Yews are associated with death and resurrection as limbs that drop in a storm quickly root and regrow. They were also associated with ancient Celtic worship sites and the location of this church, with it's views across the valley, would have been ideal for our ancestors to worship the

constellations and spot enemies.

The square-towered church replaced an earlier Saxon one and next door is a Norman motte and bailey. Lambs, grown chunky since the spring, graze sedately beneath the remains of an old cherry orchard, all the skip of a few months ago seemingly lost with their tails. Inside the belfry are bats - little droppings, like dried coffee grounds, can be spotted on the pews. I think of the bats, hiding in the crevices of the old beams which criss-cross the ceiling and emerging at night to flit through the forest of stone columns. Churches provide an important sanctuary for our bats at a time when many are being evicted by housing renovations and developments.

Outside Stockbury, magnificent views open up across the Medway to Sheppey. I plummet at speed downhill and ripening blackberries blur into a wash of purple and scarlet as I whizz by. I feel miles away from the carnage of roadworks as I fly along lanes, weaving through horse dung not traffic cones!

Finally, after a huff and a puff uphill, I reach Queendown Warren. The fields are still ablaze with purple and yellow flowers, wild marjoram, agrimony and black knapweed. Clouds of gatekeeper butterflies are feeding and the air is a riot of twitching cricket song and humming bees. It seems I have the site all to myself on this sunny Sunday afternoon. I would like to linger but my stomach is rumbling so I pick a few leaves of tangy marjoram to add to my roast potatoes and freewheel home for Sunday lunch.

Carol Donaldson
www.caroldonaldson.co.uk

(Thank you to Joe Ennis for suggesting the first part of this ride.)

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Climate Conversations (EP)

The Living River Foundation

I have lived next to the river for over 25 years and have never heard of the above organisation. It made me wonder how many others might be in the same boat as me, so I have taken some information from a Medway Council email that pinged into my account one day.

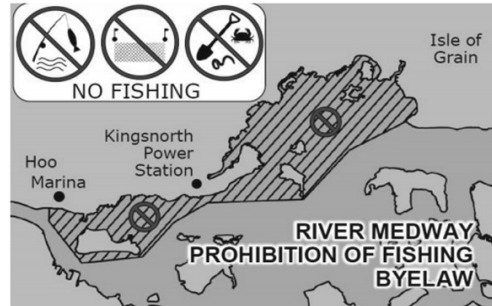
The Foundation is a local not-for-profit organisation set up to monitor and raise awareness to protect and improve the Thames and Medway rivers. Part of their work is to monitor the effectiveness of the 'No Take Zone'.

Did you know that the Medway no-take zone (NTZ) is the largest marine-protected area the UK?

It covers 4.6 square miles of saltmarsh and mudflat environments vital for the survival of many juvenile fish species, providing them with shelter from predators and storms yet with an abundance of prey for them to feed on. Apparently, many commercial fish species spend their early years inshore and migrate into offshore waters once reaching adulthood, returning inshore again just to spawn.

Protecting inshore areas ensures the best possible chance of survival in order for fish to reach adulthood and reproduce, contributing to the population. This keeps our fish stocks high and protects the jobs of commercial fishermen. The Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery established our NTZ in 2015, creating the River Medway Nursery Area, which prohibits any fishing activity within this area.

Where is it I hear some of you ask?



Perhaps lots of you already knew this but it was new information to me!

However, the NTZ has not been monitored for impact on fish species since it was set in place. The Fish of the Medway project launched in 2021 to evaluate and quantify the effectiveness of these protected areas.

It will also evaluate newly-created habitats and identify the added benefit for non-target fish species and other groups.

This will enable Medway's regulators to understand how and where they can sustainably manage the estuary.

Fishing restrictions are always of concern to some but it is hoped that the project will be able to share information about the zone with the local community and help develop future approaches. There is always a need for volunteers to take part in fish surveys so perhaps some of our keen local fisherfolk might like to get involved?

fish@living-river.org



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Rainham History (David Wood)

The Opening of Rainham Council Schools in Solomon Road

Rainham Council Schools in Solomon Road, later known as 'Meredale,' officially opened on May 1st 1907. An expanding population, grown to almost 4,000 by early 20th century, led to demand for more space to accommodate school age children and to take pressure off the National Schools in Station Road. About 250 pupils initially attended the new school - divided into two parts, Mixed and Infants. Miss Dyason became Headmistress and Miss Barker Head of Infants.

Architect Mr G E Bond from Chatham designed the new schools and builders, T Monk & Sons from Sittingbourne undertook the building work. Local yellow stock bricks were used in the construction along with red facings and red bow stone. A large cupola surmounted the central building with a red tiled roof, making the building architecturally attractive. All the classrooms opened into a large assembly hall, allowing school assembly meetings and PE lessons to take place. Each classroom could accommodate fifty to sixty pupils. Other facilities included cloakrooms and toilets, central heating, foul air extractors, an asphalted playground with shelters, two cesspools for draining surface water and a school garden area.

The official opening, by KCC Vice-Chair, Mr F W Cornwallis, took place in the hall. Local dignitaries, the architect, builder and school managers, led by Chair of Governors,

Percy Wakeley, attended along with children from the schools.

After the schools opened, problems arose. In May 1907, the managers complained that the spiked iron fencing bounding the playground was dangerous, so the County Surveyor was contacted to have the spikes filed. A proper road was needed outside the schools because the existing dirt road flooded in wet weather. The KCC Works Sub-Committee recommended that the road be properly made up, with the cost coming partly from the County Council and partly from the district. Six months later, in November, the Council Schools' managers complained that Solomon Road had still not been properly made up; a large 240 feet length of the footpath was missing, causing difficulties accessing the schools. The KCC Works Sub-Committee proposed that the footpath be made up by the owners of the land fronting the schools and also asked the local sanitary authority to clear the rubbish that had accumulated in Solomon Road. Long delays continued before the road was eventually completed.

By early 1908, the Works Sub-Committee proposed that the schools be enlarged to accommodate a further 150 pupils. Kent County Council finally approved this in August 1908.

Mr Harold Greenhalge became Head in April 1908 and remained at the schools until being killed during World War 1.

The schools later had a name change and is now known as Meredale Independent School & Nursery. The original building remains with some changes and additions.

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Dates for the Diary

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2nd Oct - Green Drinks, 7pm, Manor Farm

6th Oct - 'Zac Shulze Gang', Parkwood Social Club, £1 8.30pm, 07968 973331

7th Oct - Friends of St Margaret's Quiz Night, 7pm, £5pp, tables of 8, Book 01634 379796

7th Oct - 60's-80's music quiz night, Trinity Church, Twydall, 7.30pm, £5pp, 01634 923991

9th Oct - Medway Music Club, 'with Matthew Bason', Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30pm, refreshments/bar, £7, phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 07795 576294

11th Oct - Baby Boomers Nostalgia Show, East Medway u3a, 2pm, Smallholders Club, Wigmore, £3, sueu3acook@outlook.com

14th Oct - Darts Night with 'Silverback' Hall, Parkwood Social Club, 7pm, £15pp, 07968 973331 for details

15th Oct - Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Teas, see p5

15th Oct - Bredhurst Woodland Action Group, 9.45am, Hurstwood Rd allotments, 07772 920359 or Facebook

18th Oct - BWAG Club Night, 'Animals lost and found in Kent' Clive Nuttman, Blacksmith's Barn, Bredhurst, ME7 3JU, 7pm. £5 per person (w refreshments) 07772 920359/
info@bwag.org.UK

20th Oct - 'Josh Hassell' 8.30pm, Parkwood Social Club, £1, 01634 371886

21st Oct - Three Towns Theatre Company, see p7

25th Oct - Rainham Historical Society, 'Coco Chanel', 7.30pm, Millenium Centre, £3, 01634 263622

27th Oct - One Big Family Halloween Quiz Night, 7pm, Rainham School for Girls, ME8 0BX, raffle, £5pp, fancy dress optional, sandracolyer@hotmail.co.uk

28th Oct - Medway Geographical and Local History Society, 'History of the local area' with Maggie Francis, 2pm, Twydall Church Hall, woollett@hotmail.co.uk or lorna_bailey576@hotmail.com

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

Rainham Ladies Choir, 7.30pm, RSG, rainhamladieschoir.com or email rlchoir@outlook.com

Bredhurst Art Group, each Thurs, 1.00-3.15pm, contact Barbara on 07974 205656

Hempstead Players community theatre group, 18+, 07421 817158/thehempsteadplayers.co.uk

Oast House Community Choir, every Tues, 10-11.30, Rainham Oast, £5, Bob Carling on 07800 522724

Rainham Volleyball Club, Tues 7-9pm, Sun 6-8pm, Rainham Girls, contact 07772 593674

Medway Concert Brass, every Tuesday, Hempstead, contact manager@medwayconcertbrass.uk

Medway Scrabble Club, alternate Mons, St Stephen's, Maidstone Road, Chatham, 07523 124668

Check out www.thenet.uk.net/events

St Margaret's Monday 'Relaxed' Service, 4th Mon of month, 2pm, Contact 362 023 for more details

Rainham WI, 3rd Thurs of month, Rainham Cricket Club, 1.15pm, small charge, 01634 234997

Rainham Health Walk, alternate Weds, 10.40am outside St Margaret's, followed by an active and wellbeing session inside at 12pm, walking@medway.org.uk

Evergreen Club, each Wed, 2pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, Rita on 07748 058770

Kent Classic & Sports Car Club, 2nd Thurs of month, Three Mariners, Lower Rainham, 01634 362612

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

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

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

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

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

Upchurch Horticultural Society, 1st Wed each month, 97 Chaffes Lane, contact: upchurchsociety@gmail.com

Rainham Community Choir, every Mon 7pm, Rainham Oast, £4.50, contact cdlmedway@gmail.com

Reflex Photographic Club, Thurs, 7.45pm, Rainham School for Girls, www.reflexphoto.co.uk

Rainham Bereavement Friendship Group, Fri AM, Julie on 01634 364309

Breathe Easy Medway (for those with COPD), 1st Tues of month, 1-3pm, Twydall Community Centre, ME8 6TQ, secretary@BreatheEasyMedway.co.uk or 07775 461573

Scottish Country Dancing, Mon - 1.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, Thurs - 8pm, St Thomas of Canterbury, Rainham, www.medwaycaledonians.co.uk, £3

Crafty Friends 6.30pm, every Mon, Rainham Oast Community Centre, contact wilsons2@aol.com

Rainham Chess Club, 2nd and 4th Wed of each month, 7.30pm, Rainham Oast, Rob - 07890 938544

Rainham Horticultural Society, 1st Tues each month, 7.15pm, Rainham Cricket Club, 07931 337310/
rainham.kent.horticultural@gmail.com

Hempstead Friendship Club for ladies, every 2nd /4th Thurs, behind Hempstead Library, 2pm, 07951 629444

Wigmore Ladies Club, 3rd Wed of month, 2pm, Howard Memorial Hall, 01634 388912

Rainham Flower Club, 3rd Wed of month, Bredhurst Village Hall, 7.30pm, 01634 307855/01795 843180

Upchurch Choral Society, St Mary's, 7.30pm,

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