

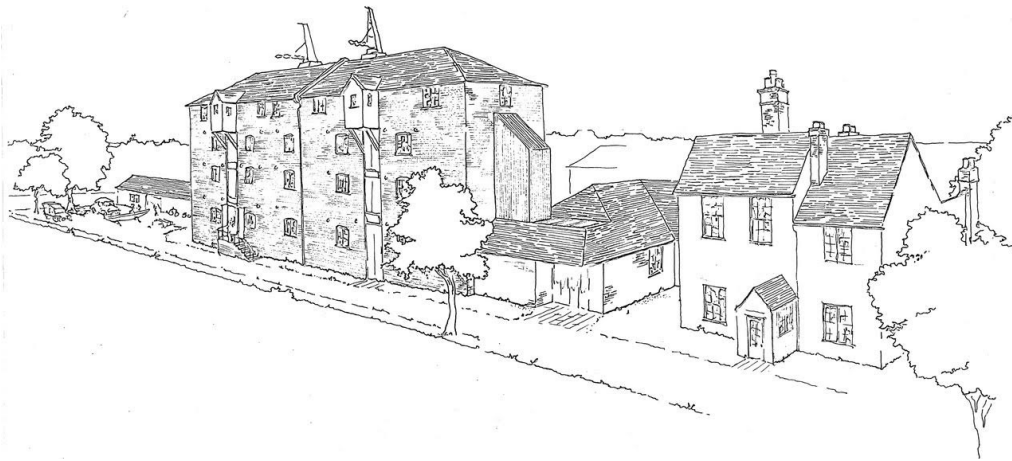
ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

**AUG
2025**

NUMBER 614
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March 1969

The Oast - Rainham's Community Centre



This sketch is of the Oast before it became the community centre and still shows what were known as Platform Row cottages to the right of it. These were demolished in the late 1960s as part of the redevelopment plan.

The building has significant historical value and has featured many times in AF. Still, many in Rainham don't know of it. An active community centre, with lots going on each week, why not take time to find out if any activities interest you and your family or whether you feel able to join the committee that runs the building and oversees its upkeep?

(www.theoasttrainham.co.uk)

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Editorial

I recently visited one of the Medway Local Plan consultation events. It was interesting but I shared some of my concerns for the huge increase in housing that is being proposed, concerns shared by some of the contributors to this edition.

As someone who lives on the Lower Rainham Road, it is difficult to comprehend how much more traffic it could take, particularly given the amount of time now taken out for sections to be repaired. And why does so much housing have to come at the expense of our farmland? We should be eating more local food.

Saying that, Medway Council provides one of the best waste systems that I have come across in this country and one with potential to raise significant amounts of money. So why do people find it so hard to bother? A few months back, somebody dumped about 8 black sacks near our home. We are gradually clearing them but, each time one is sorted, almost the entire content goes into various recycling bags leaving barely anything for landfill.

As I emptied a bin after a hall hire at church, I noticed a completely sealed, in date, 1kg block of sliced cheese. With the number of people using food banks you would have thought there was a better place for it to go but, again, it all seems too much bother.

If we can't look after our own environment or think about each other for that matter, then it is little wonder that the council are left to find money in other ways.

On a more positive note, we have a lovely new contributor this month. Read what she has to say as a local teen - do you have an answer to the problem she raises? on page 12

Letters to the Editor

Bernard Brown memories - May edition

In response to the edition of Action Forum written on May 25th (specifically p9) we received the letter below, addressed to Mr Brown, who had asked if anyone remembered growing up with him.

*Dear Bernard,
 Growing up, my family (The Read's) lived on Cutler Lane, just off Pump Lane, and we used to walk past your house often to get the bus.*

Everyone knew each other on Lower Rainham Road. Our names are Ann (me), Ernie and Susan the twins, Jane and John who are also twins, and Nicola.

We knew you and your parents growing up, and we all attended Rainham C of E school, later moving to Orchard Street.

Your family's bungalow was located opposite a black and white house which belonged to Mr and Mrs Wood, who was my Aunt. Norma, my cousin, lived on Cowstead Lane with my Aunt and Uncle.

The 'Three Mariners' pub is still going strong!

Four of us now live in Minster, on the Isle of Sheppey, and it would be lovely to hear from you.

Best wishes, Ann Whitton (was Ann Read)

If anyone would like to get in touch with either Mrs Whitton or Mr Brown, please contact us at Action Forum, and we can pass on the relevant contact details.

New hobby option?

Dear Editor,
 The Detling Short Mat Bowls Club is seeking new members.

The club has been going for many years but one or two players are having to bring their bowling days to an end. There is equipment sitting in Detling hall just waiting for people to try our sport.

There are three sessions each week to entice people: 7.30pm, Monday nights and 2pm each Tuesday and Friday. Refreshments are

included in the £3 fee.
 Hopefully anyone who joins us for a couple of hours will find our sport enjoyable.
 We have bowlers just starting out and bowlers who play for Kent County sides - a varied mixture of talent, as one would find at many of the clubs in our area.

Should anyone be interested, phone Patricia Ellis on 07919514934.

Wartime Pub Crawl - May edition

Hi, I believe you might have missed out the Mulberry Tree on the Lower Rainham Road, 100m from the roundabout, heading for Gillingham.

In times past, Men would direct by pubs and Women by shops.

What are they going to do now that the shops are going /gone?

Regards Jim Coughlan

***Having done a bit of research, The Mulberry Tree actually only closed in 1973. It was the only beer house in the area selling beer but no spirits - AJ, Rainham History*

Council Vandalism (abridged)

I would like to complain about the council's sole intention of concreting over everything green! In Lordswood, more housing goes up, no doubt intended to attract and house more people from outside the area to somewhere already vastly over-crowded.

We all know it will spread until all of Capstone Park is built over.
 Where will all our food be grown when there are no farms left? China? Russia?

I have heard Berengrave Nature Reserve is to be built on. No doubt Riverside Country Park will be next! Action Forum mentioned the council 'no mow areas' (July edition), to preserve wildlife, yet construction companies are allowed to rip out every last bit of wildlife. I also hear Chatham Docks is likely to close so more outsiders can live in over-priced properties along the river whilst local people lose their jobs.

I have lived in Rainham all my life and have had enough. It feels as if we are being turned into an eastern London borough so perhaps the leftover red route paint could be used to paint our buses red as well.

It feels as if construction firms have large wallets and our councillors, large pockets.

Ross Elliott

***The editorial team is unaware of any plans regarding Berengrave.*

Bloors Wharf

Good afternoon.

I deliver the AF down Maidstone Road and having been walking along the riverside this afternoon. I wondered if you can give your readers more information/history about Bloors Wharf? Could be quite interesting.

Kind regards, Brian Crisp

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Community

The Historic Graffiti in the Medieval Buildings of the Lower Halstow Area

Tuesday 26th August, 7.30pm

Join the Tuesday Social at St Margaret's church, Lower Halstow, for a fascinating insight of the church wall scribbles, with refreshments included.

We do not charge visitors to come to the church but still have the speaker to pay so please consider making a donation on arrival.

Please note the change of venue. Bring a torch - it helps see the graffiti better!!

Contact Liz on 01795 842272

Friends of St Mary's (FoSM) talk

Richard Emmett presents 'The Train That Jumped The Gap', examining the tragic WW2 disaster when a Doodlebug flying bomb demolished the railway bridge at Oak Lane, Aug 1944, causing the derailment of the London to Margate train.

Thursday 25th Sept at 7pm
St Mary the Virgin Church, Upchurch

Tickets are just £5 each and available on the door (cash only).

To pay by card and book ahead please visit www.ticketsource.co.uk/friends-of-st-mary-the-virgin-upchurch-fosm

Copies of the authors book will be £12 and refreshments will be available during the talk - please bring cash for donations.

Medway Towns Footpath Group

With a varied programme, we meet every Sunday morning at 10am for a 5-7 mile walk at different locations around Kent.

Please see website for more details:
medwaytownsfootpathgroup.co.uk
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Langdale Close (105)(50-55 mins)
Temp cover for Moor Park Cl (90)

Lower Rainham

Pomeroy & Greensleeves (80)
Ten Acre estate: Ten Acre Rd (86), Burrstock Way (58), Bythorne Ct (12), Caldecote Cl (7), Clover Lay (10), Shorefields (83)...total 256
Littlefields estate: Littlefields (13), Homefield (32), Grenadier Cl (26), Woolbrock Cl (40), Wilks Cl (19)...total 130 (takes about 1 hr to complete)

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Community continued...

Sunday Cream Tea CORRECTION

Apologies for an editorial mistake - Cream Teas at St Michaels and All Angels, Hartlip run on the first Sunday in the month over Summer. The next one is 3rd August.

Save the Day!

Hempstead Horticultural and Craft Fayre
6th September 2025
details from Hempstead Library

Wigmore Ladies Club

20th Aug, 2-4, Howard Memorial Hall
07943 178362

Restored Shorts Floatplane on display

Rochester Cathedral in August
www.mapsl.co.uk

St. Margaret's Rainham Arts

Alex Hart (Musician)
Friday 5th September

Amazing Blues Brothers Tribute
Friday 12th September

366 Days of Kindness (Play)
Friday 26th September

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Wigmore Voices Quiz Night Fundraiser

Thurs 7th Aug, 7pm, £5 pp, 8 per team,
St Matthew's Community Centre,
BYO drinks and nibbles, 07990 837287

New Book Club for Rainham

Sunburst Books is hoping to start a friendly book club and we're looking for someone enthusiastic to lead it! If you enjoy bringing people together, love talking about books and want to help shape a welcoming space for readers, we'd love to hear from you.

Interested? Contact Luke on 07599 745097 or lukefoord@live.co.uk to find out more!



Bell-Ringing Discovery Day

2nd August 10am - 4pm
St Margaret's Church, Rochester.

Have a go at ringing a bell under the supervision of our expert ringers and learn more about this unique activity. Discover how ringing is a great mental and physical activity and find out about this apPEALing hobby. Ringing is suitable for all ages over 10yrs old and we will have opportunities to have a go on both hand bells as well as tower bells. Free admission but donations welcome. More details: bellringing@kcacr.org.uk

Rainham Historical Society

A local group meeting for varied talks covering historical events, both in the local area and Kent. Encompassing subjects and people that have changed lives in the past.

4th Wed of the month,
St Margaret's Millenium Centre, ME8 9HB
£4 entry, visitors welcome

Schedule for Autumn 2025

24th Sept - The Commonwealth Graves Commission with Sarah Nathaniel
22nd Oct - History of the Red Arrow with Guy Bartlett
26th Nov - The Pilgrims and their influence on Sittingbourne with Richard Emmett
10th Dec - The Victoria Palace, London with Dean Caston

Contact Olwen O'Dowd - 01634 263622

Medway Repair Café

Saturday 2nd Aug, Hempstead Library,
10.30am-1pm

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Nature Notes

August in the Nature-Friendly Garden

At the time of writing we are experiencing our third heatwave of 2025, with the forecast to continue mostly hot and dry. Like many of us, I use pots to grow plants that aren't happy in our soil but it is definitely difficult to drag myself into the garden to water following tiring days compounded by sleep-deprived nights. Which is a long way of saying I have taken my eye off the ball and some favourite shrubs and perennials in pots have died! The issue is not lack of stored rain water on this occasion just that, maybe my husband is right, we have too many pots to look after properly!

Gosh, that is a difficult thing to admit! Part of a strategy for the future would be to have a Plant Sitter help us out and, more practically, fewer permanent pots. There is also a correlation between the health of pots and the distance from the house - perhaps during heat waves we need to have pots closer to rain water sources.

Shrub of the month

Escallonia is a very good source of pollen and nectar for bees, looking particularly lovely in a friend's wildlife garden at the time of writing. The variety 'Pink Elle' is particularly beautiful so would be a good one for your list,

as would be Caryopteris, a beautiful blue flower with silver foliage. Plant when cooler and wetter!

One of my favourite plants for pollinators this year has been Marjoram, which has kept flowering profusely and is spreading well. I have seen more varieties of butterfly this year too, with many more Gatekeepers than normal. I'm sure my wilder 'lawns' are helping to bring them into our garden.

Job for the month

Seed collection is in full swing and I am hoping to collect from some different salvias. Seeds of two different species I planted two years ago have come into bloom and look fantastic; one with tall pale purple spires and the other, Clary sage, with big clusters of white flowers and bracts, which develop to lavender as they age.

At Kent Wildlife Trust's AGM, it was so interesting to hear our Wardens and Ecologists show us how climate change is making us alter whole management systems, just as we need to do on a small scale in our own gardens, allotments and wild spaces.

Happy Gardening and keep cool,
Victoria Golding
(Kent Wildlife Trust,
Wild About Gardens volunteer)

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Wigmore's Hidden Nature Reserve (AJ)

Did you know that there is a secret, hidden nature reserve in the heart of Wigmore? It is an oasis of woodland calm and home to a variety of animal and bird species that has existed, little changed, for hundreds of years yet isn't signposted from any direction.

Despite having lived in Rainham over 50 years, attending school in Wigmore and regularly visiting Wigmore Library, as well as walking along Fairview Ave regularly, I'd not realised until today that Levan Strice Woods actually exists as a council nature reserve and recreation area. I'd heard the name mentioned a few times but hadn't realised it was associated with a local place. I wonder how many other people in the area are also unaware of this natural site within our midst.

It's easy to miss it because there are no signs from the main roads and it's only accessible via a track. The site is actually between Fairview Avenue and Maidstone Road but isn't signposted or directly accessible from either of them. To reach it, you either need to walk past Wigmore Library and follow the footpath signs through the gate that take you into the woods or, alternatively, from Maidstone Road follow the unmade track called Thanet Road and you will similarly reach a gate into the woods.

The only indication that there is a nature

even that isn't very obvious. The sign reads 'Levan Strice LNR'. It's very unlikely that many people will know that LNR is the abbreviation for Local Nature Reserve and that walking past the library will locate it. There are no other signs visible.

Levan Strice woods has appeared on maps for over 200 years, one of the remaining original woods left undeveloped after the Parkwood and Wigmore areas were built from the 1910's onwards. Foxborough and East Hoath Woods are far more visible but they are not designated as nature reserves. Levan Strice Woods was obtained as council land by the compulsory purchase of five parcels of woodland in 1977 by Gillingham Council. These plots were undeveloped areas from the building of Wigmore.

The woods were badly hit by the hurricane winds in 1987. This was actually a blessing in disguise as the fallen trees allowed the woodland to regenerate by opening it up to more light, in contrast to the previous strategy of leaving the woods untouched. When quiet, you can hear, or even spot, its inhabitants. All three UK woodpecker species can be found, squirrels and foxes are commonly seen and, occasionally, the regulars are joined by a woodcock or wood warbler. Almost 50 years from its inception, Levan Strice continues as a haven in the midst of a growing urban landscape.

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Climate Conversations

The 'Lungs' of Rainham at risk - Save our orchards again

(A Stockey)

So, once again we are threatened with plans for 750 new homes on the orchards at Pump Lane. Four years ago, similar proposals were refused by the Planning Inspectorate with agreement by the Secretary of State. The proposal was deemed "harmful to landscape character, in conflict with air quality policies and inconsistent with sustainable development principles".

Nothing has changed with this proposal and it is worth remembering what this will mean, both during and after if the go-ahead were given: site clearance, excavation, diesel machinery and haulage will generate high levels of dust and noise with fine particulates spreading to nearby homes, schools and footways. There is also risk from open-air burning of 20,000 uprooted trees, releasing dangerous pollutants. Increased congestion on the A2, Lower Rainham Road, Otterham Quay Lane and Station Road will then raise NO² and particulate levels. Local schools (e.g. Thames View, Leigh Academy Rainham, Twydall, St Thomas of Canterbury, Featherby and Rainham Mark Grammar), early years settings and care homes all lie within the impact range.

The site includes a proposal for a new eight form (per year) secondary school with all the additional journeys that will bring on top of those from new residents, estimated at up to 1,500 vehicle trips/day.

To make your voice heard, please contact:

www.tinyurl.com/orchards25



Our Inspiring Big Green School Year

On the 14th July, The Howard School once again welcomed students and teachers from our local schools to celebrate.

The cookies were, once again, fabulous (thank you Ellie) but so were those who presented and shared their stories and made new friends along the way.

We also presented our Eco Creator Award winners to:

Hempstead Juniors (Best Product),
Rainham Mark Grammar (Best Picture)
Leigh Academy Rainham and Mierscourt Primary (Best Poems)

Miers Court Primary also won the best overall Eco Creators award.

Many thanks to the team (Jo, Julia and Warda), and Daniel for the tote bags.

(A Stockey)

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Rainham Youth

(E Barton)

Young people and 'third spaces'

Having recently been made aware of the phrase 'third spaces', I can't help but notice the sheer lack of them in and around the Rainham area. The term refers to a place which is neither one's home or workplace, and is used purely for appreciating and enjoying the presence of others through socialisation and interaction. Obvious places spring to mind: coffee shops, local parks, libraries. However, despite having these facilities in the Rainham area, they don't seem suitable for one group who make up a large percentage of the overall population: young people.

As a young person in Rainham, there have been many times I have found myself at a loss of what to do in my free time or for fun. Without a disposable income to spend, which is becoming increasingly necessary, it feels there is a lack of available options. Although local libraries do not charge for entry, the tranquil atmosphere is not suited to the often excitable 'buzz' of young people attempting to socialise with their friends!

Facebook users seem to criminalise teens seen using local playground equipment and they are a 'nuisance' when gathered in groups in the town centre. So, where do you suggest we go?

There are local parks and nature reserves but they are often not within a comfortable walking distance for Rainham residents. Without using public transport (not easily accessible to older teens due to over 16's being charged the 'adult' price) there is a

finite number of social spaces available to young people.

This problem not only affects young people, but anyone living from paycheck to paycheck in the increasingly-demanding economy. In recent years, there has been a clear and visible increase in the number of 'paid parking' signs in the Medway towns, and the fee is only increasing. Now, even public parks and nature reserves, once enjoyed and appreciated by all, are becoming inaccessible. Both Riverside and Capstone country parks saw £2.50 parking fees introduced last year and, despite the seemingly small amount, this has massively impacted families in the local area who visit. Low-income families who used these spaces as a cost-free form of socialisation, or even daily exercise, are now suffering with the parking costs.

Social spaces such as well-equipped youth centres or government-funded sports clubs would allow for the return of one of the town's most recognisable aspects. To young people nowadays, these times are unknown - the area leaves them bored and frustrated. Teenagers in Rainham have been labelled as disruptive for years yet, whilst a small number are unfortunately disrespectful, the large majority are educated, polite young people left with little else to do other than 'hang around'.

In summary, next time there is a disorderly gathering of young people speaking loudly or riding past on bikes, consider the possibility that they are likely searching for a 'third space': one they are not likely to find.

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Dates for the Diary

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

25th July - MKAS Summer Social and BBQ, Bredhurst Village Hall, 6pm, see www.midkentastro.org.uk/events

26th July - 'Come and Sing' with Rochester Choral Soc and Rainham Ladies, led by Bob Chilcott, St George's Centre, ME4 4UH, book: rochesterchoral@gmail.com or rochesterchoralsociety.co.uk

29th July - 'Birdwise - diversity of birdlife in our estuary' with Hayley, 7.30pm, Memorial Hall, School Lane, Lower Halstow, £4 including refreshments and raffle, 01795 842272

2nd Aug - Repair Café at Hempstead Library, 10.30am-1pm

3rd Aug - St Michaels and all Angels Cream Tea, Hartlip

5th Aug - 'Green Drinks, 7.30pm, The Railway PH

7th Aug - Wigmore Voices Quiz Night, 7pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Drive, ME8 0PD, £5pp, max of 8 per team, BYO drinks and nibbles

11th Aug - Medway Music Club with Andrew Nix, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30pm, refreshments/bar, £8, phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 07795 576294

12th Aug - Refresh coffee morning, 10.30am, Rainham Christian Fellowship, Twydall, all welcome

13th Aug - East Medway u3a, 'The lifesaving work of the KSS Air Ambulance', 2pm, St Paul's, Parkwood, £3, contact Daisy at d-ohagan@outlook.com

19th Aug - RSPB Online Talk, 'Return of the Peregrine', with Keith Betton, 7.15pm, £3pp, www.group.rspb.org.uk/medway or info.rspbmedway@gmail.com

20th Aug - Wigmore Ladies Club, 2pm, every 3rd Wed, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside, Call 07943 178362

23rd Aug - Twydall Village Gardening Club Annual Gardener's Show, 2pm, Free Entry, Nye Bevan Memorial Hall, Twydall Lane, ME8 6JU, helenjonesgill@aol.co.uk

26th Aug - Refresh coffee morning, 10.30am, Rainham Christian Fellowship, Twydall, all welcome

26th Aug - 'The Historic Graffiti in the Medieval Buildings of Lower Halstow' talk, 7.30pm, St Margaret's Church, Lower Halstow, 01795 842272, (see p5 for more)

25th Sept - The Train that Jumped the Gap, talk by Richard Emmett on a local WW2 disaster, 7pm, St Mary's Upchurch, £5pp with refreshments (see p5 for more)

Summer Reading Challenge at your local library!
The theme is 'Story Garden' exploring the great outdoors. There are challenges for all ages, in various categories and rewards to be won!
Register at your local library to find out more.

5th Sept - Musician, Alex Hart,

12th Sept - Amazing Blues Brothers Tribute, St Margaret's

26th Sept - Play, 366 Days of Kindness
St Margaret's, rainhamchurch.co.uk/arts, see p7

Check out www.thenet.uk.net/events

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

St Matthew's Film Club, 2pm, last Monday of mth, £2 for refreshments, geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk or 01634 234712

The Thursday Club, St. Matthews Community Centre, Wigmore, 2pm, contact Geoff on 01634 234712/
geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

Rainham Tea Dances, every Fri, 2-4pm, £1 plus £1 visitor fee, United Services Club, Rainham, £2, Jane or Gary 01634 374938

Bredhurst Whist Club, every Tues, 7-10pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, 07707 669915

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

Rainham WI, 3rd Thurs of mth, Rainham Cricket Club, 1.15pm, small charge, 01634 616003

Rainham Health Walk, every Weds, 10.30am 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 mth, Three Mariners, Lower Rainham, 01634 362612

Gillingham Inner Wheel, Women's organisation based on friendship and service, supporting both local and overseas charities, two Tues a month, lunch at Upchurch Golf Club, followed by a meeting on various interesting topics.
chrislmorris648@gmail.co.uk for more details.

Rainham & District Dollshouse & Miniaturist Gp, last Thurs of mth, 7.30pm, Howard Hall, Wigmore, 01634 264295/rainhamdhkent@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

Rainham Community Choir, every Mon 7pm, Rainham Oast, £5, contact cdlmedway@gmail.com

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

See My Voice Song Signing using sign language (BSL) Every Monday, Rainham Social Club, Station Rd, Ages 10+, 6-8pm, £3 pp
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Upchurch Choral Society, St Mary's, every Fri 7.30pm, sue.rossiter1@outlook.com or contact Liz on 01634 361897

Rainham Historical Society, St Margaret's Millenium Centre, 4th Wed of mth (Sept-April), £4, 01634 263622

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See p2 for contact details & copy dates

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The Mackenney Centre also needs volunteers on Weds and Fridays. You can arrange a visit using the email address above or our website.

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