

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

SEPT
2025

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A Fascinating Find!



This cover photo of Rainham High Street might be familiar as it has been used in the Old Photos of Rainham book previously.

This updated picture comes with a fascinating story!

See page 12 for more details

(photo courtesy of Hamish Mackay Miller)

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Editorial

It is almost the end of our summer - but what a glorious summer it has been!
 I know some of you may have felt it was too hot but my vegetables have loved it and we have had bumper crops of cherry tomatoes, rhubarb and courgettes in our front veg garden. Even the mint has flourished!
 Whatever you did, we hope you have been able to enjoy time relaxing, home or away, or with children and grandchildren visiting. Perhaps you have been able to stroll along the estuary or walk through some of our beautiful nature reserves. There has been a lot going on around the wider environs of Medway too. The plane in the Cathedral was really quite something to see and had plenty of hands-on activities to keep everyone busy.

Thank you for all who wrote in, particularly in response to our newest contributor, Ms Barton. We look forward to reading more from her in the coming year.

But this edition for September sees the clubs and associations recommencing after the long break. It is worth reading through the pages to see if anything new takes your fancy. The last few months have shown me how many local bowls clubs we have available to us but there are history talks about local people and places which also sound very interesting. I haven't tired of studying the cover photo yet either - there is always something I hadn't spotted previously. On p12, Andy and Claire introduce us to some of the techniques used in creating these images for us to enjoy. Victoria Golding has a double dose of helpful hints and tips this month as she is on p8 as normal and also p11 giving advice to a fellow gardener looking to attract and help more butterflies. Enjoy!

Letters to the Editor

Council Vandalism

Dear Editor,
 I read with interest a letter entitled 'Council Vandalism' written by Ross Elliott in the last edition of Action Forum. I have lived in Rainham for sixty years so I understand the concerns set out in his letter and wholeheartedly agree with the him on the changes taking place in Rainham, and not for the better, due to Council decisions and the work of construction companies, and is evolving into an east London borough. I know that many others feel the same. I commend his courage in airing his views and also the Editor for publishing his letter when it is becoming increasingly apparent that we need to be careful of voicing our opinions. In the light of this I hope my letter is also published so that Ross Elliott is aware that he has the support of other people and is not alone in his views.
 Jean Clare-Tighe

Hedges

Hi, I am a wheelchair user and live on Wigmore Road. As I travel around the local roads there are houses with hedges that overhang front walls, causing obstructions to both people on the pavement and cars pulling off driveways. It would be very much appreciated if readers with these overhanging hedges could consider what a problem they cause others.
 A Wigmore wheelchair user.

Rainham Youth

Both my husband and I enjoy reading the Rainham Action Forum as it provides valuable information about what's going on in our area and inspires many lively discussions about the various photographs and letters included. I was particularly impressed by E. Barton's article about young people and third spaces. It was a very good point and exceedingly well made.

I can only hope the 'Rainham Reimagined' team have given some thought to this subject and plan to provide useful facilities for the young people of Rainham.
I look forward to more articles like this one; it is so helpful to see the world from the perspective of others.

Kathryn Heather

Rainham Youth

Dear Sir,

I read the article by E Barton with a wry smile as it seems that nothing has changed since I was a teen back in the 1960's.

Yes, we have seen a lot of technological advances since then. We only had 3 TV channels back then and no digital devices - but we survived.

We did have the advantage of more "wild" spaces back then where we could "hang out" away from interfering adults trying to stop our enjoyment, whereas, now, any such plot of land is eyed-up by greedy developers who have no care or consideration for local people of all ages.

I suspect, though, that it is the fate of the teenager to be stuck in this limbo period for a few years until they age past it and that, in 60 or so years, if E Barton is lucky enough to be a grandmother, she will hear her teen grand children saying the same things.

Yours sincerely, Bob Handy

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 annual Harvest Tea Party.

Sunday 12th October is the date for your diary this year.

Join us for entertainment by Trevor Styles at St Margaret's Millenium Hall,
3.30 - 6pm

If you are elderly, or simply lonely, you would be very welcome. Transport to and from the venue can be arranged.

To apply for an invitation, simply ring Brenda on 01634 379062.

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

Come and join the Brownies

Do you know a girl aged between 7 and 10 who likes playing games, making things and doing activities?

5th Rainham Brownies meet at Riverside Primary School each Thursday evening and have spaces for new starters.

To find out more, please email 5thrainhambrownies@blueyonder.co.uk or message us on our facebook page.

Michelle Hemsley
Leader of 5th Rainham Brownies

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Community

Hartlip Singers 'September Serenade'

Friends of Hartlip Church are presenting a concert by The Hartlip Singers, promising an evening of popular classics from stage, screen, opera and pop - something for everyone!

'September Serenade'

5pm on Sunday 28th September
St Michael and All Angels Church, Hartlip,
ME9 7TL

Admission £10 (which includes interval wine and nibbles). Tickets on the door.

Ring 07773 567179 for more information and to reserve seats.

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.



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Sunningdale Dr and Gdns (51)
Langdale Close (105)(50-55 mins)
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Lower Rainham

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Burrstock Way (58), Bythorne Ct (12),
Caldecote Cl (7), Clover Lay (10),
Shorefields (83)...total 256 or can be split
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Homefield (32), Grenadier Cl (26),
Woolbrock Cl (40), Wilks Cl (19)...total 130
(takes about 1 hr to complete)

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Crouch Hill Ct (32), Church Path (5),
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Community continued...

Final Sunday Cream Tea of Summer

St Michaels and All Angels, Hartlip,
7th September.

Save the Day!

Hempstead Horticultural & Craft Fayre 2025
6th September

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

To book tickets or find more details, visit:
rainhamchurch.co.uk/arts or e-mail:
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Medway Repair Café

Saturday 13th Sept,
Wigmore Community Hub, 10.30am-1pm

Help Required for Great Ormond Street Hospital Fundraiser!

Stallholders are needed for our annual craft/
gift fayre in aid of Great Ormond Street.

Saturday 25th Oct,
Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside,
10.30am til 12.30pm

For further details please contact:
Paula 07930 595856

Rainham Historical Society

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
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Singing is good for you!

Upchurch Choral Society are always happy
to welcome new members.

We are a four-voice part choir and rehearse
on Fridays in St Mary's Church, Upchurch.

Next rehearsal is Friday 5th Sept, 7.45pm
when we start rehearsing for a concert on
Sunday 23rd Nov featuring parts of Handel's
'Messiah'.

There are no auditions and the ability to
read music is helpful but not essential.
Call me (Liz Walters) on 01634 361897

Prince Arthur Indoor Bowls Open Day

Come and have a taster -
20th Sept, 9am till 3pm.
There is even a restaurant for a cuppa and
snack afterwards.

Find us opposite the Royal Engineers
Museum, ME7 1UR or contact us on:
01634 281243 or paribc1989@paribc.co.uk

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Nature Notes

September in the Wildlife-Friendly Garden

Our summer has continued to be mainly hot with very little rain. As I said last month, plants have continued to suffer, although our current gardening practices have helped some of our pollinators: The introduction of wild flowers into grassy areas has definitely helped struggling butterfly populations and leaving our grassy areas uncut for longer gives many species the opportunity to produce more generations of insects during the year. I know, more than ever, that each of us gardening in a wildlife-friendly way contributes to providing those oases which provide a springboard for new populations previously living in the countryside. There is a mass of evidence to back that up as well. As farming methods become more aware of nature-based solutions, that too will help habitats to recover and nature flourish along with it. Kent Wildlife Trust is getting more requests for help from our Wilder Grazing Team, both theoretical (human) and practical (a range of grazing animals, suited to different habitats).

Shrub of the month

There are a surprising variety of flowering shrubs that are good for wildlife during September. I always wax lyrical about Ivy, as

you know how good that is. Other choices include Elaeagnus, which makes a magnificent hedging plant, Ceratostigma (Hardy Plumbago) with its stunning blue flowers and later red foliage or Arbutus, the Strawberry Tree. I had always thought my neutral soil wouldn't be suitable but the only thing it doesn't like is being waterlogged.

Job of the month

I have so much work to do in the garden because, as you may know, I don't function well in the heat. Now it is a question of not what, nor where, but how? So what I am doing is starting in one corner and working my way round the various sections, trying to be systematic but also keeping my eye open for things in trouble! I follow up the clearing with supplementary planting to replace those pollen and nectar sources.

Wish us well with our garden, as I wish you lots of good sightings of wildlife in yours. That reminds me, we had the first sighting of a slow worm in the garden! It was under a board we had put over a border for builders to stand on when they replaced a window for us.

Happy Gardening,
Victoria Golding
(Kent Wildlife Trust,
Wild About Gardens advisor)

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No 8 – A Sea Swim at Leysdown on Sea

Leysdown on Sea, on the Isle of Sheppey is still in holiday mode on this super hot day. We are in the midst of yet another heatwave, the 4th this sticky summer and I am eating an ice cream as the tide slips into the estuary. And yet, there is something in the air, a shifting of the earth. The swallows, wheeling overhead like dark blown confetti know it and so do I. Autumn is coming.

I walk along the sea wall towards Shellness. Inland, the fields are golden with stubbles and gangs of sparrows are taking advantage of this brief bonanza of seed left behind by the harvesters before the stubbles are ploughed in and the fields re-sown.

There is a beach which I swim off, far enough away from the town that few people visit. In the spring the oystercatchers find shelter here to build a nest and raise their young amid the carpet of sea spurge. Now, late in the season, the acid yellow spurge has mellowed into hews of dusty pink and carmine red and the oystercatcher chicks have flown.

I crunch, through the cockles and razor shells, down to the shoreline and take tentative steps into the sea. It is warm, well about as warm as a British sea gets. The water has slipped in slowly over the estuarine mud and envelopes me in its soft, cloudy waves. I breaststroke out between the beach groins through pockets of warm and cold water before flipping over

onto my back.

The clouds bubble up with the heat and, overhead, a gull spies on me with its yellow eye to see if I am too big a sea creature to make a tasty meal. It decides I am and heads away, hoping to spot a shoal of mackerel off shore. Sometimes I am joined by a common seal, who watches me from a distance. He never approaches but just to swim in the same water as him is a joy.

I love these sea swims just a little harder at this time of year knowing that soon the water will grow too cold and the beach too windy to make these dips pleasurable for me. But, for now, the sea re-sets me in a way a dip in a crowded council swimming pool never does. It is something to do with being emersed in nature, the smell of the ozone, the distant horizon. We are born through water and often I emerge from my dip feeling revitalised; the troubles of the day washed away, a little more certain of my course for the coming months.

Like the farmers in the fields, the end of summer is our time to gather in, take stock. Know that the nights are drawing in and accept it but grasp that last glint of summer that remains.

Carol Donaldson,
Environmental Consultant
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Pollinator Planting Query

Hi Victoria,
Despite sowing 2 window troughs of pollinator-friendly flowers as yet we have had no butterflies and just a few bees have visited; are we killing them off?
The nearest butterfly was resting on a window ledge - I think it was a meadow ringlet or brown but it flew off before I could take a photo of it.
The only other thing was a funnel spiders web - a photo of which I attach.

Regards, Graham Crawford



Dear Graham,

Thank you for planting your window troughs for pollinators. The fact you've had some visitors shows the plants are working at attracting bees - butterflies are always more difficult.

I notice some annuals have finished flowering - plant a succession of plants, starting with crocus and forget-me-nots and continue through the season. Poached egg flowers are quite difficult for me so well done! It is difficult to see butterflies early and I hope you are seeing a few more late summer. I wonder whether the brown butterfly you saw was a Gatekeeper - they have been more numerous this year.

To help continue to attract pollinators, small-flowered salvias continue into autumn and, with a little care over winter, should survive for another flowering next year. It is always a case of trial and error to see which plants are happiest in your situation but you have made a great start and are on the right lines. I do hope you continue to get pleasure from your troughs.

Best wishes, Victoria

P.S. Tube web spiders are very unnerving when they leap out at you. A bite can pierce the skin but is not poisonous!

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Rainham History (AJ)

Fascinating Find (cont. from front cover)

As the author of the Rainham History website I get copies of photos sent through, many of which are previously unseen but some are examples that have appeared elsewhere.

Around 10 years ago, I received some scans of various scenes around Kent, including our cover photo this month, but didn't get any more info. Fast forward to July and Hamish Mackay Miller passed on a box of old photos which also contained some original 6"x 4" plate glass negatives, including the cover photo, dated to approximately 1910.

This scene shows one of the earliest trams that came to Rainham, along with the area around the High Street and Station Road. The White Horse is still the same building but the Cricketers was rebuilt in the 1930s further back from the road. Hookers garage was replaced by Barclays Bank, again in the 1930s.

I tried to scan the negatives with limited success so contacted local photographer Claire Colston. She has been working with old cameras and developing the results in her darkroom.

Claire writes:

Printing from glass plates differs slightly to film, especially plates that are fragile and 120 years old. Just a tiny finger print or bit of dirt, especially on the emulsion side of the glass, is always harder or impossible to remove compared to more modern day film. Still, I managed to clean up the glass plates fairly well and only handled them with surgical

gloves as cotton gloves tend to slip.

There is a thumb print of one of the plates that could only have occurred when the emulsion side was still wet. This has to be the original photographers which I find amazing.

Enlarging would be possible but tricky and detail is slightly lost the bigger we make them. There was no need to enlarge the negatives as they are so big to start with - the photo is a direct positive of the original negative. What a privilege to work with these glass plate negatives. They are art in their own right, I believe.

Two of the pictures have the same lady and boy in yet are a few miles apart. There is no doubt this was the photographer's wife and child but how did the family get around?

These negatives were taken on a half plate wooden and brass large format camera which would have been extortionate in its day. Whoever took them was a professional and these would have been made into postcards in their day.

I use these cameras too, and it is a real art but so satisfying to get an image. I have made a limited edition set of 20 postcards for my personal use - it isn't commercially viable to sell these. However, I will be giving 2 away to local residents/business. See how to win one on my Facebook page, [Claire Colston Photography](#).

I am available for bespoke darkroom work only, using original darkroom techniques. I do not scan. Scans have their place but, I think you will agree, printing these in the darkroom in the way that was originally intended does produce slightly better results.

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Dates for the Diary

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

2nd Sept - RSPB Online Talk, 'The Complete Owl', with Dr Michael Leach, 7.15pm, £3pp, email name and address to medwayrspb_descar@btinternet.com

2nd Sept - 'Green Drinks, 7.30pm, The Railway PH

5th Sept - Musician, Alex Hart with Rainham Arts, St Margaret's, rainhamchurch.co.uk/arts

5th Sept - Upchurch Choral Society, 7.45pm, St Mary's, Upchurch, Liz on 01634 361897

6th Sept - Hempstead Horticultural and Craft Fayre, Hempstead Library

7th Sept - St Michaels and all Angels Cream Tea, Hartlip

8th Sept - Medway Music Club with Mark Speight, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.30pm, refreshments/bar, £8, phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 07795 576294

10th Sept - East Medway u3a, 'Elizabeth Barton - Maid of Kent', 2pm, St Paul's, Parkwood, £3, contact Daisy at d-ohagan@outlook.com

12th Sept - Amazing Blues Brothers Tribute evening, St Margaret's, rainhamchurch.co.uk/arts

13th Sept - Repair Café, Hempstead Library, 10.30am-1pm

16th Sept - 'Birds of Amini Nature Park, Tanzania' with Clive Nuttman, Parkwood Community Centre, 7.00pm, £4.50, rspb.org.uk/medway, info.rspbmedway@gmail.com

17th Sept - Wigmore Ladies Club, 2pm, every 3rd Wed, Howard Memorial Hall, Woodside, Call 07943 178362

17th Sept - 'Conservation at Wildwood' with Suzanne Kynaston, BWAG Club Night, Blacksmith's Barn, (ME7 3JU), 7.30pm, £5 on the door, info@bwag.org.uk

20th Sept - Prince Arthur Indoor Bowls Taster Open Day, 9-3pm, opposite Royal Engineers Museum, ME7 1UR, paribc1989@paribc.co.uk or 01634 281243

21st Sept - BWAG Woodland Task Day, meet at the Hurstwood Rd allotments at 9.45am (ME7 3JZ), dress for work and weather, bring refreshments, all volunteers welcome, 07772 920359 or info@bway.org.uk

21st Sept - 60 years of St Matthew's, service and photo displays, 10.30am, Drewery Drive, Wigmore

24th Sept - 'The Commonwealth Graves Commission' talk with Sarah Nathaniel, £4, Millenium Centre, 7pm, 01634 263622

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)

26th Sept - 'The Brunel Family' with Medway Geographical Society, 2pm, URC, Balmoral Rd, ME7 4PU, £4, 01634 389916 or vwoollett@hotmail.co.uk

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

28th Sept - Hartlip Singers 'September Serenade' concert, St Michaels & All Angels Church, 5pm, £10pp, 07773 567179

Check out www.thenet.uk.net/events

St Matthew's Place of Welcome, Thurs informal drop-in, 10am, geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk

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

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

Bredhurst Garden Club, 3rd Thurs each mth, £2 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, Bring and Buy Produce Stall, 07791 781910

HempstARA Art Club, 2nd and 3rd Tues of mth, Scout Hall, £7, 07710 406154/01634 389054

Medway Aircraft Preservation Society (MAPSL), restoring vintage aircraft at Rochester Airport, visitors welcome Mon, Wed, Sun from 9.30am, contact www.mapsl.com

Art Group, Tues, 10am, Twydall Community Hub

The Music Man Project, accessible music education Sarah Mann, 07909515439 mmpkent@gmail.com

Wigmore Voices choir, Thurs 8pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Roger 07774 457001, wigmorevoices.weebly.com

Sunbeams Baby and Toddler Music Gp, every Tues, 1.45pm, All Saints, Hempstead, sjcross13@outlook.com

Medway Watersports Centre, sails@medwaywatersports.co.uk

Oast House Badminton, each Tues, 7pm, £5pp, cescottie@hotmail.com

Medway Towns Bands, every Tues and Wed, Hempstead Infants, contact mail@medwaytownsbands.uk 01474 745318

Medway Towns Footpath Group, walks each Sun, 10am, medwaytfg@gmail.com, medwaytownsfootpathgroup.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

See My Voice mini's Sundays, Rainham Social Club, Station Rd Ages 3-10, 11-12pm, £2 pp, 07383 915872

Breathe Easy Medway (those with a lung condition), 1st Tues of mth (Feb-Dec), 1-3pm, Twydall Community Centre, ME8 6TQ, 07775 461573 newmembers@breatheeasy.medway.co.uk

East Medway u3a, 2nd Wed each month, 2pm, Smallholders Club, Wigmore, d-ohagan@outlook.com

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 Thurs, Rainham Oast Community Centre, contact wilsons2@aol.com

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

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