

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

AUG
2026

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Rainham Spectacular, 1972



Rainham Seaside Spectacular, 2026

Friday 14 August, 11am-2pm

Join us at Rainham Shopping Centre for a free family-friendly event packed with entertainment, activities and seaside-themed fun - Punch and Judy shows, sea shanty performances, pirate and mermaid appearances, face painting, traditional seaside games, creative workshops and the official launch of the Rainham Reimagined Delivery Plan.

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(photo from Rainham-History.co.uk)

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Next issue : Aug 26th, 2026
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Editorial

Years gone by saw regular summer coach outings to the Kent coastal towns. This year, Medway Council is bringing the fun of the seaside to Rainham town centre instead! Our cover photo shows the Rainham Spectacular of 1972. This spectacular won't be on the same scale but will have a range of activities for all.

I recently attended the Rainham Town Centre Forum, with the latest plans for Rainham Reimagined presented. Initiatives include signage for new trails to guide residents and visitors around the area. Some seem really obvious once you consider navigation from a visitor perspective. For example, there are no signs for Cozenton Park if you approach from Rainham library or the High Street. Unless you have 'the knowledge', you won't know what is on your doorstep so, hopefully, can be extended elsewhere too.

Local Kent police were at the meeting and highlighted 'My Community Voice' service which allows residents to sign up for local area alerts: www.mycommunityvoicekent.co.uk They also urged anyone who sees anti-social or criminal behaviour to report it so appropriate resources can be deployed.

Without incidents being reported they aren't able to assess areas needing more attention

We are still desperately looking for people to deliver Action Forum. Each area takes around an hour each month and is a great way to get some exercise at the same time! Thanks to dedicated volunteers, each issue of AF gets put through letterboxes across Rainham but, sadly, locations without a distributor are increasing. Perhaps it's an opportunity for someone doing the Duke of Edinburgh award to achieve their volunteering requirements?

Letters to the Editor

Gillingham Lions Club Harvest Tea

Dear Editor,
 'We Serve' is the motto of Gillingham Lions and we look forward to serving the community once again at our Harvest Tea Party, in St Margarets Millenium Hall, Rainham.

It will be an afternoon of entertainment, bingo, good food, a free raffle and excellent company, organised for the Senior Citizens of Rainham and Gillingham.

Can readers put **Sunday 27th September**, 3pm until 6pm, in the diary and apply for a ticket by ringing Brenda on 01634 379062. Transport can be arranged but we very much look forward to greeting old and new friends again this year.

Chris Iles

Yamaha Baby Grand Piano

Dear Editor,
 I am looking for a loving new home for my late husband's Yamaha baby grand piano. If someone is interested, please feel free to contact me at:

andreafreeman90@hotmail.com

Warm regards, Andrea

Local artist selected by the Royal Academy

Dear Editor,
 My son Zac Burton, is just 17 and in Sept heads to study at Medway School of Arts but he has just had one of his paintings selected for the **Royal Academy's Young Artists' Summer Show**.

The show is both online and displayed at the RA in London, from mid-July onwards. His painting, Maggie's Den, is part of a series on derelict and abandoned buildings around Medway. He photographs them himself and then paints them. It's interesting work, capturing something real about these spaces.

The RA Young Artists's Summer Show receives over 25,000 entries from young artists across the country, so being selected

is a real achievement. They also run a People's Choice vote, which is open now and runs until the end of August.

I wondered if your readers might be interested in looking at his work and supporting him during the voting period.

The link below will take you directly there <https://youngartists.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibitions/2026/174093?query=zac>

or you can go to www.royalacademy.org.uk

Finally, the last option is to use the QR code shown here:

Many thanks in advance,
Paul Burton



Bredhurst CofE needs your help

Dear Editor,
Bredhurst Church of England Primary School is seeking enthusiastic and committed individuals to join our Governing Board.

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particularly welcome applications from people with experience in business, finance, human resources, marketing, education or community service.

This is a rewarding voluntary role that offers the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of local children while developing your own leadership and governance skills.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact the school office on: office@bredhurst.kent.sch.uk

We would be delighted to hear from you.

Yours faithfully,
The Governing Board,
Bredhurst Church of England Primary

Rainham Historical Society

Dear Readers,
Rainham Historical Society begins a new season of Winter Talks on Wednesday 23rd September 2026.

We have some wonderful talks planned.

New members are always welcome and visitors to a talk pay just £4 entrance fee each time.

Talks begin at 7.00- 7.30 pm and are followed by refreshments. Usually, the event ends approximately 9.15pm.

Please contact Mrs O O'Dowd on 01634 263622 for any further details.
We look forward to meeting some of you!

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2.30pm - local church history presentation
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St Mary Magdalene, Gillingham Green,
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28th July 7.30pm to 9pm, ME9 7ES

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Littlefield Rd, Woolbrook Cl, Homefield Dr,
Grenadier Cl, Wilks Cl (130)

Parkwood/Lonsdale

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Holtwood Cl (16), Whitegate Ct (8)

Hempstead

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Lower Halstow

Breach La (82), Burntwick Dr (52),
Crouch Hill Ct (32), Church Path (5),
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Wigmore Voices Quiz Night

Come and join us for a fun night of quizzing!

Thurs 6th Aug, 7pm,
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Drewery Dr, ME8 0PD

£5pp, max of 8 per team. BYO refreshments
Call Sue on 07990 837287

Medway Repair Café

15th Aug - Chatham Community Hub,
10.30am-1pm

A Tuesday Social talk with Birdwise

Join The Tuesday Social (Friends of St Margaret's Church, Lower Halstow) for a delightful presentation from Birdwise. Given by rangers working along the North Kent coast, it aims to help visitors better understand how to look after our stunning area.

Tues 25th August - 7.30pm
St Margaret's Church, Lower Halstow,
ME9 7PN
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Rainham WI

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Nature Notes

August in the Nature-Friendly Garden

In looking back at my August 2025 article, I see we were in the middle of our third heatwave of the year then! I didn't remember last year being so hot or for such prolonged periods. As I often say, both of us are prostrated by the heat and I feel more of a grumpy old woman than I ever did. However, there is always something to appreciate in the garden.

Grasses have grown tall and strong and, now everything is drying off, many of the meadow flowers are coming to seed. I will need to harvest the yellow rattle now and save it for planting later in the year.

I am convinced that the lack of grass cutting in the spring and early summer is contributing to the diversity of butterflies that we are seeing here at home. Painted ladies were spectacular earlier on and now Gatekeeper butterflies are common. I watch their scurrying flight and think of an officious gatekeeper, ensuring that there is no incursion onto his patch.

We all want rain but, with the school holidays getting closer, the drought is bound to break, just as the children are liberated for the summer holidays!

Climber of the month

One of our most successful climbers this year has been Campsis, or Trumpet Vine as it is also known. The flowers have been very large and very orange. It has pleasant, soft pinnate foliage and would make a very good screen to reduce the heat on buildings.

I think ours is *Campsis grandiflora*, from China, although there is another species, *C. radicans*, from North America. It is a very cheerful sight at present.

Activity of the month

I am certainly lost as to where the months have gone this year. We need to give our garden a serious tidy, but more importantly, decide how we can cope with the work in future years. It shouldn't be such a chore to keep it going, so many plants will have to be changed to plants which can really cope with our new, and probably permanent, spring and summer drought conditions.

Open gardens are a joy and to be celebrated. Gravesend Garden for Wildlife is open for two more Sundays in July, supporting different charities. It is inspirational! Be careful of the weather, especially during the hot times, but enjoy your wildlife garden.

Happy gardening,
Victoria Golding
(KWT, Wild About Gardens advisor)



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Summer and our Trees

Summer 2026 may not be remembered in future as a particularly hot summer if the scientists are right. It was hot enough for me! If true, then heatwaves will be more common in future, and hotter still. The changes we are already seeing in nature around us will continue.

Already, vineyards are expanding in Kent, palm trees are popping up in front gardens, along with olive trees, and I've even seen prickly pear thriving in a Rainham garden! I also have outdoor cacti.

As new species of trees and other plants begin to thrive in Rainham's changing climate, other, more familiar trees, are suffering, not just from the changing conditions themselves but also from pests and diseases expanding northwards which would have previously been stopped by our, once, colder winters.

It begs the question of what our environment will look like in 50, 100 or 200 years hence. We need to plan now for the quite different future our children and grandchildren face. That's a question being considered by those planning our future treescape.

With the life of trees spanning hundreds of years, should we plant to preserve the woods and trees we and nature are used to, or should we plant species that will thrive in hotter drier summers and wetter milder winters?

This is something that those responsible for Rainham's urban canopy and Rainham's tree

growers at the new Cozenton Park Community Tree Nursery need to bear in mind. Then there's the possibility that changes, already observable, in the Gulf Stream (which keeps us a warmer country than would otherwise be the case) may yet see us coping with cooler conditions in the future!

In any case, Rainham is losing the nature around us at an accelerating pace. It's becoming more difficult to find a pleasant place to walk where the sight and cooling shade of trees can be found.

Trees cool the air around them, unlike the shade from a garden parasol. They also absorb air pollution and noise and make us feel less stressed, improving both our physical and mental health.

Yes, we are losing too much green space to development but, we are also losing trees from Rainham's gardens as houses and gardens change hands, trees that should benefit generations to come.

If you would like to see more trees cooling our gardens and streets, why not pop along to the Cozenton Park Community Tree Nursery and Community Garden (any Thurs from 11.30am to 1pm) and take home a tree to plant? And if your street is lacking trees, talk to Medway Council and ask them to plant some.

Leon Roskilly - Wild About Rainham

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Climate Conversations

Rainham Conservation Area Walk

Council officers enjoyed two afternoons of fine weather and walking with residents to survey the current state of the Rainham High Street Conservation Area.

We discovered some treasures in the historic features and views to the river, as well as some definite areas for improvement and opportunity, and stories to go along with certain parts of the town, past and present.

Our prompts for discussion included the green and hard landscaping, contribution of trees, buildings, views, sounds and areas of busyness and tranquillity.

The purpose of the walks was to use conservation area survey toolkits to make notes of the current character of the area within the boundary and just outside but, we also noted that, the boundary on the west and northwest side had the potential to be extended to include more of the historic town within the conservation area.

The team, including the conservation officers and regeneration placemaking officers, plan to engage with secondary school students in Rainham. They plan further engagement with the youth groups in the area along with visits to care homes to capture more of the essence of Rainham.

All of this will help to inform a new Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the Rainham Conservation Area, with a potential new boundary and clear guidance for managing change in a way which, at the

very least, preserves the special character of the area.

We're excited that this appraisal process is running alongside the Rainham Reimagined project, led by the Head of Economic Development, Innovation and Town Centres and the Town Centre Manager. The project is in the final stages of preparation before a launch of the proposed improvements to the town centre, as workshoped with residents.

The Rainham Town Centre Partnership, Rainham First team at St Margaret's and the Rainham Historical Society have all been helpful to us in this process and we'd like to thank everyone involved to date. Further consultations will be carried out and there will be additional opportunities to contribute to this piece of work. In the meantime, if you have any particular thoughts on the current conservation area or the proposal for extending the boundary to include Station Road down to the station, Rainham Rec and the shopping centre as the current hub of the town, please do contact us at: design.conservation@medway.gov.uk.

Medway's Tree Strategy

Medway is seeking public views on how trees and green spaces should be planted, protected and enhanced.

Hard copies of the consultation are available from the libraries, online ones are available from the council website and the consultation closes on Sun 16th Aug.

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Rainham History

Life in Rainham by Clive Cobb

It is difficult to imagine now but from the church at the centre of Rainham you were never more than a mile from genuine hazard. Woodland, orchards, farms, the river, chalk pits, abandoned machinery, rusting corrugated sheds and ponds with the colour and opacity of military soup. For boys this was less landscape than opportunity.

We possessed, what amounted to, six-day-a-week, ten-hour licences for unsupervised exploration. Childhood then operated on a simple contractual understanding: leave the house after breakfast, return before dark and try not to lose an eye. The geography surrounding Rainham offered endless possibilities for injury, drowning, concussion, tetanus or accidental death which, of course, made it irresistible.

The chalk pits, in particular, had the white lunar desolation of somewhere bombs ought to have landed. Orchards became jungles. The Medway was not scenic water but an industrial soup carrying old tyres, oil slicks and occasional dead animals towards the Thames Estuary.

We climbed things we should not have climbed, swam in places we should not have swum and discovered that fear was often merely excitement wearing different trousers.

Out on the furthest reaches lay the wrecks of old wooden minesweepers abandoned in the mud to rot slowly back into the Medway. Their ribs protruded through peeling paint and salt rot like the carcasses of extinct animals.

To us they were treasure ships. We climbed aboard through broken hatches and claimed the crews' quarters as our own. We lit small fires in rusted tins to keep warm, the smoke trapped beneath collapsing timbers, and imagined ourselves at sea, at war, somewhere in the North Atlantic hunting submarines through black water and fog. Boys of the fifties were only ever one

generation removed from the war. Fathers had fought it, films celebrated it and half the town still smelt faintly of it. So naturally, we played at war with the seriousness other children reserved for religion.

Roger Parnell came from the rougher end of Lower Rainham, though in the late fifties roughness usually meant poverty. He lived with his mother and Aunt Maud in a prefab near the railway. His father had been killed years earlier at Rainham station while shunting wagons, trapped between the buffers during a stunt that went wrong. In those days, men died at work often enough for tragedy to become almost administrative. An only child, he carried the restless intensity of boys raised entirely by anxious women. He was funny, unpredictable and always prepared to go slightly further than common-sense advised.

John Chandler lived in Tufton, the long road between Station Road and Berengrave Lane, where the houses stopped looking municipal and started trying to look important. John went to grammar school in Sittingbourne.

Bryan Flynn attended a private day school in Rochester. His father owned a cement brick works down near the Quay in Lower Rainham and had built himself a modern house with a great stone chimney stack, inspired, no doubt, by American ranch homes seen in magazines. To us, it looked impossibly glamorous.

What joined us together was not class, school or ambition but bicycles.

Bicycles were freedom. Bicycles dissolved geography. On bicycles we crossed estates, orchards, mudflats, farms and chalk pits with the unquestioned confidence of boys who believed themselves immortal. The bicycle was our passport, getaway vehicle and declaration of independence. Once you were out of sight of your front gate, Rainham and the surrounding countryside belonged entirely to us.

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Dates for the Diary

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contact: diary@actionforum.co.uk

28th July - 'Life of a Royal Protection Officer' with Tuesday Social Club and Richard Griffen, 7.30pm, £5, Memorial Hall, Lower Halstow, see p5 for more.

2nd Aug - RSPB Medway guided walk, Oare Marshes, 10am, ME13 0QD, group.rspb.org.uk/medway

2nd Aug - Afternoon Teas, St Michaels and All Angels, Hartlip, ME9 7TL, lovely views across the orchards

3rd Aug - 'Happy Hour' singing group, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, St Margaret's, Lower Halstow, Liz - 01795 842272

6th Aug - Wigmore Voices Quiz Night, 7pm, £5pp, 8 per team max, St Matthew's Community Centre, Drewery Dr, ME8 0PD, book on 07990 837287

8th Aug - Medway Culture Club Carnival 2026, noon till 5pm, free family day celebrating diversity within our community, music, entertainment, food, games and more, including free entry into Royal Engineers Museum www.medwaycultureclub.co.uk/event-details/medway-culture-club-carnival-2026-1

8th Aug - Open Garden at Tyland Barn, 11am-3pm, An easy way to experience the wonders of our Kentish countryside. The park has woodlands, colourful wildflower meadows and a large pond full of life. You might spot orchids, stag beetles in the log piles or dragonfly, Parking is available, All ages are welcome!

10th Aug - Medway Music Club w Andrew Nix, Parkwood Community Centre, 7pm, refreshments/bar, £10, phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 07795 576294

12th Aug - RSPB Medway guided walk, Cliffe Pools, 10am, ME3 7SU, group.rspb.org.uk/medway

14th Aug - Rainham Seaside Spectacular, 11am-2pm, fun for all the family, Rainham Town Centre

15th Aug - Repair Café, Chatham Community Hub, 10.30am -1pm

16th Aug - RSPB Medway guided walk, Dungeness Peninsular, 10am, TN29 9NA, group.rspb.org.uk/medway

17th Aug - 'Happy Hour' singing group, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, St Margaret's, Lower Halstow, Liz - 01795 842272

19th Aug - 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/info@bwag.org.uk

20th Aug - 'Round the World in Your Garden' with Victoria Golding, Wigmore & Bredhurst Garden Club, 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, ME8 0PN, 07531 624679

20th Aug - Rainham WI, Berengrave Cricket Club, 1.45pm, contact Pam on 01634 365789

25th Aug - The Tuesday Social presentation from Birdwise. Given by rangers working along the North Kent coast to help visitors better understand our stunning area, 7.30pm, St Margaret's Church, Lower Halstow, donations on door, contact Liz - 01795 842272

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

Wigmore and Bredhurst Garden Club, third Thurs each mth, 1.45 pm, Howard Memorial Hall. Membership £15 quarterly. Entrance fee £2. Visitors - first visit free, first quarter membership £10. All welcome, just come along or for more details call 07531 624679.

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, Tuesdays, 10am, Twydall Comm Hub

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

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

See My Voice Song Signing using sign language (BSL) Every Monday, Rainham Social Club, Station Rd, Ages 10+, 6-8pm, £3 pp Learn sign language through the power of music

Upchurch Choral Society, St Mary's, every Fri, 7.45pm, Liz - 01634 361897/kbl.walters@talk21.com

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

Rainham Cricket www.rainhamcricketclub.com

Rainham Ladies Choir, local, enthusiastic, non-audition choir meeting Mon evenings, Rainham School for Girls. rainhamladieschoir.com or email rlchoir@outlook.com

Prince Arthur Indoor Bowls, opposite the Royal Engineers Museum, ME7 1UR, open daily 9am-12.20pm with restaurant for refreshments, 01634 281243 or paribc1989@paribc.co.uk, come and join us for a taster!

Wigmore Voices choir, Thurs 8pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, Roger 07774 457001 wigmorevoices.weebly.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 01474 745318 or mail@medwaytownsbands.uk

Medway Towns Footpath Gp, walks each Sun, 10am, medwaytownsfootpathgroup.co.uk

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See p2 for contact details & copy dates

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