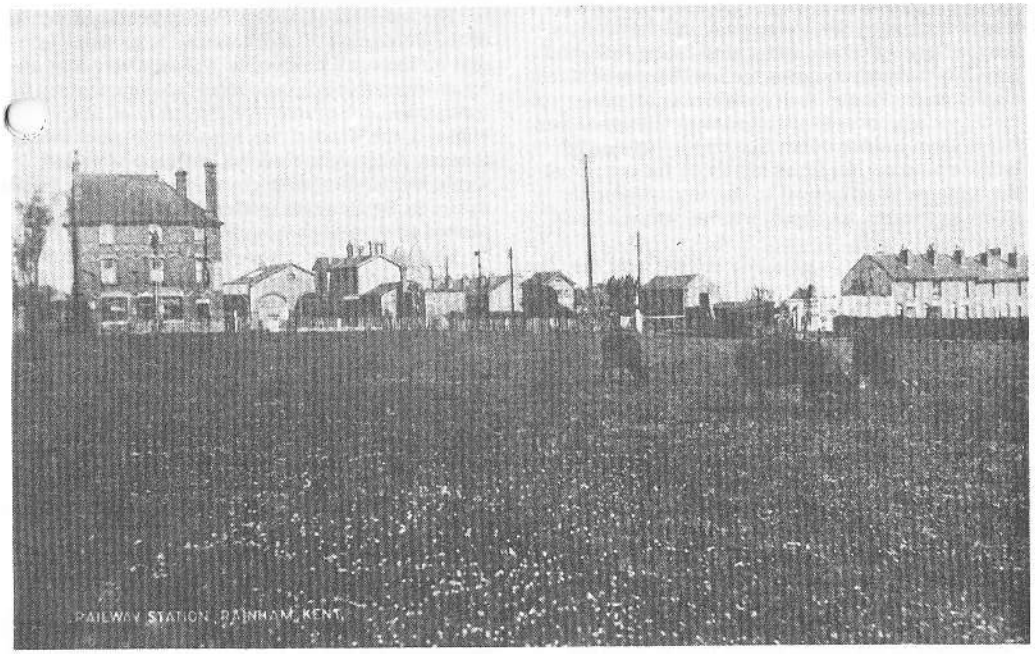
ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RESIDENTS OF RAINHAM AND WIGMORE ■ AUGUST 1983 NUMBER 160

Memories of Rainham



Jacobs Meadow opposite the Railway Hotel in Station Road (now the site of Signal Court and the Fire ation). Jacobs Meadow is the subject of more Memories of Rainham in this month's Action Forum.

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Editorial

There is no pleasing some people is there? Having longed for a good dry hot summer, all the time we were suffering the cold wet spring during April and May, when it arrived it was too hot! I suppose if it arrived gradually and then remained constant we would soon become accustomed to such temperatures but in short sudden bursts like that it just totally incapacitates me. So let us hope that for the rest of the summer we will revert to the more moderate, sunny and warm, but fresh, weather which I find more comfortable.

Now is the time, would you believe, that the Adult Education people would like you to start thinking about the long winter evenings when there is nothing good on television. They hope to tempt you to sample their courses, and have collected an impressive array of subjects together, some of which are mentioned in the centre pages this month. Full details, as always are in the prospectus and again we include details of how to procure your copy. If by some remote chance, even after studying the booklet from cover to cover, you still can't find anything to interest you, Brian Haynes on Medway 388461 is always on the look-out for constructive new ideas, and would be happy to try to provide a course to suit you in the future if at all possible.

What a pity that the beautiful fields of yellow rape flower in the spring should turn at this time of year to a putrid mass with such an obnoxious odour. We reprint in this issue an extract from a Swale Footpaths news letter explaining how this and other crops obstruct the legal rights of way. They wish to know of any footpaths you find blocked in this or any other manner. I am sure the Medway Footpaths Club would be equally concerned about paths in their area. The people to contact are, for Swale, Andrew Gray (Faversham 535160) and, for Medway, Mick Whittingham (Medway 362654). Despite all the difficulties I hope you are able to get out and enjoy the local footpaths – there are many around Rainham and just a very short walk can offer a whole new impression of an area you may have thought you knew very well.

Finally this month I hope everyone has a very happy holiday whether it be at home in the garden or further afield exploring places new. So that's all until September when you will all be dashing to enrol for Adult Education!

Correspondence

FREE TAPE LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND

Dear Editor,

Through Action Forum I would like to thank the lady who gave a lovely furry owl for us to raffle for the library funds. Unfortunately, I didn't get her name and address, but am sure she would like to know that we raised £8.45 and the lucky winner was Carol Hales of Rainham.

The last issue of Action Forum published details of the Berengrave Nature Reserve. It so happened that on the day I received it, I spent a very interesting morning there doing a recorded commentary for inclusion in one of our tape programmes. John Williams, the Warden, was most helpful, and we felt that any fairly agile visually handicapped person would be able to appreciate the scents and sounds of nature in the Reserve, and he would be only too pleased to show them round a suitable route.

Yours sincerely,
Jean Weir,
18 Highfield Road,
Rainham

FRIENDS OF WAKELEY SCHOOL

Dear Editor,

On behalf of the Friends of Wakeley School, I should like to thank everyone who came along to our Summer Fete on 18th June and contributed towards its success. Around £650 was raised towards our funds.

In addition our Grand Summer Draw raised £225, and we should like to thank all the local traders who so generously donated prizes for this.

All the money raised will be used to buy items of equipment for use by the teachers and children, and everyone's efforts in raising the money is very much appreciated.

May I also correct an error which I made in letter which you printed last month regarding our Boot Fair held in May. The actual amount raised by this was £550, and not £50.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,
Pat Butler, Secretary,
758 Lower Rainham Road,
Rainham.

17TH GILLINGHAM (ST MARGARET'S RAINHAM) SCOUT GROUP

Dear Editor,

May I appeal, through your columns, to anyone who has or may know of a large garage that would house our mini-bus. The entrance to our present garage is quite narrow and consequently the body-work of the mini-bus is suffering. A considerable amount of work has been done to the mini-bus recently by a parent and we want to prevent it being spoiled by further damage.

If anyone in the Rainham area can help perhaps they would contact me on Medway 367379.

Yours sincerely,
Jean Penney,
Scouter-in-Charge,
18th Gillingham
(St Margaret's Rainham)
Scout Group,
52 Bredhurst Road,
Wigmore.

FRIENDS OF ST MARGARET'S

Dear Editor,

On 18th June the Friends of St Margaret's Church, Rainham, held a very successful Jumble Sale in the Church Hall. The proceeds went to the Fund to Build Church Toilets. We were most fortunate in collecting a large quantity of very good clothing. After the Jumble Sale the better clothing that was left was carefully packed up in a number of cartons and they were transported to an address in Gillingham – to be transferred to a depot in Rochester. They would then be sent to Poland together with food and medical supplies. A lorry goes each month to Poland from Rochester – on a voluntary basis – taking these supplies. Many thanks to all who helped in any way.

Yours sincerely,
Nancy Duncan,
138 Tufton Road,
Rainham.

SELLERS (AND BUYERS) WANTED

Dear Editor,

Can I enlist your support once again to pass on through your columns details of our Boot Sale, to raise funds for the Miers Court School?

The Sale will take place on Sunday, 18th September 1983, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., in the School grounds (Silverspot Close).

We are charging £3.50 for a pitch booked in advance, or £5.00 on the day. There is ample room for all who wish to sell!

Pitches may be booked by telephoning me, Paul Warren, on Medway 372508 or writing to me at the above address, enclosing a cheque for £3.50 payable to Miers Court County Primary School. Full details and instructions will be forwarded by return of post.

For those who wish to buy, admission will be 15p. Accompanied children will be admitted free of charge. There will be refreshments available.

We look forward to hearing from anyone who would like to sell and to seeing all the buyers on that day.

Thanks again to Action Forum for their support to the School.

Yours sincerely,
P.A. Warren, Chairman,
Fund Raising Committee,
133 Lonsdale Drive,
Rainham.

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Diary '83

Keeper: Mrs Christine Smith
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No charge is made for Diary entries.

August 7th – Medway Towns Footpath Group. Stockbury church (just off A249) 11 am and 2 pm. Leader John Rogers.

August 8th – Medway Organ Club, presents Mike Finden. 7.30 pm for 8 pm. £1.35. Parkwood Community Centre.

August 9th – Medway Antique & Collectors Club. Mr Moad, Reminiscences of a Museum Curator. The club meets at the Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel, Hotel Street, Rochester. For details of time telephone Med: 813560.

August 10th – Rainham (Kent) Floral Art Group. Competition – An exhibit incorporating fabric. 7.15 pm to 9 pm in St Margaret's Hall, Orchard Street.

August 10th – Bredhurst W.I. Members Meeting. Competition – Flower of the month. 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

August 11th – Hempstead Leisure Club. Mr A. Laming, 75 years of Scouting. 2.15 pm in the Village Hall.

August 11th – The Roy King GABIT JAZZ BAND playing at the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre. Broadcast by Radio Kent 11 am to 12.

August 14th – Medway Towns Footpath Group. Upper Halling car park, 2.30 pm. There will be someone outside the White Hart pub on A228 South of Bush Road, until 2.30 pm to lead cars in the direction of Upper Halling. Leader Stan Kennard.

August 17th – Wigmore Evening Townswomen's Guild. Sergeant B. Elvey – Police Business. Competition – Arrangement of Flowers. 8 pm Smallholders Club.

August 18th – Hempstead Leisure Club. Schoolday memories, and a cream tea.

PRIZES **PRIZES**

Sunday 21st August, 12 noon

Annual Fancy Dress Sponsored 'Push' in aid of Danecourt (E.S.N.) School Hall Building Fund

Celebrities: Amande Fisher, TVS Reporter
Radio Kent D.J. John Thurston

The above race will take place down Station Road, Rainham. Anyone want to enter a team? For details please contact Rita Taylor, 57 Chalky Bank Road, Rainham, Kent. Medway 33811 or Medway 372729.

If you don't want to enter a team, how about coming along and supporting the contestants on the day? Prizes for the best fancy dress (any theme) and prizes for the best pushing conveyance (anything without a motor) pushing power only!

This annual 'push' is in aid of the Danecourt (E.S.N.) School Hall Building Fund. This is a special school for children with learning difficulties and they need a larger school hall for indoor activities.

Hope you can enter a team, or at least come along on the day and throw your pennies and silver into the buckets.

August 21st – Medway Towns Footpath Group. Car Park Borough Green (on A25 about 2½ miles beyond Wrotham)(traffic lights). Two walks 11 am and 2 pm. Leader Frank Parkinson.

August 22nd – Rainham (Kent) Stamp Bourse – 7.30 to 10 pm. White Horse pub Rainham.

August 25th – The British Red Cross Society are holding a Mini Sale at 46 Orchard Street at 10.30 am.

August 25th – Hempstead Leisure Club. Mrs A. Hooker.

August 28th – Medway Towns Footpath Group. Ash Tree Lane, Gillingham. 2.30 pm. Leader Will Rose.

LYNSTED FETE

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY
(29th AUGUST) 2.00 pm

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August 31st – Mini Auction by Friends of St Margaret's at Church Hall, Orchard Street, viewing 7 to 8 pm. Contributions to hall from 2 pm onwards or ring 33964, 360937 or 365563 for collection. Proceeds to fund for building toilets and other facilities at church. Please note – not large items or clothing – thank you.

September 1st – Hempstead Leisure Club. Games Afternoon.

September 7th – Rainham (Kent) Horticultural Society. Lecture on Fruit Growing by Mr I. Scott. 7.15 pm, St Margaret's School, Orchard Street.

September 7th – Wigmore & Rainham Men's Branch TOC H. General Meeting. 8.00 pm, 25 Wigmore Road.

September 8th – United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women. Members Evening, Holiday Slides. Bring and Buy. 7.30 pm at the United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham.

September 8th – Rainham Evening Townswomen's Guild. The work of the Samaritans. Competition –Something made from six pipe cleaners. Meeting 7.15 pm in the Methodist Church Hall, Station Road.

September 8th – Hempstead Leisure Club. Mrs Holmes in Malawi.

September 10th – St Margaret's Church Social Committee. JUMBLE SALE. 11 am to 12.30 pm in the Church Hall, Orchard Street. Admission 10p. Profits to hold a Christmas lunch for elderly people.

September 11th – Medway Towns Footpath Group. Car park Tunstall 2.30 pm (take Bredgar Road out of Sittingbourne for about 2½ miles). Leader Don Allen.

September 18th – BOOT SALE in aid of Miers Court CP School Fund, in the school grounds Mierscourt Road/Silverspot Close. Pitches £3.50 in advance, £5 on the day. Buyers 15p Admission – Children Free. Phone Medway 372508.

"Slim and be Trim" with Rowena Tucker meets at the Rainham and Wigmore Community Centre, Granary Close, every Thursday lunchtime at 12.15 pm and 1.15 pm. Just come along or phone Med 251271.

The Rainham Motor Club hold their weekly meetings every Friday at 8.30 pm at The Bell, Bredhurst. For further details contact Sue Skinner Medway 866.

Antique and Collectors Club meet at 7.30 pm every 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Royal Victoria and Bull Hotel, High Street, Rochester.

Popmobility every Monday 2.00-3.00 p.m. in Bredhurst Village Hall, admission 75p.

Rainham Tufty Club meet every other Monday at the Oast House Community Centre. 2.00–3.00 pm. For further details contact Mrs Lorna Russell. Tel: 371629.

Humpty Dumpty Mother and Toddler Club meets every Wednesday 2.00–4.00 pm at the Rainham and Wigmore Community Centre, Granary Close. More details from Medway 360690.

Gillingham Social Democrats meet every Thursday at 8.00 p.m. in the Prince of Guinea, Medway Road, Gillingham. For any further details telephone Pam Holman 53817 or Brinley Morgan 362644.

Gillingham Labour Party Rainham Branch, meet every first Wednesday in the month at Twydall Labour Hall, Committee Rooms, at 8.00 pm. Contact Eddie on Medway 35588 or Mike on Medway 33833.

Rainham Conservative Headquarters, 123 High Street, Rainham – Medway 373266. Meetings every 2nd Wednesday in the month at the White Horse public house 7.45 pm.

Liberal Party; for more information please contact Tony Luckhurst, 35 Gillingham Road, Medway 52975.

Rainham Chess Club meet every Tuesday evening, from 7.30 pm at the White Horse public house, High Street, Rainham. All are welcome – beginner or expert, young or old. And the first night's play is free. Further details from David Mitchell, Medway 360503.

Rainham War Games Group, first and third Sunday in the month 11.00 a.m. in Twydall Community Centre. For further details telephone Mr Simcock Medway 376167.

The Mid-Kent Astronomical Society has now amalgamated with the Mid-Kent College in Horsted (opposite Rochester Airport), and will now hold two monthly meetings, on the second and last Friday of each month; the former at the College, and the latter at the Medway Teachers Centre, Vicarage Road, Strood. The meetings will commence from 8 pm, finishing promptly at 10 pm. For further details please contact Mr Nazim Rajan, 52 Tilbury Road, Rainham, Kent ME8 7QE (Secretary).

Bookings for the use of St Margaret's Hall, Orchard Street, Rainham should now be made either in person or by telephone (Medway 362023) on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 10.30 and 12.30 and Friday evening between 5.30 and 7.30 pm. Postal bookings should be made to the Hall Bookings Secretary at the above address.

Gillingham Marching Band, Monday and Wednesday Practice Night. 6.00 pm - 8.30 pm. All Recruits welcome, age 8-12 years. Meet in the back of St Margaret's School, Orchard Street, Rainham. Details from Mr K. Fisher. Tel: 361927.

The Strood Poetry Group. Meet at 8.00 pm second Thursday in the month at The Teachers' Centre, Vicarage Road, Strood.

Medway Youth Hostel Association Group, meet every Tuesday at 8.00 pm, at the United Reformed Church Hall, Balmoral Road, Gillingham. More details from Jane Pullinger Tel: 405066.

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Old Rainham

A LITTLE MORE OF OLD RAINHAM

In a recent number of Action Forum mention is made of the cows being driven up Station Road between a meadow in Solomon Road and a farm opposite the Church.

The cows belonged to Mr Jacobs who used the meadow known as 'Jacobs Meadow'. The so called farm was not a farm but Greenborough Dairy, named after Greenborough Marsh where Mr Jacobs kept other cattle.

I have often as a boy helped drive the cows up Station Road and many Saturdays have I spent in the cow shed at the Dairy. Gordon and Douglas Wickens, old Rainham boys, were my companions and they could tell you tales of the cows and the Dairy. Sundays we were all angelic choir boys, singing our heads off.

Mr Keutenius was the cowman, a patient and kind man to his cows and to we boys. He had an unusual nickname, 'Old Cakybun and Cheesepastry', he so loved these two items, always to be found in his lunch bag. There were never any bulls in the meadow, these were kept on the marsh, and all the cows returned to the Dairy each evening. The meadow behind the Old Parsonage was also used by Mr Jacobs for his cows, mostly during the winter months.

We boys often spent the dark winter evenings in Jacobs meadow playing 'Jack, Jack show your light', and when we were cold we would warm our hands on the two big iron supports let into the wall forming the back of Mr Cramp the bakers oven. The two iron bars are still there in Solomon Road in the side wall of what is now a motor spares shop, but then Mr Cramp's bread and cake shop.

After a warm we would bide our time 'till the stableman at Wakeley's Oast House, now the Community Centre, had gone for his evening pint. We would then raid the stable and pinch the locust beans from the horses feed. The young people of today don't know the delicious taste of a locust bean; or enjoy the fun we had. No wilful damage in those happy days, too busy having our fun.

Monday and Thursday evenings were for choir practice and if you missed one you were not permitted to attend choir the following Sunday. As a result you were a penny farthing short in your quarterly pay packet. A farthing for the choir practice and a halfpenny for each morning and evening service.

In 1919 the body of Nurse Edith Cavelle was sent to England from Belgium. For those unacquainted with the name, Edith Cavelle was a lady from Norfolk who as a Matron ran a training hospital for nurses in Brussels. She was shot by the Germans in 1915 for hiding Allied soldiers cut off during the Mons retreat.

In 1919 the Belgian authorities exhumed the body and it came to England by a British Destroyer from Ostend to Dover. The old S.E. & Chatham Railway conveyed the body from Dover Marine to Victoria. In the spring of 1919 as a boy of the old C of E School I marched with others to Jacob's Meadow. There we lined up facing the railway line. The usual train arrived from Dover and halted at the station. I well remember the large black carriage which our teacher, old Grace Campbell told us contained the remains of the heroine Nurse Cavelle.

Two ladies of Rainham also of the C of E School remember parading in the Meadow and getting into trouble because they picked daisies in the Meadow and made daisy chains. Another remembers parading in the Council school playground which ran alongside the railway line. The train stopped at all stations between Dover and London to enable people to pay their respects.

Do any other people of World War I vintage remember taking part in the parade in the Meadow?

Harry Hammond
Rainham.

Gardens of Kent

185 Borden Lane (Mr & Mrs P.A. Boyce). ½m S of Sittingbourne. Borden Lane is 1m from Sittingbourne side of A2/A249 junc. Present owners have been continually improving this small informal garden since 1976; fuchsias are a feature with around 75 different varieties; shrubs; pond; fruit and vegetable garden. NO DOGS. Home-made TEAS. Adm 30p, Chd 10p. Sun. Aug. 7 & Wed. Aug. 10 (2-6).

Mereworth Castle (His Excellency Sayed Mohamed Mahdi Al-Tajir). 7m W of Maidstone. A26 mid-way between Maidstone and Tonbridge. Beautiful landscape garden surrounding famous Palladian mansion (not open). NO DOGS. Adm 50p, Chid 10p. Sun. Aug. 14 (2-6).

West Studdal Farm (Mr & Mrs Peter Lumsden). West Studdal, N of Dover. Farm is just off A256 on E side. From Dover area via Whitfield and on approx. 1½m passing High & Dry pub on right, after which take 2nd road on right. From Sandwich area via Eastry and on 2m passing Plough & Harrow pub on right, after which take 2nd road on left; follow road to 1st crossroads and turn right, then on 500 yards, at entrance on left is pair of yellow cottages. Medium-sized garden around old farm house set by itself in small valley; herbaceous borders, roses and fine lawns protected by old walls and beech hedges. Duodecagonal folly (in which teas will be served). Plants for sale. TEAS. Adm 50p, Chd 20p. Sun. Aug. 21 (2-6).

ADULT EDUCATION in GILLINGHAM and RAINHAM 1983/84

County Education Officer:
W.H. Petty, C.B.E., M.A., B.Sc.,
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Divisional Principal for Adult Education:
Peter Chittenden,
Gillingham Adult Education Centre,
Green Street, Gillingham.

COURSES IN A WIDE VARIETY OF INTERESTING SUBJECTS BEGIN IN SEPTEMBER AT:

Gillingham Adult Education Centre, Green Street, Gillingham. Medway 50235 and 56439
Enrolment: At the Centre – 12 to 15 September 1983, 10 am to 12 noon; 6.30 to 8.30 pm

Hempstead Village Centre, Hempstead Road, Hempstead, Gillingham. Medway 31206
Enrolment: At Hempstead Centre – 6 to 8 September 1983, 10.30 am to 12 noon; 7.00 to 8.30 pm

Pump Lane Evening Centre, Rainham Mark Grammar School, Pump Lane, Rainham. Medway 364151
Enrolment: At Rainham Mark Grammar – 13 & 15 September 1983, 6.30 tp 9.00 pm

Rainham Adult Education Centre, Derwent Way, Rainham. Medway 388461
Enrolment: At Rainham Centre (Howard School Buildings) 6 to 9 September 1983, 6.30 to 8.30 pm

Upbury Manor Evening Centre, Upbury Manor School, Marlborough Road, Gillingham, Medway 578414
Enrolment: At Green Street Centre – 12 to 15 September 1983, 10.00 to 12 noon; 6.30 to 8.30 pm

SUBJECTS OFFERED INCLUDE:

Arts and Crafts	Knitting, crochet, flower arranging, pottery, upholstery, woodwork and metalwork.
Cookery	
Dress	Tailoring, fashion accessories and sewing machine techniques.
General Studies	Architecture, Astronomy, Bee Keeping, Biology, Bridge, Chess, Car Maintenance, Collecting, Computing, Driving, Finance, First Aid, Fly Fishing, Gardening, Geography and Local Studies, History, Home Maintenance, Literature and Drama, Maths, Making the most of Yourself, Music, Natural History, Navigation, Photography, Pre-School Playgroups, Retired People's Groups, Self Development, Shorthand and Typing, Understanding Society, Video, Wine and Beer Making, Writing.
Languages	English. Dutch, French, German, Italian, Latin, Polish.
Physical Education	Archery, Badminton, Cricket, Dancing, Fencing, Golf, Hockey, Keep Fit, Rugby, Soccer, Tennis, Target Shooting, Trampolining, Volley Ball, Yoga.

FEES:

All fees are based on a charge of 80p per hour, but there are many reductions for retired people, unemployed people, and others receiving some form of Social Security Benefit.

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- Adult Education Centre, Green Street
- Gillingham Road Post Office
- D.S. French, Butchers, 263 Gillingham Road
- Harvey's Florist, 1 Livingstone Circus
- J.L. Simpson, Newsagent, 39 Barnsole Road
- Carlton Motoring School, Canterbury Street
- The Post Office, 104 Canterbury Street
- Byron Road Post Office
- Newsagency The Spot, Canterbury Street
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Rainham Area/Twydall Area
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- Rainham Mark Post Office
- Newsagent, Ashley Road
- Rainham Library
- Rainham Book Shop
- Rainham Sports, High Street, Rainham
- E & G Confectioners, Station Road
- Newsagent, Wakeley Road
- The Chocolate Box, High Street, Rainham
- Lavells Newsagent, Maidstone Road, Rainham
- Newsagent, Norrey's Road/Arthur Road
- Newsagent, Lonsdale Drive
- Martin The Newsagent, Peverel Green, Parkwood
- Martin The Newsagent, 19 Parkwood Green
- Wigmore Post Office, Woodside
- Wigmore Library, Fairview Avenue
- Wigmore & Hempstead Newsagent, Wigmore Road
- The Post Office, Hempstead
- Hempstead Library
- Smiths, Beechings Way

Villages near Rainham
- Bredhurst Post Office
- Upchurch Post Office

If you have not made up your mind what you would like to do, come along to our enrolment week exhibitions. Hempstead Village Centre has an exhibition which illustrates a number of their classes.

Gillingham Adult Education Centre has a similar exhibition. (This also refers to classes at Upbury Manor Evening Centre), and in addition to the displays, there will be *live demonstrations* of Arts, Crafts, Cookeryy and Physical Education during the week. See posters, leaflets and local newspapers for full information nearer the time.

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Correspondence

H.M.S. HOOD ASSOCIATION

The above association has now incorporated within its organization the following capital ships associations.

H.M.S. Repulse, H.M.S. Renown, H.M.S. Nelson, H.M.S. Rodney, H.M.S. Invincible. This will make the association the largest warship association in the country.

Our continued links with H.M.S. Invincible will maintain the everlasting glory that day at the battle of Jutland on May 31st. Shortly after 6.30 pm on the evening of that day, Rear Admiral Hood in his flagship Invincible leading the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron was hotly engaged with Admiral Hippers Battlecruisers, then the flagship met with disaster, at 6.33 pm, a 12 inch shell from the Derfflinger struck her amidships, and igniting the magazines of the two midship turrets, caused a gigantic explosion which cut the ship in half. The Invincible went down with the Admiral and some 1,020 officers and men, out of a total of 1,026. From start to the end of Invincible the action lasted less than one minute.

Plans are afoot to hold a gigantic reunion at Weymouth in the near future. For this Weymouth situated midway between Portsmouth and Plymouth is most ideal.

Membership is open to all those who have at any time served or are still serving in these great ships, at £2 per year. Those wishing to join should send their £2 membership fee, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope to:

Fred White,
Founder & Vice President
H.M.S. Hood Association
17 St Mary St, Weymouth
Dorset, DT4 8PB.

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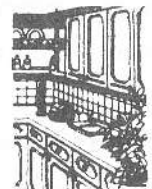

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RAPE!

In the spring of the last few years our eyes must often have been cheered by bright splashes of yellow bursting on the farming landscape, as oil seed rape comes into flower. This highly profitable crop, not unlike mustard in appearance, has become increasingly popular with North Kent farmers. It is used for vegetable oil and animal feed.

Unfortunately, the plant grows over six feet tall, and before harvest it curls over into a tangled mass as thick as a bramble patch. Any path through a rape field becomes totally impenetrable – and rape fields tend to be very large.

Our highway authorities are well aware of the difficulty. In 1980 the County Secretary wrote in 'Kent Farmer'.

"Clearly there are crops which constitute an obstruction to a public right of way. Potatoes, rape and maize are clearly within this category and the County Council and District Council are bound to take action on complaints regarding these."

These were encouraging words. KCC is bound by law to "assert and protect the rights of the public" on public paths, and has the power to get illegal obstructions removed, and we thought we could rely on them to see that rape did not obstruct paths.

Picture our dismay, then, when in April 1982 'Kent Farmer' reported a meeting between "footpath walkers, farmers and officers of the County Council", at which, on the subject of oil seed rape, "it was agreed that in most cases where these difficulties arise, and the field is not too large, we should ask walkers to walk around the outside of the field, by putting up a suitable notice directing walkers".

I don't know who the 'footpath walkers' were; but did KCC officers really agree that a farmer could obstruct a right of way with crops? Did they seek legal advice first?

You may be sure that we and other organisations are asking KCC to explain their position. Meanwhile, if you find a path planted with crops – particularly rape, maize, potatoes, beans – tell us!

From Swale Footpaths News — Andrew Gray

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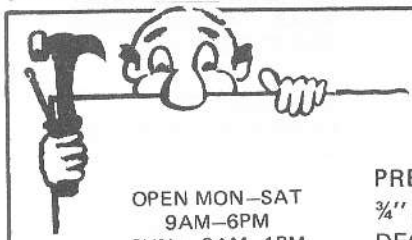

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