

# ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

APRIL  
2026

NUMBER 621  
First published  
March 1969


## Rainham had its own hovercraft!



Gillingham Technical College,  
now Rainham Mark Grammar School, built its own hovercraft.  
Find out a little more on p12

(photo from [Rainham-History.co.uk](http://Rainham-History.co.uk))

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	Copy date : April 13th, 2026
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## **Editorial**

What an amazing week we are having! We have had 3 days of glorious sunshine, blue skies and the blossom looks simply stunning. It really is a joy to be out and I have finally got into the garden so I can apply all of the hints and tips Victoria Golding offers. This year, I am trying potatoes in a sack and a grape vine - lets see if they are still alive by the next edition! On the plus side, my garden is awash with rhubarb. Any simple recipes beyond rhubarb crumble and rhubarb jam would be gratefully received.

I am excited to attend the Tree Nursery Open Day (p7) - perhaps I can glean some hints and tips there. If the weather continues though, I may need to follow the route described by Carol Donaldson (p9).

The more technically-minded may prefer to get in contact with MAPSL and help them out with all they are doing but there seems to be much opportunity for getting stuck in to community life. There is a heritage morning at St Margarets and if you fancy a night out then we seem to have a wealth of options - from music to sport to theatre... My husband and I 'googled' the young man being advertised on p7. At only 17, this remarkably talented Australian guitarist provides "a sound that is technically breathtaking and emotionally raw" and has already graced the stage with many internationally acclaimed guitar greats. And he's coming to Rainham!

There is little space here to mention the hovercraft, food waste bins, the history of Credit Unions, the Medway Credit Union and how you can be involved, but do browse the edition and feel free to get back to us at any time.

All the best for a great start to April!

## **Letters to the Editor**

### **Can you help Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Ltd?**

Dear Editor,

Readers will probably remember the very successful display of our Short Scion float plane within the Cathedral last summer and might be interested to learn that restoration work is continuing at our Rochester Airport hangar. MAPSL is an all-volunteer, not for profit limited company. Visitors of all ages are always welcome. They will receive a guided tour of the busy hangar and view restoration in action.

The Short Scion float plane is currently nearing the paint spraying stage whilst restoration continues of an ex-Soviet Air Force Hawker Hurricane fighter. Recently received for attention are two Rolls Royce Merlin engines and substantial parts of another Hurricane fighter. (See [www.mapsl.co.uk](http://www.mapsl.co.uk) for further details.)

All this activity has resulted in the need for additional volunteers. There are activities for suitably enthusiastic people, be they hands-on skills based, archivists, buyers, researchers, shop workers/guides or have specialist experience of Health and Safety or Store keeping.

Please contact me on 07983 835459

Regards Philip Cole, Managing Director

### **Plea for new school governor**

Dear Editor

The Local Governing Body (LGB) of St Margaret's Church of England Jnr School, in Orchard Street, Rainham, is seeking a new co-opted governor.

The school is a founder member of the local Medway Anglican Schools Trust. The LGB comprises the Head Teacher, a staff member, two parents and six co-opted members.

We are looking for someone who will be committed to helping our LGB to, both, challenge and support the School Leadership Team in its roles of improving the quality of teaching and learning, and nurturing our pupils.

At our most recent OFSTED inspection, in September 2023, we were pleased to, again, retain our 'Good' judgement. The LGB meets six times a year, in school, sometimes spending the whole day there. Online training and support will be available. If anyone wishes to put their name forward, or would like further information, please do contact me, Chrissy Hornby, on Medway 387348 or 07762601545.

I am looking forward to hearing from you!  
With thanks,  
Chrissy,  
Chair of the Local Governing Body at St Margaret's C of E Junior School

### Dementia Support Group

Dear Editor,  
I am the coordinator for the Rochester Dementia Support Group which meets at St Peter's Church, Delce Road, Rochester.

There are so many people with different sorts of dementia and at different stages, which is very frustrating both for the sufferers (it is a disease) and their carers. We hold a Singing for Memory session, which all seem to enjoy, and a Dementia Cafe which really helps the carers connect with other carers and volunteers. Leaflets and information is available at these sessions, as at the Carers Support Group which meets during the Parish Coffee Shop on a Tuesday morning. We are working hard to

spread the word about our sessions throughout Medway and need all the help we can get. Readers can feel free to pop in and see what we do.

The details are as follows:

- Singing for Memory**  
2nd Fri of the month 2-3.30pm
- Dementia Cafe**  
4th Fri of the month 1.30-3.30pm
- Carers Support Group**  
2nd Tues of the month at Coffee Shop 10-11.30am
- Dementia Worship on**  
2nd Tues of the month 2.30-3.30pm  
St Justus, The Tideway Rochester.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email or on 07905 357247.

Kind regards  
Monica Aldridge, Dementia Coordinator

### Quiz Night - 24th April

Dear Editor,  
One Big Family Helping the Homeless are hosting a quiz night at Rainham School for Girls, ME8 0BX.

Tickets are £7pp, with a max of eight to a table, doors open at 7pm.  
BYO drinks and snacks.

Contact [sandra@helpingthehomeless.org.uk](mailto:sandra@helpingthehomeless.org.uk)

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### Three Towns Theatre Co - New Show

'And We'll Sing Once More' tells the tale of Camp Crescendo and the fight to save it. A fun and uplifting concert, refreshments are available but you may also bring your own drinks and nibbles.

Sat 28th March, 2pm and 7pm  
Upchurch Village Hall

Book tickets or a table on 07720 953383 or  
[www.ticketsource.co.uk/three-towns](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/three-towns)

### City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra

'Music from the Stage' includes songs from Sweeney Todd, Phantom, West Side Story, Wicked etc, plus orchestral items.

29th March, 3pm at Glassbox Theatre,  
Mid-Kent College, Tickets are £20  
(students £5, children £1)

[Glassboxtheatre.com](http://Glassboxtheatre.com)

### Oasthouse Theatre with 'The Lion Queen'

Based on the true story of Ellen Bright, killed by a tiger in 1849 whilst Wombwell's Travelling Show was in Chatham, this series of dramatic monologues allows us to hear from those who knew Ellen or watched her demise, including her mother, the medic and the tiger!

26th - 28th March,  
Curtain up at 8pm

Bookings at [www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk](http://www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk)  
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### Medway Repair Café

25th April  
Wigmore Community Hub, 10.30am - 1pm

### Thrift and Thrive Pop Up Repair Café

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Upchurch Choral Society presents songs of peace and hope

Sunday 19th April, 7.30pm  
St Mary's Church, Upchurch,  
Tickets £14, cheque or card on door

**Cozenton Park Community Tree Nursery**

Come and check what the fabulous volunteers have been up to each Thursday!

There will be free outdoor craft-type activities for the children, a raffle and Ellinor's icecream van to tempt you.

Sunday 19th April, 10.30am - 1pm

**Heritage Open Morning at St Margaret's**

Saturday 11th April, 10am -12pm

The beautiful church of St Margaret's, Rainham, holds over 800 years of history behind its medieval doors!

We'll be open all morning, with knowledgeable guides and hosts on hand to showcase and tell you all about the heritage in our town.

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## Nature Notes

### April in the Wildlife-Friendly Garden

Although I have not been very active in the garden since I last wrote, lots of plants have found their moment to shine. They give me a lot of pleasure if I can brave the cold and winds to actually spend some time to look.

Wildlife is also getting active and I had about thirty frogs in the smaller pond at breeding time who were very jumpy, in both senses of the word! Now they have mainly dispersed, as has most of the frogspawn, partly because of this activity. I thought the same last year; anxious as I saw several dead frogs, killed by cats and foxes. I believed that the population in the garden was crashing but it seems not yet! A large dog fox has made himself a comfortable spot at the base of the tall *Daphne odora*, tearing down branches to make himself a platform on top of the gravel. Then, today during a sunny period, there were loads of, mainly, bumble bees but also different solitary bees active on anything in flower. I had forgotten how lovely their background buzzing makes me feel. We are having very good flowering on our shrubs this year, again related to the hot summer and subsequent endless rain!

### Climber of the month

Again, this month, I am waiting for clematis

to flower. The *Clematis alpina* I mentioned last month has big buds, showing a tinge of blue. However, I became aware that one of the New Zealand varieties (which is planted in an inaccessible part of the garden, at the back of the shrub border, in the corner) has been quietly making a bid for freedom and found its way into the *Magnolia stellata* where it is full of bud. This one is *Clematis x Cartmanii* "Joe", and is described as a scrambler rather than a climber. It will be a pure white when it opens. "Joe" would be a lovely clematis for a big pot, to fall down over the edges. The medium-sized camellia, which used to go in the Pot Garden, is now planted in the border, where it is thriving and flowering beautifully.

So, many reasons to be cheerful.

### Job of the month

Any severe pruning now needs to stop in case of nesting birds so, we can turn our attention to training our climbers and prune the early shrubs after flowering. Keep planting seeds and pricking out seedlings. I love doing that as it is such an absorbing job and rewarding.

Happy Gardening!

Victoria Golding  
(KWT, Wild About Gardens advisor)

[www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk)



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### A cycle from Bearstead to Leeds Castle

It is spring...at least for today. Finally, after weeks of rain, the sun is out and the daffodils cluster together on the village green at Bearstead as I set out on my cycle ride.

I pass the village bowls club where retirees are enjoying some gentle exercise and conversation. Maybe I should have taken a leaf out of their book as, by the time I have pedalled up hill to the village of Otham, I am already shedding my winter layers.

Otham has hosted many illustrious visitors including Winston Churchill and Francis Drake. I freewheel down Stoneacre lane, splashing through the ford and stop to admire Stoneacre house, a medieval yeoman's house owned by the National Trust and set in a garden of plum-coloured hellebores. The house and gardens are well worth a visit when they open to the public in April.

Beyond Stoneacre, the bridlepath is muddy after the winter rains but I push through the quagmire and am rewarded with the sight of sweet violets on Holly Bush Lane and my first ladybirds of the year emerging from hibernation.

Beyond Leeds village I head through lanes of celandine, passing the diminutive church at Broomfield and take a footpath which leads alongside the River Len, emerging into the grounds of Leeds castle. I can't help feeling slightly smug at avoiding the £34 entrance

fee and enjoy my picnic with a view across the lake to what was once the glamorous home of the decadent Lady Ballie. From the far side of the lake, I can escape the tourist hoards and enjoy the site of a kestrel hunting through the long grass of the estate.

While it is legal to push a bike on a public footpath it is not always easy and leaving the grounds of Leeds proves tricky as I wrestle with the electric security gate which refuses to recognise a bike as transport. I'm not sure who comes off worse but I limp into the George Inn in Leeds village for plasters and a pint of Pale Ale.

As I pedal out of the village four buzzards are rising on the warming thermals before drifting off towards the hills of the North Downs. Their call would have been rare only 20 years ago but now, with a reduction in persecution and more rabbits, they are becoming a common site. A little story of nature recovering in our depleted countryside. As I head back into Bearstead, the shadows are lengthening across the lawns of the Bowls club. My day has been more active than the bowlers and more muddy but I am glad I ventured out and grabbed spring before it passes.

Carol Donaldson  
Environmental Consultant

[www.caroldonaldson.co.uk](http://www.caroldonaldson.co.uk)

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## Climate Conversations

### 'Food Waste Recycling Scheme for Flats

Dear Editor.

I have received information from Medway Council about this new service starting on 6<sup>th</sup> April. I live alone in a flat and create next to no food waste. It appears that I will receive 2 plastic bins and one roll of waste food bin liners. After that I would have to purchase more bin liners at cost to me.

I read, with interest, where this food waste will be processed - by a private company in Cambridgeshire! This is around 90 miles each way! Seems like 'so much for saving on Greenhouse emissions' has not been taken in to account.

Also, I have no intention of trying to find somewhere indoors for 2 unrequested plastic bins. Can I tell the Council I do not want them? I will be paying for them in my Council Tax no doubt.

I would love someone on the Council to reply to this matter.

Although not connected with the council, we have done some research on this and, it seems to be a new initiative for flats. Every house in the area is encouraged to place foodwaste into the brown garden bins as, apparently, around 35% of the average black sack is food waste!

But it did raise an interesting conversation amongst our editorial team so we thought perhaps we could address some of the points raised.

*'I create next to no food waste'*

If you had an upbringing like mine then you

were taught to finish everything on your plate! But most people do not eat onion skins, banana peel, applecores, teabags, chicken bones etc so unless everything is a ready-meal then everyone produces food waste. Once in the black sack it quickly goes off and produces bad smells.

*'I will have to purchase food waste bin liners at a cost to myself'*

Each home currently purchases its own black sacks but if no food waste goes into the sack then a single-person household could have the same black sack for almost a month. That saving would cover the cost of food waste bags.

*'...processed in Cambridgeshire'*

You are right, this is a shame but all brown waste goes to the same place. Perhaps we can campaign to have a local option for the farms and gardeners of Medway?

*'...unrequested plastic bins'*

The council has decided on a particular waste system in order to earn back as much money as possible to go towards council waste costs and new government directives around waste.

Refuse sites have to be maintained, kept secure yet cause many long-term issues. Food waste taken out of the waste stream can, instead, be composted and generate income, much the same as paper recycling.

[www.medway.gov.uk/info/200132/waste\\_and\\_recycling/77/what\\_goes\\_in\\_my\\_recycling\\_and\\_rubbish\\_bins\\_or\\_bags/4](http://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200132/waste_and_recycling/77/what_goes_in_my_recycling_and_rubbish_bins_or_bags/4)

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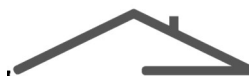
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## ***Rainham History***

### **Medway Credit Union**

Did you know that Medway has its own Credit Union and it is located here in Rainham? No - us neither! We received the following and thought it would be great to share it.

Dear Editor,  
We are writing to ask if you would kindly highlight the work of Medway Credit Union as a service for the communities of Medway and Swale.

Credit unions were first established in Germany in the 1850s, then by the 1900's had spread to North America but only reached the UK in the 1950s. Now, membership of British Credit Unions stands at 1.52 million and there are hundreds of local credit unions.

The credit union vision is to offer everyone living or working within their area the opportunity to save securely and access affordable loans. Credit unions have been seen as an important part of the response to financial exclusion, and a responsible credit alternative for financially excluded people compared to payday loan providers and loan sharks.

Medway Credit Union was established in 1999 and is owned, controlled and run by the members.

We save together to provide a pool of money from which members can apply for a loan at affordable rates. Money saved with the credit union is protected by the FSCS and regulated by the FCA.

All staff are unpaid volunteers who offer their time to run the Credit Union. The interest from the loans covers the running costs.

We are always happy to welcome new members to allow us to support the community in their financial resilience. We are always happy to welcome new members to allow us to support the community in their financial resilience.

For information, go to:  
[www.medwaycreditunion.co.uk](http://www.medwaycreditunion.co.uk) or on 01634 403335

Opening hours: Thur-Sat 10am – 2pm  
Medway Credit Union Ltd  
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### **Rainham Hovercraft** (from front cover)

A reader, watching a documentary on hovercrafts was reminded of one she saw running at the Gillingham Technical College Summer Fair in Pump Lane in the late 70's/ early 80's.

It was being demonstrated on the school ground where the Sports Hall now is.

Andy James of Rainham History attended the school at the time and knew a little more: The Design and Technology Dept along with A'level students, built it and used it to give rides across the school field on open days and school fairs. It was also used for 'messaging about' during some lunchtimes! Perhaps readers remember more.

Can you imagine it happening today?!

[www.rainham-history.co.uk/latest/rainham-mark-grammar-school-rmgs-hovercraft-1987](http://www.rainham-history.co.uk/latest/rainham-mark-grammar-school-rmgs-hovercraft-1987)

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## Dates for the Diary

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

**Upto 29th March** - River Medway Journeys community art exhibition, Historic Dockyard, ME4 4TZ, 10-4, daily

**26th-28th March** - Oasthouse Theatre presents 'The Lion Queen', 8pm, Bookings at [www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk](http://www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk) or 03336 663366

**28th Mar** - 'And We'll Sing Once More' is a new show by Three Towns Theatre Co, Upchurch Village Hall, 2pm and 7pm, refreshments available, BYO drinks/nibbles, [www.ticketsource.co.uk/three-towns](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/three-towns) or call 07720 95338

**28th Mar** - Maidstone & Medway Sinfonia Spring Concert, 7.30pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, ME8 0NP, £14, [www.ticketsource.co.uk/mms](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/mms) or cash on the door, children free, [mandmsinfonia@gmail.com](mailto:mandmsinfonia@gmail.com)

**29th Mar** - 'Music from the Stage' with City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra, The Glassbox Theatre, Mid-Kent College, ME7 1FN, 3pm, [Glassboxtheatre.com](http://Glassboxtheatre.com) £20, Students £5, Children £1

**29th Mar** - RSPB Medway guided walk, Samphire Hoe, 10am, CT17 9FL, [group.rspb.org.uk/medway](http://group.rspb.org.uk/medway)

**4th April** - Rainham Food and Craft Market, finest quality local food and craft produce, The Oast, Granary Close, Rainham, 10am-2pm, dog/family friendly

**7th April** - RSPB Medway Zoom Talk, 'the Best of Britain's Summer Wildlife' with James Lowen, £3pp, 7.15pm, [group.rspb.org.uk/medway](http://group.rspb.org.uk/medway)

**11th April** - Heritage Open Morning at St Margaret's, 10am -12pm, Free drop in, discover something amazing!

**12th April** - RSPB Medway guided walk, Stodmarsh NNR, 10am, CT3 4BB, [group.rspb.org.uk/medway](http://group.rspb.org.uk/medway)

**13th April** - Medway Music Club w Lewis Scott, Parkwood Community Centre, 7pm, refreshments/bar, £10, [phil.burt@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.burt@ntlworld.com) or 07795 576294

**16th April** - Rainham WI, Berengrave Cricket Club, 1.45pm, contact Lynne on 01634 616003

**17th April** - BWAG Woodland Task Day on fence restoration, 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](mailto:info@bwag.org.uk)

**19th April** - Cozenton Park Community Tree Nursery Open Day, 10.30am-1pm, free activities, raffle and refreshments to purchase

**18th April** - Boot Fair Table Sale, St Mary Magdalene, Gillingham Green, 11am - 1pm, contact Janet Duke on [pinkdukebox@aol.com](mailto:pinkdukebox@aol.com) to book a table

**19th April** - 'Look at the World' songs of peace and hope with Upchurch Choral Society at their Spring concert. 7.30pm, St Mary's Church, Upchurch, £14 pp, cheque or card on the door

**20th April** - 'Happy Hour' singing group with Friends of St Margarets, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, Memorial Hall, ME9 7ES, Liz 07730893747 or [gilliangay99@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gilliangay99@yahoo.co.uk)

**20th April** - BWAG Club Night, 'Wildlife in Bredhurst Update', 7.30pm, Blacksmith's Barn, ME7 3JU, £5 on door, refreshments, 07772 920359/[info@bwag.org.uk](mailto:info@bwag.org.uk)

**21st April** - 'The Orchids of Kent' with Clive Nuttman, RSPB Indoor Talk, Parkwood Community Centre, 7pm, £4.50, [info.rspbmedway@gmail.com](mailto:info.rspbmedway@gmail.com)

**22nd April** - 'Friends of Eastgate House' with Elaine Gardner, £4, Millenium Centre, 7pm, 01634 263622 This month, our AGM will take place following the talk.

**24th April** - 'Defending the Swale' with Medway Geographical Society, 2pm, URC, Balmoral Rd, ME7 4PU, £4, 01634 389916 or [vwoollett@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:vwoollett@hotmail.co.uk)

**24th April** - Quiz Night with One Big Family Helping the Homeless, Rainham School for Girls, ME8 0BX, 7pm, Tickets £7, tables of upto 8, [sandra@helpingthehomeless.org.uk](mailto:sandra@helpingthehomeless.org.uk)

**25th April** - Repair Café, Wigmore Community Hub, 10.30am -1pm

**See My Voice** Song Signing using sign (BSL), every Mon, Rainham Social Club, Station Rd, ages 10+, 6-8pm, £3pp, Sign language through the power of music

**Upchurch Choral Society**, St Mary's, every Fri, 7.45pm, Liz - 01634 361897 / [kbl.walters@talk21.com](mailto:kbl.walters@talk21.com)

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

**Rainham Cricket** [www.rainhamcricketclub.com](http://www.rainhamcricketclub.com)

**Rainham Ladies Choir**, local, enthusiastic, non-audition choir, Mon eve, Rainham School for Girls. [rainhamladieschoir.com](http://rainhamladieschoir.com) or email [rlchoir@outlook.com](mailto:rlchoir@outlook.com)

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

**St Matthew's Place of Welcome**, Thurs informal drop-in, 10am, [geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs each mth, £2 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, Bring and Buy Produce Stall, 07791 781910

**HempstARA Art Club**, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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](http://www.mapsl.com)

**Art Group**, Tuesdays, 10am, Twydall Comm Hub

**The Music Man Project**, accessible music education Sarah Mann, 07909515439 [mmpkent@gmail.com](mailto:mmpkent@gmail.com)

**Sunbeams Baby and Toddler Music Gp**, every Tues, 1.45pm, All Saints, H'stead, [sjcross13@outlook.com](mailto:sjcross13@outlook.com)

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