

ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

MAY
2026

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March 1969


Mardale Garage, Rainham



The location above is currently the Asda petrol station on the A2,
opposite STS Tyre Pros.
This photo is of Brian Ward Garages and Amoco petrol station in 1987.

(photo from Sarah Allen - Mardale Dental Laboratories)

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 Please contact us at the appropriate email and include your telephone number so we can call you, if needed.
 Editor@actionforum.co.uk
 Diary@actionforum.co.uk
 Adverts@actionforum.co.uk (prices on p14)
 Distribution (no other queries please):
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Editorial

This time of year always seems so positive with evenings getting longer and all the trees and plants in the garden bursting into life with blossom and new leaves. On that note, it is good to see the allotments in Cozenton Park starting to take shape. Anyone interested can apply to join the waiting list on the Medway Council website.

An alternative would be to look at a garden sharing option such as the one offered by Hamish on p11. However you grow your own food, it's a great way to save money, as well as having the freshest fruit and vegetables with minimal food miles. The taste when picked straight from the garden can't be beaten!

The Community Tree Nursery is also coming to life at Cozenton after the derelict plant nursery site was transformed by local volunteers. If you're walking through the park it's worth a look.

As with the old photo of The Mackland Arms earlier this year, pubs are often the heart of the local community. It's always sad to see a local pub shutting its doors so it was great to see The Angel pub on Station Road reopen again after a few months. From the social media posts I've seen, their reopening night was a huge success and very well-supported so, hopefully, the pub will flourish under new landlords, with lots of events planned over the next few months.

The Oast Community Centre is becoming much more of a music venue in recent years, something sorely missing from the local area after long-time venues such as The Beacon Court closed. Sat 9th May is going to be a busy evening there with Taj Farrant, as advertised on p7. Bez from the Happy Mondays is also playing the same evening which might be of interest to those who grew up in the 1980s and 90s.

Our diary section has many more activities taking place this month. I know from personal experience how much effort is involved in putting on local events so even in these difficult times I'm sure any support that can be given to them will be very much appreciated.

Letters to the Editor

Medway Community Awards 2026

Dear Editor,

The Rainham Community Awards are now open for nominations and this is your chance to celebrate the people, places and small everyday moments that make our community such a special place to live.

These awards shine a light on the kindness, creativity and hard work happening all around us. If someone has made you smile, helped you out or inspired you this year, now is the perfect time to give them the recognition they deserve.

There are a number of different categories, so nominate at: <https://bit.ly/RCAwards2026>
 Your nomination helps celebrate the heart of Rainham and means a lot to those nominated. Let's come together and show our appreciation.

Thanks in advance, Russell Poynter

Rainham Hovercraft (April edition)

Dear Editor

I have some doubts about the school being called Gillingham Technical College during the timescale mentioned.

I was a pupil there from 1976 till 1982 and it was the GTHS - Gillingham Technical High School. However, I cannot remember ever seeing a hovercraft there!

Jim Charters

** Thanks for pointing out our error. We missed correcting it from College to High School. Apologies for any confusion caused.

Oasthouse Theatre in May

Dear Editor,

We have 2 great productions coming this May which your readers may be interested in booking.

On Sat 16th may at 12.30pm we have 'The Golden Days of Variety', a talk given by Dean Caston focusing on the golden era of variety theatre, with musical interludes from Faye Wyatt.

'Cheshire Cats' is a show by Gail Young, following a group of women as they speedwalk their way to glory in the London Moonwalk. Join them on their journey during an evening of tears and laughter!
It runs May 7th, 8th and 9th at 8pm then again on 14th, 15th and 16th May.

Find out more and book at:
www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk

Thanks in advance, Dean Caston

Wanted - a suitable home

Dear Editor,
We have a table tennis table, used by both our children and grandchildren. A 'Dunlop MaxPly', it is in excellent condition, can be stored folded and moves about on wheels. We wondered if there was any youth club or organisation that could make use of it?

John Coppen

**If anyone is interested, or knows an organisation which could put it to good use, please contact us at Action Forum and we will put you in touch with Mr Coppen.

Medway Mike's 'Cure EB' Challenge

Dear Editor,
As we reach the copy date for this issue, Wigmore Road resident, 86-year-old Mike Patrick is halfway through a 10-day, 100-mile walking challenge. Members of the Medway Ramblers have teamed up to lead 10 different walks to support Mike with his challenge.

Mike met a family earlier this year whose young daughter suffers from Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare condition causing extremely fragile skin. After seeing the distress and realising his own good health and fitness, he decided to do something about it. Currently midway through the challenge, he has so far raised nearly £6,000 on his Justgiving page (www.justgiving.com/page/mike-patrick-cure-eb).

An inspirational character, Mike can often be seen walking with the Medway Ramblers. If you're thinking of joining a walk, our programme can be found at:
medwayramblers.weebly.com

Chris Strachan



**Details of the completed challenge will hopefully be published in the next edition.

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Community

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There are fantastic opportunities available, offering safe, fun and empowering spaces for girls (4-18). From outdoor adventures and community projects, to crafts, STEM challenges and leadership opportunities, girlguiding gives girls the chance to discover their strengths and explore what they enjoy. It's a place they can be themselves, learn new skill and grow at their own pace. Families interested in finding out more or joining a local unit can do so easily through our website: www.girlguiding.org.uk/

As a vibrant part of our Rainham community, we hope more girls will become a part of it.

Volunteers Needed

Have you got some spare time and would like to help a good cause? If so, Making Miracles are looking for volunteers to do bucket collections on various dates throughout the year. If you are interested in joining our friendly team of volunteers, or would like more information, please email: tarah@makingmiracles.org.uk

Happy Hour with Uplift

Join our all-age, all-ability community singing group:

May 18th, June 1st and June 15th
6.30-7.30pm, £2/pp or £3 per family
Memorial Hall, School Lane, ME9 7ES

Contact Liz on 01795 842272

Medway Repair Café

23rd May
Rainham Library, 10.30am - 1pm

Can You Help Us?

We appreciate all who volunteer to deliver for us. It is much appreciated.



If you think you can help with any of the following roads, even if that is just for occasional help, then please contact Anne: 07791 585998

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Moor Park Cl (90)*

Parkwood/Lonsdale

*Long Catlis Rd (2-108) (40)
Holtwood Cl (16)
Lambes Ct (14), Whitegate Ct (8)*

Hempstead

Glenwood Cl (48), Hinton Cres (57)

Upchurch

*Chaffes La (field to Oak La (64),
Chaffes Terrace (18), Drake Cl (56),
Marston Cl (13)*

Lower Halstow

*Breach La (82), Burntwick Dr (52),
Crouch Hill Ct (32), Church Path (5),
Cumberland Rd (29), School La (98),
The Green 918), The Street (28),
Vicarage La (28), Wardwell La (12),
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Holiday Heritage at St Margaret's

An afternoon of history and fun with family-friendly 10-min tours, craft activities and a family trail in the church, all revealing our heritage to the next generation.

Tues 26th may, 2-4pm

Drop in for this free event.

For more info: vicky@rainhamchurch.co.uk

Upchurch Choral Society 'Come and Sing'

Sat 27th June, 9.30am - 4pm

St Mary's Church, Upchurch, ME9 7AL

No need to read music for the day, just £15, including music hire and refreshments.
£2 admission to the concert at 3.30pm.

Contact Liz Walters: 01634 361897 or

kbl.walters@talk21.com

Macklands House Plant Sale

We will be hosting our annual plant sale (flowers) again this year and look forward to seeing customers, both old and new:

Sat 23rd May, 10.30am on the lawn,
Macklands House, Station Rd

Homemade goodies will also be available.

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Nature Notes

May - my favourite month

After a long, wet winter of short cold days and bare trees, when outdoors has been less than inviting, followed by a Spring that seemed unable to make up its mind, May is a month of longer, warmer days.

It promises a gateway into Summer; less clothes are needed, there's a chance to sit in the garden and birdsong can be heard into twilight, when bats then first appear.

It's a month when everything is new and green, new life is everywhere as fledglings beg parent birds for food with fluttering wings.

The greens of hedgerows and urban trees are greener, before nibbling larvae gnaw at the edges, leaf miners draw patterns across their greenery and fungus and viruses become established.

Then there are the flying creatures: butterflies and flutterbies, bees and hornet mimic hoverflies and so many others, some only seen when a leaf is turned to reveal who is hiding there.

And scents: sweet smelling flowers and herbs, some waiting until the sun goes down to attract night-time moths and other pollinators.

There are other months to look forward to, full

of promise and colour, hotter days, longer days, when twilight seems to never end, but none compare to the few short weeks of May when everything is new and full of promise for the days ahead.

But so many, caught up in routines that know no season, the stresses of work and family, miss all of this.

Stress, anxiety, worry, eats at happiness and mood. It's not how we have evolved to be. We have evolved to listen to nature's signals, to worry when birds fall silent and things seem wrong around us.

For own health, happiness and mental well-being, we need to make time to experience the natural world.

A cup of tea in the garden, a walk through a park, a few moments taken to listen and see. Even just stopping to watch a pollinator take nectar from a dandelion can reset our day. We miss so much when hurrying by, our minds focused on, what we regard, as more important things.

So today, take just five minutes to clear your mind and see, listen to that sound, know what is happening all around you and learn. Is that a robin or a dunnock that you hear?

Enjoy the month of May.
Leon Roskilly

[Wild About Rainham Facebook page](#)

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May in the Wildlife-Friendly Garden

What a difference from one month to the next! Since I last wrote, the countryside has turned green and the early flowers have already bloomed, set seed and finished. We have even had some beautiful days to enjoy being outside to garden, turning chores into pleasures.

The wildlife experiences have been enjoyable too. This week, I have seen the wren from my kitchen window and my one common spotted orchid is doing really well in its grassy patch. We had a brimstone butterfly on the rosemary flowers, its pale yellow a wonderful contrast to the dark blue flowers.

One of my climbing roses is infesting with aphid. I have things that will eat them as, for once, the ladybirds are not late. However, ladybirds seem to want the sunny spots and this rose is shaded till the late afternoon so not attracting their attention! I am watering the plant more as it is stressed, as are so many plants in the garden. I had mistaken dull, cold days for damp days. Everything has suffered, including my ferns. I hope I have saved them before it is too late - mind you, ferns have been here on Earth since the Devonian (380 million years ago), so can probably cope with a bit of neglect.

Climber of the month

Many clematis are in flower now, including the white 'Joe' in bud last month and the *Clematis alpina* which I had hopes for the previous month! The lovely *C. armandii* are now out

and about except mine, which had all its stems eaten by the fox and is no more. *Clematis montana*, which my Father-in-law grew to cover the workshop wall, went many years ago because it was too vigorous for us but I love to see it in other people's gardens. There is a good point to be made about clothing our buildings with foliage, as it helps keep them cooler in summer and warmer in winter. All those flowers also provide early nectar and pollen to give all kinds of bees a boost.

Job of the month

although I have lots of plants in flower now, I am conscious that, come late June, there is not so much to follow on. If you are the same, now is the time to get some trellis up on the walls of your house and plant a summer-flowering climber. Find varieties of honeysuckle that are bee-friendly and they will produce berries suitable for birds whilst also producing hundreds of flowers.

Follow the RSPB guidelines on bird feeders and bird tables, as we may be doing more bad than good in feeding birds throughout the year. Refill your bird baths on a daily basis, ensuring they are well-cleaned.

www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/feeding-birds-near-you

Happy Wildlife Gardening!
Victoria Golding
(KWT, Wild About Gardens advisor)



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 01634 322591 or 07966073672

Climate Conversations

Thrift and Thrive Pop Up Repair Café

Last month we introduced this new initiative in Chatham and thought readers might like more detail.

This community-driven initiative, is led by skilled tradeswomen and Fixers from diverse backgrounds and aims to attract women - giving them opportunity to learn practical repair and DIY skills. Funded by Medway Council's UKSPF Feasibility Fund, activities include training, DIY repair, interior decorating, power tool sessions, revamping small items with paint and, of course, refreshments!

Wed, 10am-2pm, 1-9 High St, Chatham (old car dealership)

The Bite Bar and Community Greengrocers is open Mon- Fri, from 11-2 and they also offer free house clearance and fortnightly mixed-lot auctions with all funds supporting the community initiative.

Email: owecic@gmail.com or call Angela on 07496 547214.

Help us update Rainham's Conservation Areas

Medway Council's Conservation Team are looking to review and update conservation areas in Rainham, in partnership with local residents and business owners. The Team will look to delve into what makes Rainham's history both special and unique, and how new conservation area appraisals and management plans can take all of this into account and be

referred to in future planning applications. This will help towards ensuring any future planning decisions respect the area's heritage and building aesthetics.

We're looking to uncover your memories, associations, meaning of specific spaces and buildings, likes, dislikes etc.

Some members of the Rainham Town Centre Partnership have already volunteered to join a heritage working group.

In the first instance we're looking to set up a short in-person training session this summer on surveying an area's heritage on the ground, before going on a walk around Rainham Town Centre.

If you would like to be a part of this session and help us update the conservation areas, please email: design.conservation@medway.gov.uk

Debbie Salter
Senior Conservation Officer

Allotment Available

My late wife and I purchased a plot adjoining our garden to grow fruit and veg. Now at 80, I can no longer cope so would like to give the younger generation an opportunity. The land (half a mile from the M2 services) could be split into 4 smaller plots if it helps. I am not looking to charge rent but would expect supply of fresh produce and the tenancy contract would include 12 months notice to quit.

Contact Hamish on 07835 859846 or email him at: hamish@thenetmag.uk

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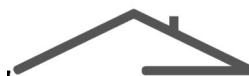
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Rainham History

The Amoco Petrol Station

The garage on our front cover was owned by grandfather, Dennis Collins.

I have been advised that the site was formally the home and surgery of a Rainham GP. It is now the Asda Petrol Station (217-225 High St) but in the 1950's and 1960's it was Mardale Garage and an Amoco petrol station.

My dental laboratory is named after my grandfather's business. If anyone has any memories of him or the garage, I would be grateful for their comments.

Rainham Hovercraft

I recently received a request for information about the location of Ashe House, the residence/practice of a Dr. Drake, located in Wigmore. This Dr. Drake was involved in assisting at the Rainham Poison Mystery of 1931 and was in partnership with Mr William Ulic Desmond Longford and Mr Sven Arthur Bather.

Searching Google threw up no clues, nor did checking a map of Wigmore from 1912 which showed all the plots being sold off. Having drawn a blank, I was doing some other family history research when I decided to check the local Kelly's Directory. This annual index of all residents and properties in an area enables one to look up either by location or by person.

I checked the 1936 edition and managed to find a Dr. Drake listed as resident at *Ashe Ho, Maidstone Road, Wigmore*. The only problem is that it gave no indication where Ashe

House was on the Maidstone Road as all the houses then were named rather than numbered. However, I remembered that, as well as some roads being renamed in the 1930's, there was also a process of houses being numbered too, so perhaps a later edition may have more information. That brought partial success! The next edition showed houses on Maidstone Road now with number up to 365, but Ashe House was still in a section that only contained named properties. The next step was to try a later year. This time, we had a successful match. Dr. Drake was shown as living at 383 Maidstone Road - we had the location of Ashe House.

However, there is another twist!

On checking the location on a map, and in person, it appears that number 383 no longer exists, which might explain the lack of information about Ashe House. Number 383 appears to have been where Woodpecker Glade is now located. The numbers either side are 381 and 385 so I'm guessing it was demolished some time in the late 1960's to make way for the Woodpecker Glade estate.

Bizarrely, whilst researching something separate, I spotted Ashe House listed on a Wigmore map from the 1950's, in exactly the location shown by Woodpecker Glade. As with much historical research, a few different sources and clues all came together to give an answer!

Next month, we will include an old map and also a little more about the good doctor himself.

AJ - RainhamHistory.co.uk

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Dates for the Diary

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

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

24th April - Quiz Night with One Big Family Helping the Homeless, Rainham School for Girls, ME8 0BX, 7pm, £7, tables upto 8, sandra@helpingthehomeless.org.uk

26th April - RSPB Medway guided walk, Old Lodge, Ashdown Forest, 9.30am, TN22 3JD, group.rspb.org.uk/medway

28th April - RSPB Gravesend guided walk, Riverside Country Park, 10.30am, ME7 2XH, meet in reserve car park, group.rspb.org.uk/Gravesend

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

3rd May - Afternoon Teas, St Michaels and All Angels, Hartlip, ME9 7TL

4th May - The Five Church Walk fundraiser, 16 miles in total, £5 recommended donation, 10am start at any church involved, parking and refreshments available, www.thefivechurchwalk.co.uk

7th -9th May - 'Cheshire Cats' by Gail Young, Oasthouse Theatre, 8pm, Bookings at 03336 663366 www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk

9th May - RSPB Medway guided dawn walk, Northward Hill, 4.30am, ME3 8DS, group.rspb.org.uk/medway

9th May - Taj Farrant 'Chapter 1 Tour', The Oast, Rainham, 7pm, Tickets from rockinrootsevents.co.uk

11th May - Medway Music Club w Steve Hubble, Parkwood Community Centre, 7pm, refreshments/bar, £10, phil.burt@ntlworld.com or 07795 576294

13th May - 'Hidden Disabilities' with Jonathan Ash, East Medway u3a, St Paul's, Parkwood, ME8 9PN, 2pm, £3, Daisy - membership.eastmedway@gmail.com

14th -16th May - 'Cheshire Cats' by Gail Young, Oasthouse Theatre, 8pm, Bookings at 03336 663366 www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk

16th May - 'The Golden Days of Variety' with Dean Caston, Oasthouse Theatre, 12.30pm, Bookings at www.oasthousetheatre.co.uk or 03336 663366

17th May - BWAG Woodland Task Day on fence restoration and prep for upcoming Bluebell Walks and Cream Teas, 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

18th May - 'Happy Hour' singing group, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, Memorial Hall, ME9 7ES, Liz - 01795 842272

20th May - BWAG Club Night, 'Lifecycles & Lifestyles of Insects - part 2' with Mike Chittenden, 7.30pm, Blacksmith's Barn, ME7 3JU, £5 on door, refreshments, 07772 920359/info@bwag.org.uk

21st May - Rainham WI, Berengrave Cricket Club, 1.45pm, contact Lynne on 01634 616003

21st May - Growing Pelargoniums, Fuchsias and Organic Veg with Brian Carline, Wigmore & Bredhurst Garden Club, 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, ME8 0PN, call 07531 624679 for more.

23rd May - Macklands House plant sale, 10.30am, Station Road, refreshments available

23rd May - Repair Café, Rainham Lib, 10.30am -1pm

26th May - Heritage Holidays at St Margaret's, 2 - 4pm, Free drop in, family-friendly, discover something amazing! vicky@rainhamchurch.co.uk

26th May - 'The Train that Jumped the Gap' by Richard Emmett and the Tuesday Social Club, 7.30pm, £4 on door, Memorial Hall, School Lane, ME9 7ES, Liz - 01795 842272

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, 01474 745318 or contact mail@medwaytownsbands.uk

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 or newmembers@breatheasymedway.co.uk/

East Medway u3a, 2nd Wed each month, 2pm, St Paul's Church, Parkwood, ME8 9PN, membership.eastmedway@gmail.com

Scottish Country Dancing, £3 Mon - 1.30pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, Thurs - 8pm, St Thomas of Canterbury, Rainham, www.medwaycaledonians.co.uk,

Rainham Evening WI at St Paul's Parkwood, 7.30pm, 3rd Mon of every mth, Annette - 07536 064911

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

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

Check out www.thenet.uk.net/events

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