

# ACTION FORUM

AN INDEPENDENT MONTHLY FOR RAINHAM AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

JUNE  
2026

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## Ashe House, Maidstone Rd, Rainham - 1950



Last month we looked at how Rainham History solved the mystery of the location of Ashe House, the long-term home of a Doctor Drake, a well-known GP in the area. Location identified, page 12 this month finds us looking into the life of the doctor himself.

(photo supplied by Rainham History from a local map)

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## ***Editorial***

How lovely to be spending the evenings in light! May and June are such beautiful times of the year with the blossom still out and a variety of flowers blooming.

Once again, the Rainham verges have looked amazing. Even now, the seed heads developing bring a sense of open spaces and a promise for next year.

My veg garden is well underway and we have had our first crops of radishes, rhubarb, mint and thyme. On p.11 we hear of the success for the offer to share a garden.

It has been great to receive some letters regarding the Ashe House article and the old map on our front cover may give you a better idea of where it was located. We hope you also enjoy reading a little more about the doctor who lived there on our History page. It is fascinating to find out about the lives of past residents.

The Rainham Community Awards nominations are live and perhaps there are local characters, businesses, gardens and organisations that you would consider putting forward for awards. The awards are for all the areas around Rainham too so get thinking about who you might be able to nominate and use the links in the next column.

Our diary section has many more activities taking place this month. As Andy said last month, a lot of effort is involved in putting on local events and running clubs so, even in these difficult times, any support that can be given to them is much appreciated.

Have a look through the pages of this edition and see what you might fancy going along to.

Enjoy June!

## ***Letters to the Editor***

### **Medway Community Awards 2026**

Dear Editor,

We are continuing to take nominations for the Rainham Community Awards - your chance to celebrate the people, places and small everyday moments that make our community such a special place to live. Look out for any flyers being handed out or posted up around the area.

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 Historical Society**

Dear Readers,

Rainham Historical Society begins the new season of Winter Talks on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2026. We have some wonderful talks planned

New Members are welcome and visitors to a talk pay just £4 entrance fee.

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

Please contact Mrs O O'Dowd on 01634 263622 for further details.

### **Wanted - a suitable home - UPDATE**

Dear Editor,

I am pleased to say that we have found a good home for our table tennis table. A local school appreciate the excellent condition and will make good use of it. Thanks for putting the note in Action Forum.

Kind regards, John Coppen

### **Medway Mike's 'Cure EB' Challenge**

Dear Editor,

Last month's edition highlighted how I met a young lady who suffers from Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare condition. I decided to raise funds by walking. We had nearly £6k on the Justgiving page.

My challenge was 100 miles in 10 days. In total we walked 103 miles, Alamantus Jurkis walking 9.5 of the 10 walks and Louise Hubbard 9 of them - both are fellow walkers with the Medway Ramblers.

*The first day's walk from Hempstead Valley to Maidstone was the hottest day of the year so far (24 degrees). 19 set off, including the Kloeck family visiting from Munich - the youngest a 7-yr old).*

*Day 2, we were joined by three members of the Kingston Ramblers who operate close to where Poppy lives. We walked through Capstone Park, had lunch at the Bredhurst Bell before walking through Bredhurst Woods with bluebells in full bloom.*

*Day 3, Poppy and her family joined us at Manor Country Park where Poppy completed 2 miles in the bespoke wheelchair she had waited a year for. It was very humbling to meet her again and made me even more determined to complete the challenge for the charity. We continued through Kings Hill; able to take in the some of the area's sculptures.*

*Day five's walk was from Leysdown to the Harty Ferry through the bird sanctuary.*

*Day 6, the morning walk was around Jeskyn's Park and we were joined by Chris Strachan and his granddaughter for part of it before heading to the Mausoleum at Cobham.*

*Day 7 began at Teston Bridge, taking us both side of the River Medway.*

*Day 8 was the toughest day, from Harrietsham. It ended up being nearly 12 miles of hilly terrain and lots of stiles. A well-earned bath that evening helped to soothe the aching body. Day 9 took us from West Motney Way, Lower Rainham via Berengrave Nature Reserve to Riverside Country Park then, for the final day, we left Hempstead Valley by bus for Maidstone and walked back through the woods and fields. Boxley was the halfway stop, where we met Poppy's Mum, Kate, and Chris, her Grandad who gave me a hand-written message from Poppy, thanking me for supporting her charity and with instructions for Grandad to buy me a pint at the King's Arms! It was also a pleasure to see the three teenage boys on the walk run up the steepest part of the climb to the top of Boxley Hill.*

I would like to thank the many people who supported with generous donations and kind words of encouragement, also the Medway Ramblers, especially the walk leaders. I would not have been able to undertake this challenge without them.

The fund currently stands at £10,105 and you can still donate at:

[www.justgiving.com/page/mike-patrick-cure-eb](http://www.justgiving.com/page/mike-patrick-cure-eb)

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## Community

### 'Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis' Quiz

This rare and, at present, incurable disease affecting the lungs and leading to complications with other vital organs is on the rise. Funds raised are for research into a cure.

Michael and Sharon Link are hosting their second quiz as Michael was diagnosed with the disease in 2024. Join them on:

Friday 12th June, 7pm,  
Parkwood Community Centre, ME8 9PN  
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A licensed bar is available and you are welcome to bring your own nibbles.

Call 07598 922059 or find out more and book at:  
[www.actionforpulmonaryfibrosis.enthuse.com/pf/sharon-link-64188](http://www.actionforpulmonaryfibrosis.enthuse.com/pf/sharon-link-64188)

### Steel Pan Workshop

Medway Culture Club presents 'The Music of Windrush', an exciting and immersive workshop for children aged 5–16. The hands-on session introduces the joyful sounds, rhythms and cultural heritage of the music, whilst exploring the Windrush story and the lasting impact Caribbean communities have had on British culture. Parents & carers are invited at 1pm to enjoy a group performance.

Saturday 13th June, 10.30am - 1.30pm  
MidKent College, ME7 1FN  
£8 per child, hot lunch included,

[www.Medwayculture.club/book-online](http://www.Medwayculture.club/book-online)

### Medway Repair Café

20th June - Strood Comm Hub, 10.30-1

### Rainham WI

18th June, 1.45pm, Lynne - 01634 616003

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*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 just for occasionally, then please contact Anne: 07791 585998*

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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 (18), The Street (28),  
Vicarage La (28), Wardwell La (12),  
Westmoreland Dr (27)*

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## ***Community continued...***

### **'A Splash of Paint'**

We have been meeting for just over 10 years at Bredhurst Village Hall and would love to offer our group to anyone interested in joining us.

We meet Thursday mornings 9.30 – 12.30.  
For details contact Karen on 07986 356977.

### **St Matthew's popular Plant Sale**

Saturday 13th June, opens 10.30am

Find us outside the church, Drewery Drive Wigmore ME8 0TG.

Cake & Refreshments will be available along with other garden-related items for sale.

### **Wigmore Voices choir summer concert**

'Look at the world' celebrates our natural world in song.

Saturday 27th June at 7.30pm

St Matthews Community Centre, Drewery Dr, Wigmore, ME8 0PD

Tickets £10, refreshments included, available from Sue on 07990 837287

### **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](mailto:kbl.walters@talk21.com)

### **Herbs for Health - a Tuesday Social talk**

Join the Tuesday Social (Friends of St Margaret's Church, Lower Halstow) for a fascinating talk, presented by Mandy Rickard who has over 25 year's experience as a medical herbalist and aromatherapist, growing and using herbs for her practice and running workshops teaching adults and children how to use herbs at home.

She will chat about her experiences both growing and using herbs, bring a few plants to see and smell and, hopefully, inspire us to spread a little more greenery in our lives! There will be time for questions after.

Tuesday 30th June - 7.30pm

Memorial Hall, School Lane, ME9 7ES

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## Nature Notes

### Its Almost Summer!

It is time to seek out the section on summer in my seasonal guide to natural recipes and remedies and I can't believe how much information there is!

I love the sun so, fortunately for me, summer's warmth and sunlight improve our physical and mental health, enabling us to function better against a plethora of diseases, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Our serotonin rises, boosting mood, whilst the warmth speeds up circulation, metabolism and, bizarrely, wound healing!

More Vitamin D is being produced during sunny days so get out there and maximise those benefits!!

But if it is glowing skin you want then it needs nourishing from within via food, as well as outwardly protection to prevent dryness and sunburn.

Did you know that the following foods not only nourish but also act as natural sun blockers?

**Oily fish, avocados, seaweed, nuts, seeds, extra virgin olive oil, skins, seeds and fruits (which are black, purple or red), grapes (including the pips), apples, cocoa, green/white/black tea, cinnamon bark, tomatoes, (especially cooked), carrots, red peppers,**

**squash, sweet potatoes, spinach, kale, apricots and melon** - that is a lot of options.

### Staying safe under the Sun

This varies depending on your skin type, the time of day, cloud cover etc but as a rule: *the shorter your shadow, the higher your exposure to UV*

Get that sunscreen on or put yourself in the shade. You can even have a go making your own sunscreen apparently...

### Summer Proof Hair

Swimming and the sun can wreak havoc with hair. Massage **coconut oil** or **extra virgin olive oil** into your hair after washing, wrap with a

towel for 15 mins or so then wash out.

But then ensure you support hair growth with foods such as **oily fish, mixed nuts, seeds, green veg daily and mixed red berries**

### DIY Insect Repellent

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Spray a little below your forearm and leave for 24 hrs to check for any irritation, diluting further if necessary.

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*excerpts from 'Root to Stem' by Alex Laird*

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### June in the Wildlife-Friendly Garden

Every month I seem to be in despair about the continuing weather difficulties although, this month is, at present, a little different. The garden looks lush, despite not as much rain as I would like. The only things that need constant watering are the plants in pots. I agree I have too many and am gradually moving plants into the beds that I have, resolving to let them either sink or swim. I am listening to advice from gardening programmes and trying more natives to give wildlife a chance.

The hedge garlic, *Alliaria petiolata*, has spread into the grass, slightly away from the hedge, but I'm quite happy to let this happen as it is a useful plant for wildlife. Later into June, I will look to see if I have small green caterpillars feeding on the seed pods. These would be Orange tip butterflies, which would be lovely to support in the garden. I did see them this spring, so I have hope.

Everything is dashing forward, with roses early and beautiful this year. I can't remember a year with such beautiful soft green colours in the leaves.

### Climber of the month

What would an English garden be without Honeysuckle? There are many varieties with different flowering times and different colours. Unfortunately, some of the brighter-coloured varieties do not seem so useful for pollinators but there are many different types to give that bright, sharp fragrance, so romantic and

especially good in the evenings for enticing moths. *Lonicera periclymenum* 'Serotina' looks superb and has autumn berries, which are great food for birds, and varieties of *Lonicera periclymenum* are strongly fragrant and great for pollinators as well.

### Job of the month

I'm getting bored with 'job of the month', because I can't garden with the intensity I used to and want to enjoy what I have more than I used to. I feel we all know what we need to do, if we really want to know. I'll tell you something shocking. We have no proper places to sit in our garden and no decent benches or chairs to relax on! The garden was a place to work, so I have stools, kneeling pads, etc, but no comfortable furniture. There's a revolutionary change to be made!

No matter the time of the year, we are thinking in terms of plants we would like to see in future years, so this is the time to make notes of things we see in the wild, in garden centres, parks and gardens. Then we can track them down for our own. We all have wonderful phones and take loads of pictures; this way we prepare for the future. This could be your job for the month.

Happy times in your wildlife-friendly garden,

Victoria Golding  
(KWT, Wild About Gardens advisor)



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## Climate Conversations

### Allotment Update

*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.*

We are delighted to say that the above gentleman had a number of takers to this request and the fruit and veg plot has had a successful start for this season!

There may be many other older folk out there who have a large garden, vegetable plot, orchard or small woodland. Many may not want to sell the plot or move out - perhaps this option would work for them too? There is a lot to consider but the idea itself is a sound one.

Our gardens do so much for the whole community; absorbing heat and carbon dioxide, holding water in the ground, providing havens for wildlife, giving our pollinators flowers and us a rich food source!

If it is something you would like to talk about then we are sure Mr Mackay Miller would be happy to chat through the pros and cons and share his knowledge and experience in this area.

Hamish on 07835 859846 or email him at: [hamish@thenetmag.uk](mailto:hamish@thenetmag.uk)

### Medway Volunteer Workshop (MVW)

Medway Climate Change recently visited this amazing workshop at Elm Court and spent the morning learning about the initiative to repair, re-home and sort unwanted DIY tools, garden equipment and sewing machines.

The organisation was set up by Trevor and Hillary Cox in 2019, with tools being sent to Africa as part of the Tools with a Mission (TWAM) initiative, re-homed in the UK or broken up for recycling.

Vicki, Marion and Victoria from the Climate Response Team at Medway got stuck into the handy work stripping down the unusable machines and learning more from the MVW Volunteer Team. They finished the day inspired by such a great local example of resource efficiency. The work done by the Medway Volunteer Workshop benefits everyone - from reduced landfill and rubbish in this country, to working tools for individuals in other countries.

Medway Volunteer Workshop is open Monday to Friday, with weekly volunteering opportunities available. For anyone wanting more information, why not check out:

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

If you have unwanted DIY or garden tools that you would like to donate, please contact MVW for advice on how to proceed.

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## ***Rainham History***

### **Doctor Drake of Ashe House** (continued)

Last month, we followed the process to identify the location of Ashe House, Maidstone Rd. We discovered that it was re-numbered during the 1930's as number 383 but no longer exists today. Further exploration resulted in a definitive answer - Ashe House was demolished and the land used to create Woodpecker Glade.

We also received a letter this month from Annette Morgan. She moved into Maidstone Rd on Decimalisation Day - 15th Feb, 1971. Ashe House was close by, set back from the road and owned by Mr and Mrs Bodkin of Bodkin Removals. They sold up and moved to Deanwood Drive, the house was pulled down and Woodpecker Glade built. But back to Doctor Drake, involved in what sounds like a case worthy of a good Agatha Christie novel - the 1931 Rainham Poison Mystery!

I've received some more details about him from Annette in Munich who has been researching details of Dr Drake: Dr. Dennys John Drake was not a "Wigmorian" by birth but originated from London, where he passed his examinations at the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in 1891. His first 'call' was Assam (then part of the Bengal Presidency, British India). There he married a Miss Helen Katherine Gill in 1902. About 1910 he was moving again, this time to Leeston, NZ. I found some amusing stories in a local paper, concerning a motor cycle damaged by

straying horses, which led to a wrathful complaint of the Dr, along with his outspoken satisfaction with the 'Overland Model 46', thus advertising an US-imported motor car.

During the Great War, Drake served in the Army Medical Service for a year. Whether back in England for this purpose or part of an Australian regiment, and whether he returned to NZ after the end of his service, we don't know. In 1927 our doctor was divorced, on his wife's petition, and only a year later, he married a Gerda M. Prentice. My guess is that, from around that time onwards, he lived with his second wife in Ashe House.

The circumstances of his death are a bit dramatic and the starting point of my interest in his life. Though retired from the firm of Drake, Longford & Bather in Wigmore, in 1939 he was still active, serving as a Ship Surgeon on the HMS Devonshire.

At the beginning of '39, during the Spanish Civil War, that ship was involved in a rescue attempt. On Feb 8th, she transported refugees to Marseille where, on Dec 23rd, Dr. Drake died in hospital.

Since the Devonshire was already back in Scapa Flow on the day of his death, and had last sailed to Marseille on 6th of March, spring 1939 is the latest possible time of his going ashore, perhaps already ill.

His absence must have caused worries at home in Wigmore and he, in turn, must have witnessed the outbreak of WW2 during Sept 1939 in Marseille. I wonder where he found his final rest - that is a different story.

AJ - [RainhamHistory.co.uk](http://RainhamHistory.co.uk)

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## Dates for the Diary

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contact: [diary@actionforum.co.uk](mailto:diary@actionforum.co.uk)

**30th May** - Plant and Cake Sale, all proceeds to church funds, St Mary Magdalene, Gillingham Green, ME7 1SS, 11am-1pm.

**1st June** - 'Happy Hour' singing group, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, Memorial Hall, ME9 7ES, Liz - 01795 842272

**7th June** - Afternoon Teas, St Michaels and All Angels, Hartlip, ME9 7TL, lovely views across the orchards

**8th June** - Medway Music Club w David Ingley, Parkwood Community Centre, 7pm, refreshments/bar, £10, [phil.burt@ntlworld.com](mailto:phil.burt@ntlworld.com) or 07795 576294

**12th June** - Quiz Night for Action for Pulmonary Fibrosis, Parkwood Community Centre, Me8 9PN, £5pp, tables of upto 8, bar open but bring your own nibbles, book places at [www.actionforpulmonaryfibrosis.enthuse.com/pf/sharon-link-64188](http://www.actionforpulmonaryfibrosis.enthuse.com/pf/sharon-link-64188) or call 07598 922059

**13th June** - Broadside Games Show 2026, 10am, the ultimate gathering for wargame enthusiasts, role-playing gamers and curious newcomers alike, with 'meet and greets', upcoming games and the Painting Lab. Tickets at the door, £4, Medway Park, ME7 1HF

**13th June** - St Matthew's Popular Plant Sale! 10.30-12.30 outside the church, Drewery Dr, Wigmore, ME8 0TG, refreshments for sale along with other garden-related items

**15th June** - 'Happy Hour' singing group, Lower Halstow, 6.30pm, Memorial Hall, ME9 7ES, Liz - 01795 842272

**17th June** - BWAG Club Night, 'Amphibians and Reptiles of the UK' with Mike Phillips, 7.30pm, Blacksmith's Barn, ME7 3JU, £5 on door, refreshments, 07772 920359/[info@bwag.org.uk](mailto:info@bwag.org.uk)

**18th June** - Plants from Around the World with Nigel Gibson, Wigmore & Bredhurst Garden Club, 1.45pm, Howard Memorial Hall, ME8 0PN, call 07531 624679.

**18th June** - Rainham WI, Berengrave Cricket Club, 1.45pm, contact Lynne on 01634 616003

**20th June** - Repair Café, Strood Community Hub, 10.30am -1pm

**21st June** - BWAG Woodland Task Day with an orchid walk and survey, 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)

**27th June** - 'Come and Sing' with Upchurch Choral Society, ending the day with a short concert. Booking required, £15 for the day, £2 for concert, St Mary's Church, Upchurch, ME9 7AL, Liz - [kbl.walters@talk21.com](mailto:kbl.walters@talk21.com)

**27th June** - Wigmore Voices summer concert, 'Look at the World', 7.30pm, St Matthew's Community Centre, ME8 0PD, £10pp including refreshments, Sue on 07990 837287

**30th June** - 'Herbs for Health' with Tuesday Social Club and Mandy Rickard, 7.30pm, £4, Memorial Hall, Lower Halstow, see p7 for more.

**St Matthew's Film Club**, 2pm, last Monday of month, £2 for refreshments, [geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk) or 01634 234 712

**The Thursday Club**, St. Matthews Community Centre, Wigmore, 2pm, contact Geoff on 01634 234712/[geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:geoff.hufton@hotmail.co.uk)

**Bredhurst Whist Club**, every Tues, 7-10pm, Bredhurst Village Hall, 07707 669915

**Hempstead Players** community theatre group, 18+, 07421 817158/[thehempsteadplayers.co.uk](http://thehempsteadplayers.co.uk)

**Rainham WI**, 3rd Thurs of mth, Rainham Cricket Club, 1.45pm, small charge, 01634 616003

**Rainham Health Walk**, every Weds, 10.30am St Margaret's, followed by an active and wellbeing session inside at 12pm, [walking@medway.org.uk](mailto:walking@medway.org.uk)

**Evergreen Club**, each Wed, 2pm, Bredhurst VH

**Kent Classic & Sports Car Club**, 2nd Thurs of mth, Three Mariners, Lower Rainham, 01634 362612

**Gillingham Inner Wheel**, Women's organisation based on friendship and service, supporting both local and overseas charities, two Tues a mth, Upchurch Golf Club for lunch, followed by a meeting on various topics. [chrismorris648@gmail.co.uk](mailto:chrismorris648@gmail.co.uk) for more details.

**Rainham & District Dollhouse & Miniaturist Group**, last Thurs of mth, 7.30pm, Howard Hall, Wigmore, 01634 264295/[rainhamdhkent@gmail.com](mailto:rainhamdhkent@gmail.com)

**Lower Halstow short mat bowls**, each Mon 2-4, Wed 7.30-9.30, [glenyslovell@hotmail.com](mailto:glenyslovell@hotmail.com)/01795 842376

**Knit and Natter**, every Tues, 12-2pm, Rainham Mark Social Club, ME8 6YX, bring your craft, come & chat

**Hempstead Valley Short Mat Bowls Club**, contact Joy on 01622 693101

**Upchurch Horticultural Society**, 1st Wed each mth, 97 Chaffes Lane, contact: [upchurchsociety@gmail.com](mailto:upchurchsociety@gmail.com)

**Rainham Community Choir**, every Mon 7pm, Rainham Oast, £5, contact [cdlmedway@gmail.com](mailto:cdlmedway@gmail.com)

**Reflex Photographic Club**, Thurs, 7.45pm, Rainham School for Girls, [www.reflexphoto.co.uk](http://www.reflexphoto.co.uk)

**Rainham Horticultural Society**, 1st Tues each mth, 7pm, Rainham Cricket Club, 07954 180590, [rainham.kent.horticultural@gmail.com](mailto:rainham.kent.horticultural@gmail.com)

**Hempstead Friendship Club** for ladies, every 2nd/4th Thurs, behind Hempstead Library, 2pm, 07951 629444

**Borstal Bowls Club**, every Thurs, 6pm, Brambletree, Wouldham Rd, ME1 3TN, find us on Facebook

**Refresh Coffee Morning** at RCF Baptist Church, Twydall (ME8 6XE). Every 2nd and 4th Tues of mth, drop in 10.30am -12 noon, all welcome. [www.rcftwydall.org.uk](http://www.rcftwydall.org.uk)

**Medway Ramblers**, walk every Sunday, see [www.medwayramblers.weebly.com](http://www.medwayramblers.weebly.com)

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