

## Kent's Pothole Crisis: Progress Made But Winter Takes Its Toll



**Pothole Pete explains to The Looker the very real issues of maintaining Kents roads**

Kent's road network has been under intense scrutiny in recent months, with potholes turning from a daily nuisance for motorists into a political talking point as the county grapples with the combined effects of weather, legacy under-investment and soaring demand for repairs.

According to figures released by Kent County Council (KCC), the authority's highways teams have repaired more potholes in the past nine months than in the preceding fifteen — a striking turnaround that highlights a stepped-up response to a problem long ingrained into the county's ageing road network. Between May and early February, KCC's repeated milestones suggest the county has repaired well over 23,000 potholes across its more

than 5,400-mile road network — a tally that already outstrips previous periods and reflects the largest sustained push on road defects since local highways performance was reviewed.

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Reform Councillor Peter Osborne — popularly known as "Pothole Pete" — has been at the forefront of the council's drive to tackle the issue. Osborne's profile soared last year when a major investment programme was agreed that saw tens of millions of pounds earmarked for road repairs and pothole treatments. That investment, part of a wider £67 million "Reforming Kent's Roads" package, included dedicated funding for resurfacing, preventative treatments,

*Continued on page 2*

## Four Years On: Ukraine's Fight Is Not Forgotten



This week marks four years since Russian tanks rolled across Ukraine's borders in a full-scale invasion that shocked Europe and appalled the world. Yet for the people of Ukraine, the war did not begin in February 2022. It began twelve long years ago in the Donbas region, when Vladimir Putin's regime first sought to carve up a sovereign nation by force, stoking separatism, annexing territory and unleashing a conflict that has never truly paused.

Four years on from the full invasion — and twelve years since the first shots were fired in eastern Ukraine — it is right that we stop, reflect and recommit ourselves to remembering.

*Continued on page 3*

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local patching and urgent pothole repairs across the county.

“It’s been an unprecedented effort,” Osborne said. “We’ve put more money into potholes and road repairs in the coming three years than at any time in Kent’s recent history. That means more crews out on the roads, quicker responses to defects and a strategic push towards more permanent fixes rather than quick surface patches.”

**Why Winter Makes Things Worse**

While the figures show clear progress, winter has repeatedly thrown fresh challenges at efforts to keep roads smooth.

Engineers point out that potholes seldom appear fully formed — they usually begin life as small cracks in the surface. When water seeps into those fissures, especially in autumn and winter, it can freeze and expand, fracturing the surrounding tarmac and creating cavities. Repeated freeze-thaw cycles combined with heavy rain and high traffic volumes can turn those cracks into substantial potholes in a matter of weeks.

Kent’s recent winter has been among the wettest on record, with persistent rain saturating soils and filling smaller defects. That moisture, combined with fluctuating temperatures around the freezing point, has created ideal conditions for potholes to form — even on stretches of road that had previously shown only minor wear.

Beyond the weather, infrastructure failures such as burst water mains and drainage issues have added to the headache, undermining carriageways from below and hastening the collapse of surfaces that might otherwise have endured longer. The result has been a steady flow of new defects, some of which form within days of temporary repairs being carried out.

**Temporary Fixes vs. Permanent Solutions**



Osborne acknowledges the pressures of winter on roadwork crews. “In colder, wetter conditions, you simply cannot complete every repair to the standard we’d all like,” he said. “A temporary pothole fill might only last a few days in these conditions, which is frustrating for residents — but it buys us time to return and do the job properly when the temperature rises.”

Highways engineers stress that the correct way to mend a pothole goes beyond simply dumping cold mix into a hole. The best repairs involve digging out the defect, sealing the base, filling it with appropriate hot mix tarmac, rolling it flat and then sealing the edges to stop water ingress. This method significantly prolongs the life of the fix and reduces the likelihood of it reopening in a matter of weeks.



Osborne says that “doing it right” remains a core priority, even when pressure mounts to show quick results for frustrated drivers. “It’s always better to fix a pothole correctly than simply fill it,” he added. “We inherited a road network that was neglected for years. If I had a magic wand, I would fill every pothole in Kent within the next 12 months — but I’m limited by our budget and by the laws of physics in winter. What I can promise is that we’re targeting the worst locations first and bringing a much higher level of funding and professionalism to this job than ever before.”

**What the Budget Looks Like**

Under the current spending plans approved at County Hall, the £67 million investment sits alongside other highways budgets to sustain targeted pothole and surface repairs over the next three years, with significant funding allocated each year to local patching teams, preventative surface treatments and larger reconstruction schemes.

Council documents presented during recent budget debates show that this level of investment represents one of the largest sustained commitments to roads in Kent’s recent memory, even as the authority faces deep pressures in other statutory services such as adult social care and health.

**The Road Ahead**

Come spring, highways teams will increasingly divert resources from short-term cold repairs towards more robust reinstatement and resurfacing works, with major arterial routes taking precedence before moving into smaller rural lanes.

For residents, the pothole saga hasn’t disappeared — not by a long chalk. But as potholes continue to be filled at a rate unseen in the county for years, there is cautious optimism that the worst damage is being arrested.

And, as one local motorist quipped after seeing another crew at work: “Never fear — Pot Hole Pete and his wheelbarrow fleet are still on the job.”

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Because while the headlines have shifted and the cameras have moved on, the war has not.

In those early days of 2022, we all remember the disbelief. The grainy footage of missiles striking Kyiv. Families crowding into underground stations for shelter. Mothers clutching children as fathers stayed behind to fight. It felt unthinkable that in 21st-century Europe we would witness cities bombed, civilians targeted and borders redrawn through brute force.

What was shocking then has, disturbingly, become familiar.

The war has become a fixture on our television screens — another scrolling headline, another update in the news cycle. Human beings have an unfortunate ability to adjust to even the most extraordinary suffering when it is repeated often enough. The world moves on. Other crises dominate the agenda. Political rows at home compete for attention.

**But in Ukraine, the suffering is not episodic. It is daily.** This winter has been one of the coldest in living memory. As temperatures plunge, Russian forces have intensified their campaign against energy and power infrastructure, deliberately targeting electricity grids, heating systems and water supplies. These are not military installations in the conventional sense; they are the lifelines of ordinary communities.

**The aim is clear: to freeze a population into submission.** Hospitals forced to rely on generators. Families huddled in darkened flats. Elderly residents facing sub-zero nights without heating. Children trying to study by torchlight. This is not collateral damage; it is strategy. It is the weaponisation of winter against women and children as much as against soldiers on the front line.

**It is, quite simply, barbaric.** And yet, in the face of this sustained assault, Ukraine has endured. Its people have shown a resilience and courage that command admiration. Volunteers continue to deliver aid under fire. Medics work in impossible conditions. Soldiers defend their towns and villages not for conquest, but for the right to live freely in their own country.

Here in Kent, only 1600 miles from the front line, it would be easy to feel powerless. What difference can a small newspaper, a coastal community, a handful of determined volunteers really make?

At The Looker, we asked that question four years ago — and our readers answered it.

From day one of the full-scale invasion, this newspaper and its readership have tried to do their bit to support our European allies. We have reported, we have fundraised, and we have encouraged practical action where we could. We have collected aid and medical supplies. We have amplified the work of those who refused to stand by and do nothing.

It may seem a small contribution against the vast scale of war. But small contributions, multiplied by thousands, become lifelines.



Among those who have inspired us all is Gina Allen and the extraordinary volunteers behind the Ambulances for Ukraine group. Through tireless effort, relentless fundraising and countless hours of organisation, they have helped secure and transport a significant number of ambulances to Ukraine.

These are not symbolic gestures. They are vehicles that carry the wounded from the front. They are mobile treatment centres. They are, in many cases, the difference between life and death.

Each ambulance represents the generosity of ordinary people — pensioners who donated a few pounds, schoolchildren who organised collections, businesses that gave what they could. It is community spirit turned into practical solidarity.

We have been humbled to play our own small part in supporting such efforts. If even one vehicle reached a medic faster because of funds raised locally, if even one life was saved because a community in Kent cared enough to act, then that is something to be proud of.

But commemoration is not only about looking back; it is about renewing commitment.

Four years is a long time in politics. Governments change. Public attention shifts. Fatigue sets in. There are always voices urging compromise at any cost, or suggesting that resistance is futile.

**Yet we must be clear about what is at stake.** Ukraine is not merely defending territory; it is defending the principle that sovereign nations have the right to determine their own future. It is standing against the idea that might makes right. It is resisting a regime that has shown, time and again, its willingness to use force, fear and deprivation as tools of policy.

For those of us who believe in democracy, in the rule of law and in the right of people to live without fear of invasion, this matters.

As we mark this sombre anniversary, The Looker wishes to place on record that our friends in Ukraine are not forgotten. We stand with them — not only in moments of dramatic headlines, but in the grinding, freezing, difficult days that do not make the front pages.

We remember that behind every statistic is a name, a family, a story interrupted.

And we reaffirm that solidarity is not measured by the size of the country offering it, but by the sincerity of its commitment.

Until peace is restored — a just and lasting peace — we will continue to support, to speak out and to do what we can. However small our part may seem, it is part of a wider chorus that says clearly and without hesitation:

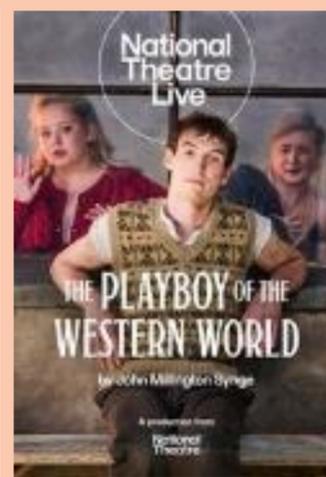
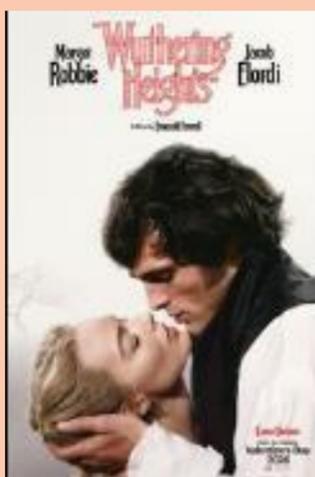
Ukraine does not stand alone.

*David Wimble Editor The Looker*

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# Carers and Students Unite to Thank Hythe's Unsung Heroes

Martello Manor team and EKC Folkestone College deliver handmade brownies to local community champions ahead of Summer opening

The team at Martello Manor Care Home has marked Random Acts of Kindness Day by delivering over 40 gift bags filled with handmade brownies and heartfelt cards to community heroes across Hythe.

Home Manager Marlene and Admissions Manager Jude teamed up with catering and hospitality students from EKC Folkestone College, who lovingly baked batches of brownies for the initiative. Each gift was beautifully wrapped and accompanied by a handwritten note of thanks.

Recipients included staff at local GP surgeries, pharmacies, Age UK Hythe Lyminge and Ashford, Hythe Library, the Royal British Legion drop-in centre, and members of the Hythe Dementia

Awareness Forum, people who dedicate themselves to supporting others every day.

Marlene said: "It was such a joy to personally thank the people who do so much for others. As we prepare to open our doors and welcome our first residents, we wanted to start as we mean to go on, by being an active, caring part of this wonderful community. Working alongside the talented students at EKC Folkestone made it even more special."

The gesture is part of Boutique Care Homes' commitment to building meaningful connections with the Hythe community ahead of Martello Manor's opening this summer. When the team visited the 'Let's Talk Dementia' group, a representative from the Hythe Dementia Awareness Forum said: "It was a lovely surprise when you dropped in and met our 'Let's Talk Dementia' group at the Library."



Jude, Admissions Manager, added: "The smiles on people's faces reminded us that even the smallest gestures can make a real difference. Random Acts of Kindness Day gave us the perfect opportunity to show our appreciation, but this is just the beginning of how we want to connect with Hythe."

In the months leading up to opening, the team will continue working with local schools, colleges and community groups. Once open, Martello Manor will host the Hythe Dementia Awareness Forum's monthly support group, providing a permanent space for families and carers to gather.

Martello Manor Care Home on Farmer Road is scheduled to open this summer.

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# Editor's Word

David Wimble



You will have seen from our front page that this week marks four years since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Four years. It hardly seems possible.

In those early months the conflict dominated every television bulletin and newspaper headline. We watched in disbelief as cities were bombed, families fled and an entire nation was forced to fight for its survival. Blue and yellow flags appeared in windows across Kent, collections were organised in village halls, and strangers opened their homes to people they had never met.

Today, you do not see as much about Ukraine on the television as you once did. The rolling coverage has faded. Other crises have taken centre stage. But the war has not stopped. The suffering has not stopped. And for thousands of families, the uncertainty remains part of daily life.

Here in Kent, we continue to do our bit.

Last Tuesday, at County Hall, there was a non-political gathering where, as a county, we reaffirmed our support for our Ukrainian friends — and friends they are. This was not about party politics or grandstanding. It was about solidarity. It was about recognising that this conflict is not some distant event on another continent, but one unfolding just 1,600 miles from our shores.

Kent has welcomed more Ukrainian refugees than any other part of the country. Families have rebuilt their lives here, children have joined our schools, and communities have quietly and consistently stepped up. Churches, charities, schools and volunteers across the county have continued their work long after the initial wave of attention passed. Our commitment does not end when the television cameras move on.

It does, perhaps, put our other lead story about potholes into perspective. Important though local issues are, they pale when set against the scale of human suffering taking place so close to home. Roads can be repaired. Lives, once shattered, take far longer to rebuild.

Four years on, we remember — and we stand firm in our support.

*David*



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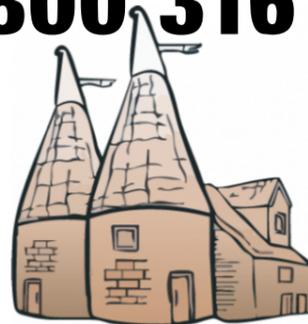
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# Decades of Dreams: 80 Years of Coach and Cruise Heritage Meets Door-to-Deck Luxury

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The partnership marks a significant milestone for Crosskeys. By joining forces with Amadeus—a firm also celebrating over four decades of excellence in river cruising—Crosskeys is bridging the gap between luxury coach travel and first-class river cruising.

"There is a rare synergy when two family businesses come together," says Alan Johnson, Managing Director at Crosskeys. "Between our 40 years on the road and Amadeus's 40 years on the water, we offer our customers a combined 80 years of luxury travel wisdom. True to the Crosskeys mission, have refined this partnership to ensure the journey is entirely seamless, providing luxury transfers

directly to the ship, making your cruise an exclusive 'door-to-deck' experience where the only thing you have to worry about is what to pack. We know what makes a holiday special: personal service, attention to detail, and a commitment to quality that only family ownership can provide."

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This partnership isn't just about a new ship; it's about a shared philosophy. Both companies were founded on the principle of providing high-quality, authentic travel experiences while maintaining a personal touch. As the travel industry becomes increasingly automated, Crosskeys and Amadeus remain dedicated to the human element of hospitality.

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# Taking the Lydd off the Dementia Café

It was a chilly mid-February day when The Looker made a return visit to the Methodist Church Hall in Lydd's New Street to find out how the town's Dementia Café is faring since our last drop-in.

This vital local lifeline in a safe and friendly environment gives those living with dementia and their carers a relaxed two-hour respite, with plenty of chat and activities – and no shortage of laughs..!

The concept of dementia cafés originated in the Netherlands in 1997 to provide those living with dementia, their carers and friends with an opportunity to share experiences in a supportive environment – but also to stimulate café users with games and activities suitable for all to take part.

The Group Lead Officer is Pauline Pogson, who is also responsible for food, hygiene and safeguarding.

"I was initially involved with the dementia café at St Peter's Church Hall in Greatstone, but was approached by the then Community Warden, Joanna Watts who suggested there was a need for a similar resource in Lydd," she says. "I was keen to set this up as my own grandmother had lived with dementia, so I knew how important a facility like this would be to those affected.

"There is a lot of work we, as volunteers, put in to ensure confidentiality and that rules and regulations are strictly adhered to, especially when we undertake the occasional trip out for a change of scenery," she says. "We rely mostly on donations to keep us afloat, although external grants and organisations such as the New Romney Rotary Club have also been helpful."

One of Pauline's key volunteers at the Lydd Dementia Café (LDC) is Richard Davies, whose parents were stalwarts of the Lydd community involved in many local groups from the RNLI to the church and the sea cadets. He now travels from his home in Hartley near Dartford every fortnight to support Café friends and their carers as a way of putting something back into the Lydd community of which his parents were so much a part.

"We involved them in the LDC when they started to display symptoms of dementia, and my father died two-and-a-half years ago," an emotional Richard told me. "We have since had to move my mother up to a wonderful care home in Hartley,

"I have got to know the people and their carers over the last three years, and I know how important it is to provide one-to-one chats or a game of bingo," he says. "I can see the decline over a period of time, which is why it is important for me to provide the support to those who need it, just as I did when my parents came here."

Volunteer Rosie provides teas, coffees and biscuits with a ready smile, and the day of our visit was also Shrove Tuesday, which meant delicious pancakes all round! While the refreshments were gratefully received, volunteer Judith was fully engaged with one of the visitors in chat and activity.

There is a wide range of information available at the LDC, provided by the Alzheimer's Society, from dealing with the symptoms to financial and legal advice. The LDC's mission is to support those living with dementia to 'live well', as well as helping carers to manage their own well-being. With support from the Alzheimer's Society and links with the Shepway Alzheimer's Society Support Services, the LDC will always have room for those who may need help or guidance, or just to have a couple of hours' break in an informal atmosphere.

Dementia is an insidious condition which doesn't just appear overnight – it can take many months or years to evolve. Symptoms include confusion, memory loss and mood swings. Someone who may have had good mental acuity can lose track of everyday routine and find language and problem-solving a challenge. Today, dementia is now the UK's number one killer, with one in three of us likely to develop dementia in our lifetime. Just have a look around your own family members to realise the scale of how dementia may affect all of us one way or another, especially with an increasingly ageing population.

Free to visitors, the Lydd Dementia Café is open fortnightly on the first and third Tuesday of each month, with the next gatherings taking place on March 3rd and 17th, and April 7th and 21st.

Further information can be found by contacting Pauline by e-mail: [pepoggy11@gmail.com](mailto:pepoggy11@gmail.com), or by calling 01797 329390.

The Alzheimer's Society can provide a wealth of information and advice about dementia and its various forms. Have a look at [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk) for guidance from spotting symptoms to how to find the support that those living with dementia, their carers and family may need.



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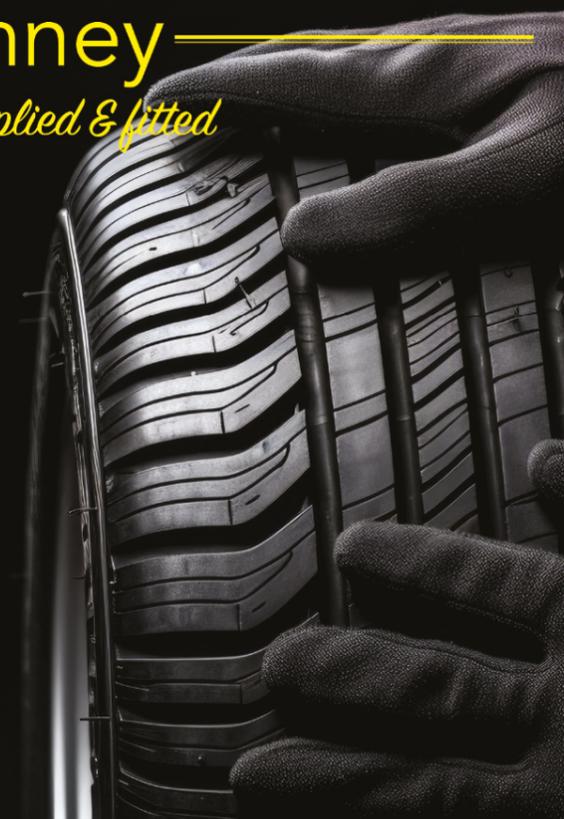
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# Licence Revoked After Illegal Working Raid at Folkestone Café



A Folkestone café has lost its premises licence following the discovery of four people working there without the legal right to do so.

Sunshine Bistro, in Sandgate Road, was subject to an enforcement visit by the Home Office's South East Immigration, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) team on April 9, 2025, after officers received intelligence suggesting illegal workers were on site.

During the visit, four individuals were identified as having no lawful right to work in the UK. All were arrested. A subsequent civil penalty of £120,000 was issued to the business, of which £106,000 remains unpaid.

The Home Office later applied for a review of the premises licence, asking Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) to revoke it on the grounds that the licensing objective of preventing crime and disorder had not been upheld.

In its report to the council, Immigration Enforcement stated that each of the four workers told officers they had been engaged by the owner, Halit Guner, who has held the licence since April 2008. Three of the individuals reportedly claimed to be related to him.

The matter was considered by FHDC's licensing sub-committee earlier this month. Kent Police supported the Home Office's request, telling councillors they had serious concerns about the management of the premises and the reliability of the

licence holder's account.

A decision notice issued after the hearing recorded that police believed the café had not been operated in a manner consistent with promoting the prevention of crime and disorder.

At the meeting, the licence holder, Hait Gunar, disputed elements of the evidence relied upon by Immigration Enforcement. Through a representative, questions were raised about whether the Home Office investigation had followed its own operational guidance and whether appropriate interpreter support had been provided during interviews.

The committee was told that Mr Gunar had been out of the country at the time of the enforcement visit and that a manager had been appointed in his absence. That manager has since left the business.

It was accepted on behalf of the licence holder that full right-to-work checks had not been completed. However, it was argued that, had either Mr Gunar or the appointed manager been present, the individuals would not have been allowed to carry out certain duties within the premises.

The licence holder proposed a series of measures aimed at addressing the council's concerns. These included restructuring the management of the café and introducing regular, documented checks of employees' immigration status. A request was also made to adjourn the hearing to allow time for a recently submitted application to transfer the premises licence and vary the designated premises supervisor to be processed.

Councillors rejected both proposals. The sub-committee determined that, given the seriousness of the allegations, it was in the public interest to proceed without delay.

In reaching its decision, the panel concluded that imposing additional conditions would simply restate existing legal obligations that had already been breached. Members also found inconsistencies between the licence holder's explanation and the evidence presented, which they said undermined the credibility of the account given.

The premises licence was formally revoked.

Following the decision, Cllr Polly Blakemore, FHDC's cabinet member for transport, regulatory services and building control, said licence reviews were an important safeguard for local communities.

She said where the prevention of crime objective is undermined through unlawful activity linked to licensed premises, revocation should be seriously considered. In this case, she added, allowing the business to continue trading under its licence would risk damaging public confidence in the licensing system.

# Families hit out at £900-a-year cost for new Invicta youth academy



Parents have voiced anger after Folkestone Invicta FC unveiled plans for a new youth academy that will cost families £900 a year for their children to take part.

The club this week announced the launch of its new Centre of Excellence, describing it as an accessible pathway for young players looking to progress through Invicta's ranks.

Under the scheme, teams from under-7s to under-18s will compete in organised leagues, with trials scheduled to take place over the Easter holidays. Successful players will be invited to join the programme, which includes a £200 signing-on fee followed by monthly payments of £70 from July through to April.

The total annual cost has prompted a strong reaction from some parents, particularly when compared with nearby clubs. Hythe Town Youth, for example, charges £25 a month.

One parent described the pricing as "a massive barrier for ordinary working families who just want their children to enjoy football and be part of a team". Another said the move "risks turning grassroots sport into something only a few can afford".

Several parents raised concerns that talented youngsters could miss out because of financial pressures at home, particularly at a time when many households are grappling with rising living costs.

The backlash on social media was swift, with some supporters questioning whether the pricing structure reflects the community ethos traditionally associated with local clubs. Comment sections on the club's announcement were later restricted.

Despite the criticism, club officials have confirmed the academy will proceed as planned. They say the programme is designed to deliver a high-quality development pathway with enhanced facilities and professional standards.

Young players enrolled in the academy will train and play home fixtures on the newly surfaced Alcaline Stadium pitch, a FIFA Quality Pro surface. The package also includes a full clothing bundle comprising playing kit, training wear and a club bag.

In addition, participants will benefit from video analysis sessions, one-to-one development reviews, ECG screening, free entry to senior home games and post-match refreshments at youth fixtures.

Club representatives say pricing has been set to reflect the standard of coaching, facilities and welfare provision, adding that there are no hidden costs. They have indicated fees will be kept under review.

Invicta report a strong response to the upcoming April trials and insist the initiative will provide a clear pathway for local talent to progress within the club.

Alongside the academy, soccer schools will run during school holidays and player development classes will be available from £8.50 per session. The club says it will continue to work with grassroots organisations in the area, describing collaboration across local football as vital to the sport's long-term health.

For now, however, debate continues among families over whether the new academy represents an investment in youth development — or a step too far for community football.

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# Leave Your Mark on Oaklands Park



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Participants will attend a guided creative workshop, ensuring every brick is crafted with care and creativity.

With only 230 bricks available, spaces are filling quickly.

Progress update: 182 of 230 bricks have already been pledged — 79% of the target has been reached.

At just £15 per brick (including workshop and materials), this is a rare opportunity to leave your mark on a much-loved community space. No payment is required now — we are simply gathering expressions of interest.

Once workshop dates are confirmed, registered participants will be contacted to secure their place.

If you'd like to take part in this family-friendly project, visit [www.teachmecourses.co.uk](http://www.teachmecourses.co.uk) today and register your interest.

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# Bowl Them Over: Free Summer League for Hythe's Youngsters

Hythe Bowling Club is throwing open its gates to the next generation this summer with a series of free junior lawn bowls sessions designed to give 13 to 18-year-olds a fresh challenge — and perhaps spark a little friendly rivalry along the way.

Running from Sunday 24th May through to 20th September 2026, the sessions will take place every Sunday from 11am to 1pm at Hythe Bowling Club, Ladies Walk, Hythe, Kent, CT21 6AX. The initiative, affiliated with Bowls England (Affiliation Number 18085), is being actively promoted by Folkestone and Hythe District Council as part of its drive to encourage youth sport and community engagement across the district.

And the best part? It won't cost families a penny.

**A Sport with a Competitive Twist**  
The club's youth section is inviting teenagers aged 13 to 18 who feel they "need a new challenge" to step onto the green. Equipment will be provided — participants simply need to bring a change of shoes, plenty of enthusiasm and, as organisers put it, "a smile."

But this isn't just a casual roll-up-and-play arrangement. Organisers are planning to introduce a structured mini-league across the summer months.

The concept is simple: teams of three players will take part in coaching sessions before competing in a friendly league format. With points awarded throughout the season, there will be an overall winning team crowned at the end of the summer.

There is already strong interest from local organisations including Brockhill Park School, Hythe Scouts and Hythe Youth Club, and the ambition is to see groups fielding their own teams to compete against one another.

The prospect of Hythe Youth Club taking on the Scouts — with school teams in the mix — could add a healthy dose of community rivalry to proceedings.

**Building Skills — and Confidence** Qualified coaches will lead the sessions, teaching at each player's pace. All coaches and helpers are fully DBS checked and committed to creating a safe, welcoming environment.

Sessions will combine structured coaching, fun practice bowls and competitive matches, ensuring newcomers can develop

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skills before stepping into league play.

Parents and guardians are asked to remain on site for 13 and 14-year-olds, ensuring younger participants are properly supported.

Organisers are also mindful that families may have holidays planned during the school and college summer break. The schedule will be structured flexibly to accommodate absences, so no young player feels they are letting a team down by taking a well-earned break.

**A Timely Boost for Youth Sport**  
In an age where screen time often dominates teenage free hours, Hythe Bowling Club's initiative offers something refreshingly traditional — outdoor activity, teamwork and competition, all in the heart of the community.

Lawn bowls, sometimes unfairly stereotyped as a sport for older generations, has been steadily attracting younger players nationwide. With its emphasis on precision, strategy and teamwork, it provides both a mental and physical challenge.

Club members hope this summer programme will not only introduce new players to the sport but also build lasting links between local youth organisations and the club itself.

**How to Enter**  
Young people aged 13 to 18 can attend individually, but those wishing to enter the mini-league format will need to form teams of three.

For further information, or to register a team, contact:  
Adina Nash  
Email: [Adina.nash@btinternet.com](mailto:Adina.nash@btinternet.com)  
Telephone: 07825916929

With summer on the horizon and the green waiting, Hythe Bowling Club's message is simple:

**Hythe Bowling Club - youth section**  
**WE NEED YOU!**



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**bowling**  
**sessions May to**  
**September**  
**2026**



**BOWLS ENGLAND**  
Affiliation number – 18085  
**Hythe Bowling Club**  
- Ladies Walk,  
Hythe, Kent, CT21 6AX

**13 to 18yrs, need a new challenge. Come to Free lawn bowls 24th May to 20th Sept 2026 every Sunday 11am to 1pm.**

Equipment provided. Just bring a change of shoes, enthusiasm and a smile.

Qualified coaches to teach you at your pace – all DBS checked Coaching fun bowls and competitions.

Parents/Guardians to stay for 13-14 year olds.

If interested or require further information then please contact:  
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## Cut Above the Rest: Capelli Café Plan Wins Backing in New Romney

There is fresh optimism on New Romney High Street after plans for a new café behind Capelli Hairdressers were officially approved – paving the way for what many hope will be a welcome boost to the town centre.

Salon owner Abigail Adams has secured permission from Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) to build a single-storey café next to her established business, following a thoughtful redesign of earlier proposals.

The move marks a positive step forward after an initial two-storey scheme, which included a flat above the café, was turned down last year. Council officers at the time felt the scale of the building was too large for the sensitive conservation area setting.

Undeterred, Ms Adams went back to the drawing board – and the result is a carefully scaled-back design that planners say now “sits comfortably within the site and the wider street scene”.

The approved café will stand at just 3.4 metres high, a significant reduction from the previously proposed 8.3 metres. Planning officers concluded the revised design keeps the building low-profile and ensures it would not appear intrusive within the conservation area.

In their report, officers stated the development would not result in overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts on neighbouring properties. The revised scheme was described as acceptable in terms of scale, design and siting.

Importantly for a town keen to see continued investment in its High Street, the project is also expected to create three full-time jobs.

Ms Adams has long argued that her part of the High Street would benefit from a welcoming social space where



Previous two story plan has been scaled back

residents and visitors can relax. The café, she believes, will bring renewed vitality to this corner of town, complementing existing businesses and encouraging people to spend more time locally.

While some concerns were raised during the consultation process – including one objection relating to the character of the conservation area and the protection of nearby trees – planning officers concluded the revised design strikes the right balance.

The most prominent tree to the front of the site will be retained, and special “no-dig” construction methods will be used near protected trees to safeguard root systems during building works.

Parking arrangements were also addressed. Although the café itself will not have on-site parking, the premises sits immediately adjacent to West Street Car Park, offering convenient access for customers.

High streets across Kent continue to face significant pressures, from online shopping to rising business costs. Developments such as this are increasingly seen as part of the answer – smaller, independent ventures that enhance community life while strengthening the local economy.

For Capelli Hairdressers, the café represents not just an expansion, but an evolution. By blending hair, hospitality and community space in one setting, the business hopes to offer something slightly different – a place where people can meet, pause and enjoy the atmosphere of a traditional market town.

With approval now secured, attention will turn to the build itself. If all goes to plan, New Romney could soon have a new gathering spot – one designed with both heritage and community firmly in mind.



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## Dates for your Diary

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### Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.  
Woman's Wednesday Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.  
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.  
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

### Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March

Middlemarsh WI, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 9.45 a.m. (1<sup>st</sup> Thur)  
Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.  
Dance Moves with Chris, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10.15 a.m.  
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.  
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

### Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.  
Social Ballroom Sequence Dancing, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

### Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March

Exhibition of early 20<sup>th</sup> century photos, Old School Trust, New Romney, 10 a.m.

### Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March

Dymchurch Meeting Point, Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Sunflower Memory Café, Old School, New Romney, 10 a.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mon)  
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 11 a.m.  
The Games Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.

Greatstone WI, St. Peter's Church Hall, 7.30 p.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> Mon)

### Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March

Pilates, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Dance Moves, Burton Hall off Stade Street, Hythe, 10.30 a.m.  
Dymchurch Art Society, Village Hall, 1 p.m.  
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m.  
Foodbank, New Romney Community Church, 4 p.m.  
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

### Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March

Computer Club, Village Hall, St. Mary's Bay, 9.30 a.m.  
Bridge Meeting Point, New Romney Scouts Hut, 10 a.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wed)  
Woman's Wednesday Club, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.  
Romney Marsh Flower Arrangers, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 2 p.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> Wed)  
Needlecraft Club, Old School, New Romney, 7 p.m.  
Short Mat Bowling, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.

### Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March

Lydd Meeting Point, Hardy Hall, 10 a.m.  
Dymchurch WI, Masonic Hall, 10 a.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs)  
Dance Moves with Chris, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 10.15 a.m.  
Pebbles Dementia Café, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 10.30 a.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs)  
Craft "N" Laughs, St. Peter's Hall, Greatstone, 2 p.m.  
Dymchurch Short Mat Bowls, Village Hall, 6 p.m.

### Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March

Pilates, Dymchurch Village Hall, 10 a.m.  
Friday Art Group, St Mary's Bay Village Hall, 1 p.m.  
Social Ballroom Sequence Dancing, St. Mary's Bay Village Hall, 7 p.m.



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# Plans for Six-Bedroom Townhouse at Former Devonshire House Hotel Refused



Plans to convert part of the former Devonshire House Hotel on Folkestone's seafront into a six-bedroom townhouse have been refused by Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

The proposal related to 7 Marine Parade, a vacant section of the once-prominent Devonshire House Hotel, which ceased trading in 2008 after a sustained downturn in tourism rendered the business "commercially unviable".

## A building with a long history

The property dates back to 1848, when it was constructed as part of a terrace of four townhouses, numbers 4 to 7 Marine Parade. In the mid-20th century, numbers 4 to 9 were converted into two separate hotels – the Devonshire House Hotel and the Gran Canaria Hotel.

Number 7 was later internally linked with numbers 8 and 9 to form the Devonshire House Hotel. However, in 2012, numbers 8 and 9 were successfully converted into residential properties, physically separating number 7 from the rest of the former hotel complex.

Since then, number 7 has remained vacant for almost two decades.

Most recently, the building was acquired by the owner of the neighbouring Gran Canaria Hotel, but it has not been brought back into active hotel use.

## The latest proposal

The current applicant, Cesar Benitez, submitted plans in December seeking permission to convert the five-storey

property into a six-bedroom townhouse. The scheme proposed a single car parking space and no private garden.

Planning documents lodged on behalf of the applicant argued that the conversion would secure the long-term future of what was described as a heritage asset.

The supporting statement maintained: "This proposal addresses the need to secure the long-term preservation of a heritage asset while adding to the district's housing supply and regeneration objectives."

"The conversion from a commercially unviable hotel use to a residential use provides the only realistic path to ensuring the building's long-term preservation."

The submission further claimed the development would provide a "viable long-term future" for the site and strengthen the "visual and economic character" of Marine Parade.

Council concerns over tourism loss

However, planning officers have refused the application, citing concerns over the loss of visitor accommodation in a prominent seafront location.

In their report, officers stated: "The application particulars fail to demonstrate that the loss of visitor accommodation would not have a detrimental impact on the local tourism economy."

"It is considered the proposal would be an unsustainable development that would conflict with development plan policy."

A key issue highlighted by the council was the lack of evidence to show that the property had been actively marketed for continued hotel or visitor accommodation use.

Under local planning policy, applicants seeking to change the use of visitor accommodation are required to demonstrate that the property has been marketed at a reasonable rate for a minimum period of 12 months. Officers said this had not been done in this case.

They added that such marketing evidence would help establish the level of interest in retaining the building as visitor accommodation, particularly given its well-located position close to the centre of Folkestone and directly on the seafront.

## Second refusal

This latest decision marks the second time proposals to convert the building into residential accommodation have been rejected. A similar scheme was refused by the council in November.

Despite being purchased by the neighbouring hotel, the section of the former Devonshire House Hotel has never been re-integrated into active hotel use.

The refusal underlines the council's continued emphasis on protecting tourism assets in key coastal locations, even where former hotels have stood vacant for extended periods.

Residents wishing to view planning applications that may affect them can do so via the Public Notice Portal on the council's website.



## Cubs, Scouts, Guides & Brownies

# 2026 - The Scouting Adventure Continues

## Love Mud!!



Here's to muddy boots, big dreams, and unforgettable moments with Beaver Scouts.

There's truly nothing like it for a guaranteed FUNTASTIC day! Romney Marsh Beavers from Dymchurch, New Romney, and Lydd joined over 200 Kent County Beaver Scouts at Brockhill Park for an incredible adventure—a muddy day outdoors that was wet, WET, WET from start to finish.

The event was packed with activities, and if it involved mud, we did it! From the Mud Trail and Mud Monsters to Mud Face Packs and Mud Painting, every muddy moment contributed to our awesome adventure. Beavers also learned how to build a campfire and, best of all, toasted marshmallows after sliding down a muddy slope—by then, they were absolutely covered in mud! Local washing machines have been working overtime this week!

Mud definitely brings joy; playing in mud lifts your spirits, and there's nothing quite like its soothing effect. The Mud Trail was a highlight, letting everyone discover how useful mud is to our planet and explore why it fascinates us. The Playpark was also a big hit—the slides, climbing



equipment, roundabout, and parachute (all muddied up) brought plenty of excited squeals from the Beavers.



The goal was for Beavers to get thoroughly muddy and have loads of fun, and we certainly succeeded—fun was had in abundance. Despite being wet, cold, and slipping or squelching through the mud, the children stayed cheerful throughout the day. Congratulations to all our fantastic Beavers who kept smiling and laughing in the constant rain! Their grins were as wide as the muddy puddles, and by midday, not a clean coat was left in sight.

A huge thanks to the Kent County Scout Beaver Team for organizing the Mud Adventure, and to the staff at Café Atma at Brockhill Park for their delicious catering—



especially the cookies. Beavers who learned the word Gouranga, meaning happiness, claimed a free cookie, which perfectly captured the spirit of the day: happy smiles everywhere and endless joy.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the local Volunteer Leaders and Helpers for making this morning memorable—we couldn't have done it without you! What an amazing experience. Thank you!

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# Runners urged to 'get their skates on' for 15th Folkestone Coastal 10K

Runners are being urged to sign up early for this year's Folkestone Coastal 10K, as organisers confirm that more than 200 competitors have already registered for the popular seaside race.

Now in its 15th year, the award-winning event will take place on Sunday, 31 May 2026, with the main 10K race starting at 10am. A children's run will precede it at 9.30am, offering younger participants the chance to be part of the day's activities.

Organisers say demand has been strong, with teams from local running clubs and businesses already on board. Participants are being encouraged to register in advance to avoid disappointment.

The 10-kilometre course will once again head out along the promenade towards Hythe before turning and returning along the flat coastal path. The route is widely regarded as one of the fastest in the region, giving experienced runners the opportunity to chase a personal best while also offering an accessible layout for those taking part for the first time.

This year's event will support The Gurkha Memorial Fund alongside a range of other charitable causes. Over the years, the race has raised significant sums for good causes within the district and



beyond, and runners are encouraged to use the event as an opportunity to fundraise for their own chosen charities.

In response to popular demand, organisers have confirmed that a virtual option will once again be available. This allows participants who are unable to attend in person to complete the distance remotely, broadening access to the event — even for those who may be overseas at the time.

The 2026 race has attracted backing from a number of sponsors. Main supporter SAGA is joined by The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust, Church & Dwight, Holiday Extras, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, KAP Group and Eurotunnel. Organisers say the continued support of sponsors is vital to ensuring the event's smooth running and its ongoing charitable contribution.

Businesses interested in supporting the race can contact the race director via email at ray@folkestonecoastal10k.co.uk

The event continues to draw a broad range of participants. Among those already registered are several 15-year-olds invited to take part from local schools, alongside runners in their eighties. The wide age range reflects the inclusive nature of the event, which combines competitive racing with community participation.

As well as the main 10K, the children's run provides a family-friendly element to the day, helping to inspire the next generation of runners. The seafront setting offers a scenic backdrop for spectators and competitors alike, contributing to the event's enduring popularity.

Full details, including registration information, can be found at [www.folkestonecoastal10k.co.uk](http://www.folkestonecoastal10k.co.uk)

With entries already exceeding 200 and teams continuing to sign up, organisers are advising prospective runners to act promptly if they wish to secure a place on the start line for what promises to be another well-supported edition of the Folkestone Coastal 10K

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Date	Event	Time	Cost
Mondays	Games and Crafty Club	1:30 – 3:30 pm	£3.50 each
	Dance Fit	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7.00
	Seated exercise	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7.00
Tuesdays	Walking Group	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Free
	Yoga	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7
	Pilates	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7
Wednesdays	Seated exercise (for those with Arthritis, Stroke or Parkinsons)	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7
Thursdays	Tai Chi	9:30 am – 11:00 am	£7
	Art Club	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	£3.50
	Seated Tai Chi	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7
	Line Dancing	4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	£7
	Yoga	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	£7
	Totally Shredded	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7
Fridays	Legs, Bums & Tums	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7
	Seated exercise	11:00 am – 12:00 pm	£7
Friday Feb 6 <sup>th</sup>	Cancer Peer Support Group	2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Free
Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Death Cafe	2:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Free
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup>	Ceramic Painting Workshop	1:30 pm – 3:30 pm	£6

**Hub on the Beach – 103 Coast Dr, Greatstone**

Mondays	Dance Fit	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7
	Yoga	7:30 pm – 8:30 pm	£7
Tuesdays	Seated Exercise	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7
	Salsa	6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	£7
Wednesdays	Legs, Bums & Tums	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7
	Seated Tai Chi	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7
	Zumba	6:30 pm – 7:30 pm	£7
Thursdays	Yoga	9:30 am – 10:30 am	£7
	Seated Exercise	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	£7
Saturdays	Washinkai Karate	10:30 am – 12:00 pm	£7 / £5 < 16
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# Marsh Memories

Compiled by John Wimble

## 1829-1833 Diary of James Reely, a Lydd choolmaster

**May 25 1829:** A Russian schooner of 180 tons was wrecked near No. 1 Battery at Dungeness. It was loaded with brandy and wine and the contents were sold to the people of Lydd for £138.

**Aug 29:** A Brig of 130 tons came ashore between No. 1 and No. 2 Batteries and the crew were saved. It was laden with the King's Stores, and they were sold in September to the people of Hastings for £230.

**Nov 24:** A ship sunk in West Bay and 14 men and a boy drowned.

**Nov 25:** There was very deep snow which lay for a week.

**Jan 7 1830:** Dr. Broadly fell off his horse in the snow returning from Rye and was killed. He was much respected and buried a week later and there was still a lot of snow on the ground. At the end of the month, there was a very severe frost and snow which lasted a week.

**Feb 2:** Mr. Greenland died in the poor house, and he was a long time resident of Jacques Court. Thomas Day also died in the poor house a month later.

**Mar 20:** A large French fishing boat came ashore near the old Watch House and was completely wrecked. All hands were saved and the wreckage was sold.

**June 26:** King George IV died and King William IV was proclaimed at Lydd a week later.

**Aug 2:** A Brig of 130 tons came ashore between the Brooks and Wick, loaded with coals, iron and gin. It was stranded and sold a week later to the people of Lydd for £35.

**Sept 23:** A Schooner of about 125 tons came ashore between the Brooks and Wick, loaded with currants and almonds etc. All the cargo was swept away with part of the vessel, but two women and two children were rescued. Part of the vessel was sold to the people of Lydd for £55.

**Nov 28:** A French cargo boat came ashore in the East Bay near Greatstone with a large quantity of

empty bottles on board. It was sold to the people of New Romney for £21. 10s.

**Jan 7 1831:** The Northern Lights made a beautiful appearance in the evening sky.

**Feb 1:** It was a very rough day with wind and snow. A French schooner laden with wheat and iron, came ashore at the Wick and six crew died. A Brig bound for London also came ashore at Camber and was wrecked and all the crew died. She was laden with olive oil, almonds and 11 boxes of gold with £3,000 in each box. Three boxes were saved.

**Mar 2:** A French Sloop came ashore between Tart's and Galloways, laden with oil and coffee. It was unloaded and the cargo brought to Lydd. The vessel was sold to the people of Lydd for £17.

**Mar 5:** A Schooner came ashore at Romney Sands and was got off without damage.

**May 7:** There was a very sharp frost which cut the potatoes, vines, apricots, cherries, cabbage, peas, wheat and almost everything was affected by it, devent the gorse.

**Nov 3:** I lit a fire in the school for the first time this winter

**Aug 27 1832:** A large Brig sunk between New Romney and Dymchurch in a gale, but all the hands were saved.

**Nov 7:** A galley belonging to the coastguard sank and 3 men out of the five crew were drowned. They were all buried in one grave a week later.

**Dec 20:** It was a fine hot day. I went to New Romney and voted for Edward Knatchbull.

**Jan 24 1833:** Mrs. Stephen Goodwin set herself on fire, was dreadfully burned and survived for about 24 hours before she died.

**Jan 28:** Mr. Longley, Mr. Baker and Caroline Cornelius, all from Lydd, died from narcotic painkillers. The Jury brought in a verdict of suicide in all three cases. Caroline Cornelius was buried according to law between the hours of 9 p.m. and midnight without burial service two days later. She was only 16 years old.



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# Then & Now



**New Romney High Street, c.1950s.**

The Victoria Restaurant on the corner of Victoria Street, was originally a Posting House and Hotel. In the 1930s, it was converted into a restaurant and known as the 'New Romney Teahouse'. After the war, it was renamed the Victoria Restaurant, and for some years it was run by Mr. Smithson. It hosted numerous functions including dinners and wedding receptions. Today, it is the local 'Chinese'.



## Romney Marsh Flower Arrangers

### Report for 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Most people will have heard of William Hogarth the painter. Our February Workshop was planned for our members to arrange a "Hogarth Curve". This is described as the line of beauty. It is in the shape of an elongated S. The curve design is based on this shape. It is showy and full of movement. The design often being used for formal occasions.

To create the S outline two matching curved stems needed to be placed in a foam block of a tall container. Long pliable stems need to be used such as ferns, rosemary, flowering currant or broom. Our members used ferns and wiring was threaded through the stems to enable the curve to be shaped more easily. The mechanics were then covered with filler leaves and flowers. Ann Lockett our In-House Demonstrator showed members how to wire the larger leaves, such as ivy, to cover the base and encourage the shape and form. Most of the members chose to have greenery only in their design. However, some added roses or chrysanthemums. The designs were very effective, but most members admitted it was hard to arrange the foliage and flowers to keep the shape.

Anne also demonstrated how to plait a large fern,



how to produce a flower from foliage, and pin leaves to a polystyrene ball to make a sphere. A learning curve for us all.

#### Dates for the Diary

11<sup>th</sup> March -In House Arrangement – Title Hobbies Start 2pm

8<sup>th</sup> April Demonstration by David Williams Entitled "California Dreaming"

13<sup>th</sup> May – Dried Flower Demonstration with Emma from Essentially Hops

**Meetings held at:** St Mary's Bay Village Hall, Jefferstone Lane, TN29 0SQ. Visitors welcome.

**For further information please contact Sharon on 07754 053783**



### Sunshine.

At last, some sunshine! Perhaps the spring will come, and one day it will stop raining! Our computer sits inside a south facing window, and today I had to pull the curtain across to shade the screen. Can't remember when I last did that! There is a permanent puddle at the end of our road, I fully expect the ducks to start nesting in it soon. The snowdrops and crocuses have finished, but the daffs are out in all their glory, and looking good. There are a lot of wild violets in our garden, and they too are looking good. Today (24<sup>th</sup>) has been mild and pleasant, so let's hope it continues into March.

As regards practical gardening it is very much, the recipe as before. Lots of tidying and pruning, and, if you've been leaving the twiggy out to die off, tidy it up by putting it into your gardening bin, or in bags ready for the tip. The shrubs, soft fruit and fruit trees are beginning to bud up, and signs of new growth are everywhere. I was taking pictures of our camellias to send to family, they make a lovely splash of colour in the dullness of winter. It is interesting to look back at such photos in the height of summer, hard to believe how bare the garden is at this time of year compared to the lushness of summer.

It is probably slightly early to start plants in an unheated greenhouse, but you can start seed trays off indoors on shelves and windowsills. Don't use polished shelves or windowsills, the watering, even on newspaper, may damage the finish. So many outlets sell bedding plants now, and they all want to be the first. Don't get too enthusiastic, and buy and plant too early. You have the whole summer to enjoy them, and they will last until the first frosts.

Raspberry canes will need staking. Place 4 stout poles are each corner of your bed, well sunk into the ground, and fasten 2 or 3 rows of good quality garden wire onto the poles, so you have a well-supported square or rectangle. We lost our fruit cage in a storm a year or two ago, so we use weighted nets to keep the birds off our soft fruit in the summer.

The lawns are beginning to look like they could do with a trim. If you do cut your grass, cut with a high blade. If you are too ruthless at this time of year you may damage the grass. With all the rain, there is a lot of moss around. You can get rid of some it on lawns with the rake, but again, don't be too harsh. With the sodden ground, you may pull up grass as well. Hopefully some will dry off with the drier weather, but we look forward to clearing the paths. There are damp and dangerous at the moment so take care.

### AND NOW FOR THE VEG

It's still early days to think about planting and sowing too much outdoors, as the ground is too cold and wet for seeds and plants to get a good germination going. However, this is a good opportunity to plan where your crops are going to end up and prepare the site ready for the spring weather which is hopefully round the corner! For crops which need support as they mature, why not use the next week or so in putting in frames/stakes/netting before planting out. This avoids disturbing the root systems and will encourage the climbing crops to get a good grip. We've traditionally used bamboo canes to support runner beans, largely because they've always been available and over the years we've built up a good supply. However, the disadvantage is that because the canes are smooth and slippery the stems are sometimes reluctant to get a grip and need tying up at intervals to encourage the stems to wind around the cane. The alternative is to use rough-sawn timber battens such as roofers use, although the initial outlay might be expensive.

Other crops needing support are broad beans and peas, so putting a framework for these in place is a good investment at a time when it's a bit early for sowing. If you have started early sowings of tomato seeds, once the seedlings reach about a couple of inches in height, don't forget to turn them regularly so that each side of the tray gets the same amount of sunlight. As soon as they are large enough to handle, transplant into small pots being careful to handle by the leaves and not the stems as this can damage them.

Once the soil is dry enough, parsnips can be sown now. Germination takes a month or so and they have a long growing season so they do take up space which you might prefer to use for other crops. Having said that, parsnips are a tasty and versatile winter vegetable if you have the space to grow them. Sow the seeds an inch or so apart and thin out when large enough to handle. Like most root crops, they don't like being disturbed once beginning to mature so leave about five or six inches between each root. To utilise the space parsnips take up with their long growing season, you can sow quick-growing salad crops, such as radish and lettuce, between the rows.

If you have brussel plants which have reached the end of their time, chop them up into small pieces before adding them to the compost heap. Years ago we made the mistake of throwing whole plants onto the compost heap and it took years for them to break down! It's good to learn from your mistakes!

As always, happy gardening!

Your birth Certificate. If you want to do yourself a favour, get out your birth certificate from whatever safe place you keep it, and look at it. It gives all the details about your existence, your father and mother, their occupations, where you were born, nationality, and most importantly when, your DOB. Nothing can change that fact. You are the age dictated by your birth certificate. Whether it is 17, 47 or 77, or whatever, you are the age it says. The happiest people have come to terms with their age, and accepted the changes. Women have always wanted to look their best, but why and when did fighting age become a multi-million £ international business?

My husband had a course in Canterbury, so I had a free afternoon, pottering around Canterbury. I wandered into Fenwicks, and the entire ground floor was given over to beauty and wellness. It was suffocating. I was soon out of there! What is it all for?? Our generation are all celebrating their golden and diamond wedding anniversaries, and managed to keep the love and devotion of our partners for over half a century without all this stuff!! Some of our generation wear more makeup than others, but none of them indulged in beauty products to the ridiculous levels seen nowadays. Not only removable make-up, but all the processes advertised nowadays. I am always horrified when I walk past aesthetic clinics, advertising processes I've never heard of!

Botox always frightens me. Do people know what Botox is? In the early days of canning, when it was still experimental, a disease arose called Botulism. When the sterilization process wasn't complete, bacteria would get in and mix with the metal, and create the toxin which caused Botulism. The toxin paralyses the muscles in the body, which leads to an awful death. All your organs slowly close down, eventually you can't breathe and slowly suffocate. The paralysing effect is what is used in Botox injections. Why would anyone have that injected into your face? What kind of society have we created that the only thing that matters is appearance? The worship of image is all around us. Aided by the obsession with social media.

Yet, in reality, appearance is not what life is about. The love and regard of family, partners and friends does not depend on appearance. If it does, you are on a hiding to nowhere. Tomorrow you could be in an accident, or be sick, and the importance of appearance will disappear like a marsh mist on a sunny morning. The signs of ageing always show in time. We will see our bodies deteriorate, our muscles losing tone, our skin going crepey. Does it matter? No. Not if your values are based in meaningful relationships and lifestyle, and you have learnt to be "happy in your own skin"

We belong to the generation that are being widowed, and seeing our partners fail in health, mentally and physically. Several have nursed partners through serious mental and physical illnesses to the end. They have done everything for them, cleaned up when they become incontinent, seen them lose their faculties, and cared to their last breath. That is love and tender devotion, and it has nothing to do with spending

thousands on outward appearance. Many of us are nauseated by the dating programmes, with tarts prancing about in brief bikinis, vain, poser blokes, neither anything to do with real commitment. My sister used to say that everyone needs to see their partner with a shocking cold, before you get serious. I would add, sitting on a loo with a dose of D & V. If anyone ever tried to get superior with me in my nursing career, I looked them straight in the eye, and imagined them on a loo. (Sorry, nursing does make you familiar with the basics of life!)

The sudden respectability of beards a few years ago, amused us. I have never known my husband without a beard. He used to have a beard attachment to an electric razor, but it conked out decades ago, so he just keeps it tidy with a pair of small scissors, costing 49p. Suddenly you couldn't move for beard grooming products!

Like is much too complicated nowadays. If you are struggling financially, you don't need about 98% of the stuff on offer! Keep life simple. To keep your body and mind healthy and age well, there are a few simple rules.

Eat a healthy diet, and keep your weight down. I know this is easier said than done. Stick to balanced family meals, empty the house of most snacking foods. Just close your mind to all the advertising and imagery of junk and ultra processed foods. Try not to get involved with "diets." They have a terrifyingly low long term success rate, and unless you have trained yourself to eat sensibly for the rest of your life, are a waste of time. Never try to lose more than 1 and half pounds a week, or 0.7 of a kilo. This may not have drastic results, but is more likely to stay off, as your body gradually gets used to the weight loss.

Get moving. Not necessarily high-powered gym stuff, but just working more activity into your day. Walk or cycle more, or use a bus instead of your car. Which means walking to a bus stop. Go physical shopping, rather than ordering everything on line. See your housework as a workout, not a chore.

Spend time on community. Whether family, friends or belonging to a group or club, such contacts are vital to physical and mental health. Real human contacts with people are vital, not just online.

Get plenty of rest. Make sure you get your 7-8 hours. There is nothing more important to long term health than good sleep. Put screens away, an hour before you hit the pillow. Turn your phone off, or leave it in another room. Have a regular routine, to wind your brain down.

Have you had a think about your age, and how to cope with the advancing years? Now put your birth certificate away safely, for the next time officialdom wants to see it!



# Balanced and Dangerous: The “Car Crash” That Quietly Delivered

For nine long months we were assured — sometimes delicately, more often with theatrical certainty — that Reform UK’s administration at Kent County Council was somewhere between confused and catastrophic.

Meetings were allegedly cancelled “because they didn’t know what they were doing.” Committees reshuffled. Processes paused. If you relied solely on certain coverage — and I use the word “coverage” with a gently raised eyebrow — you would have assumed County Hall was being run by political tourists armed with nothing more than a slogan and a sat-nav.

**And yet here we are.** The supposedly incompetent newcomers have delivered what many insisted was impossible: a balanced budget on a £2 billion authority.

That’s £2,000,000,000 — in British terms, a billion being a thousand million — spent on everything from Kent Fire and Rescue Service to adult social care, special educational needs, highways, school transport, libraries, waste services and the countless statutory duties that quietly underpin daily life across the county.

**So forgive the pause.** Because if the narrative for the past nine months was “car crash,” the reality looks suspiciously like competent financial management.

**Let’s deal with the elephant first.** When Reform took control last May, they didn’t just inherit the keys to County Hall. They inherited approximately £730 million in debt — along with an eye-watering interest bill of roughly £85,000 per day.

**Per day!!!!**  
Before a pothole is filled. Before a care package is agreed. Before a single fire engine rolls out of its station, £85,000 disappears in loan costs.

This is not a parish council debating flower tubs. Kent County Council employs around 12,000 people and contracts with a vast network of external suppliers. Over the previous decade, most of the easy efficiency savings — the so-called “low-hanging fruit” — had already been picked.

And the mission was clear: balance the books without mass redundancies, without closing libraries, without shutting household waste recycling centres, and without slashing essential services that residents care deeply about.

For more than ten years, the default approach had been a 4.9% council tax rise — the maximum allowed without triggering a referendum. Predictable. Automatic. Almost traditional.

**This year?** Kent came in at 3.9%. (1% =£10 million pounds that makes it a bit more real)

Not 4.9%. Not the ceiling. Three point nine per cent.

Put another way, that’s roughly 25% lower than nearly every other council in the South East, many of whom opted for the full 4.99%. At a time when household finances are stretched, that difference is not trivial.

And here’s the part that makes it more interesting.

Inflation is running at close to 4%. The minimum wage has increased. Employer National Insurance costs have risen. Threshold changes have squeezed payrolls. Energy prices remain volatile. Contractual uplifts ripple through every service agreement.

In real terms, simply delivering exactly the same statutory services as the council delivered twelve months ago now costs around 8% more.

## Eight per cent — just to stand still.

So if you did nothing clever, nothing disciplined, nothing efficient, your cost base would rise roughly double the council tax increase.

Yet through careful management, Kent delivered the same services and still balanced the books under the expected budget requirement.

**That didn’t happen by accident.** The newly created Department of Local Government Efficiency — yes, the name raised eyebrows — did precisely what it said on the tin. Departments were asked to identify savings of up to 10%. Vacancies were reviewed before automatic replacement. Contracts scrutinised. Spending assumptions stress-tested. Processes tightened.

## It was less chainsaw and more spreadsheet.

There were rumours, of course. Staff would be charged £6 per day to park, we were told. Outrage spread quickly. The reality? Officers were asked to explore revenue options — as officers routinely are. It was never adopted policy. But nuance rarely travels as far as indignation.

Meanwhile, a few miles west, Medway Council — under a Labour administration — has required government support totalling £180 million over two years.

That is not pocket change. That is significant intervention.

## Kent?

## No bailout.

## No emergency rescue package.

## No dash to Whitehall.

You might think that contrast would warrant a mention. Yet somehow, it hasn’t dominated the commentary.

For nine months, certain reporting suggested chaos. One might have assumed the very voters who delivered Reform’s decisive victory last May would be curious readers. At £2.50 a week, you would think some might even form part of the target market. Although, judging by circulation trends, perhaps readers are quietly seeking something a little less partisan and a little more balanced.

**But I digress.** When the budget debate arrived — the supposed reckoning — the opposition had their opportunity. Eight hours of scrutiny.

Did they dissect the millions allocated to adult social care? The fastest-growing pressure area in local government? Did they launch forensic questioning into SEND funding? Highways? Fire services? Libraries?

## No.

Instead, they focused heavily on £150,000 for political assistance — one post for the administration and two designated for the opposition.

## Eight hours.

## On one line.

Ironically, it was the same opposition that had previously criticised the council for lacking adequate political advisory support.

As one seasoned national reporter observing from the public gallery remarked quietly: “If that’s the best they’ve got, then the county really is in safe hands.”

Previous years’ budget meetings reportedly ran deep into the night, brimming with theatrical brinkmanship. This year, the numbers held.

Deputy Leader Brian Collins summed it up succinctly: for eight months the council had operated under the previous administration’s budget. This was the make-or-break moment — Reform’s first real financial test.

**They passed it.** That does not mean Kent’s challenges have vanished. Debt remains. Interest still ticks at £85,000 a day. Demand for adult social care continues to rise. SEND pressures remain national in scale. These are structural issues, not headline-friendly ones.

But the caricature of incompetence simply does not align with the ledger.

A 3.9% increase in a year of 8% cost pressures.

Twenty-five per cent lower than many South East counterparts.

£180 million bailouts avoided.

£730 million inherited debt managed.

No mass service closures.

No wholesale redundancies.

No emergency financial distress notice.

Balanced. Boring. Effective.

In politics, perhaps that is the most dangerous combination of all.

Because governing responsibly is far less exciting to report than predicting collapse. Efficiency reviews do not trend. Vacancy controls do not photograph well. Balanced spreadsheets rarely provoke outrage.

But residents care less about theatre and more about whether their bins are collected, their roads maintained, their vulnerable relatives supported and their children transported safely to school.

**Nine months ago, some predicted chaos.** Instead, Kent received a balanced budget — delivered below the expected rise, without running to government for rescue, and against significant economic headwinds.

## It may not fit the “car crash” script.

**But sometimes the most subversive political act is not shouting the loudest — it is quietly proving people wrong.**



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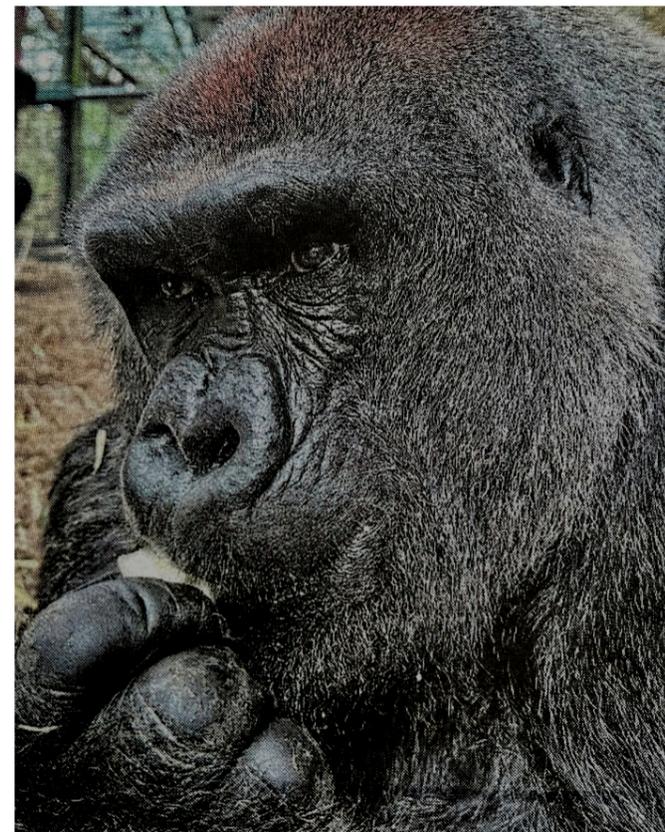
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## Wildlife

By Kerry King

# Four Decades in Kent: Port Lympne's Iconic Silverback Dies as New Life Begins at Howletts



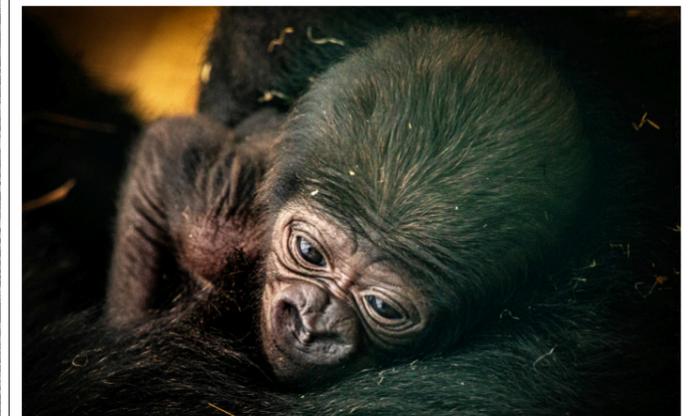
A beloved silverback gorilla, rescued as an orphaned baby in the 1980s, has died after making Kent his home for more than four decades. He spent most of his life at Port Lympne Reserve, where he grew from a vulnerable infant into a powerful yet gentle presence, becoming one of the park's most iconic residents.

Kouillou was born in the wild in West Africa, he is believed to have lost his family to poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, a fate that claimed countless gorillas during that period. His rescue and subsequent

care in Kent became a lasting symbol of conservation success.

Keepers remember him for his calm authority and distinctive character, playing an important role within his troop while captivating generations of visitors. His long life helped raise awareness of the threats facing gorillas in the wild, including habitat loss and human conflict, and highlighted the importance of long-term protection for endangered species.

While the gentle giant is laid to rest, new life is beginning just miles away at Howletts Wild Animal Park. The park is celebrating the birth of a western lowland gorilla, born just before Christmas 2025 to parents Sanki and Djanghou. The arrival marks the 155th gorilla birth across Howletts and Port Lympne combined, a significant milestone for the Aspinall Foundation's conservation programme.



Both parents were themselves born at Howletts, reflecting the success of the park's multi-generational breeding efforts. Sanki, born in 1998, is an experienced and confident mother, while Djanghou, born in 1993, is the son of Djala, a silverback released into the Congo in 2013 as part of a rewilding initiative. The infant has already attracted attention within the group, particularly from older sister Soundi, gaining valuable experience for future motherhood.

Although the infant's sex is yet to be confirmed, its arrival offers hope for the future of this critically endangered species, underlining that while one chapter ends, another is just beginning.

**Pictures show:** Kouillou, who sadly died - powerful yet gentle - much loved by his keepers and the new born western lowland gorilla born just before Christmas 2025 at Howletts. Pictures courtesy of Photography DMC - Howletts



Welcome Lookerites to another batch of reviews. In this issue we are looking at the reboot of a Troma classic, an excellent directorial debut from Cal McMau, a Scott Adkins double bill and the return of everyone's favourite psychotic AI.

If you've never ever seen one of Lloyd Kaufman's Troma films, then buckle up and get ready for this remake of the Troma classic **The Toxic Avenger - Sky/Now TV**. Troma films are low budget, no-brainers with buckets of gore and bad acting. So, if you take the Troma concept and add a budget and some Hollywood big hitters what is the outcome?



When BTH employee JJ threatens to uncover corruption she sends information to an investigative reporter to make public the illegal goings on at pharmaceutical company, but the reporter is killed by the band The Killer Nutz, who along with their manager Fritz Garbinger (Elijah Wood) work for BTH.

Meanwhile janitor Winston (Peter Dinklage) is struggling to support his stepson Wade whose Mother died of cancer. When Winston sees neighbour and shop owner Daisy threatened by Spencer who wants Daisy's property, he does nothing much to the disappointment of Wade.

At BTH owner Bob Garbinger (Kevin Bacon) and his assistant Kissy (Julia Davis) are growing at the debt they owe to Thad Barkabus, Spencer's Father.

In the meantime, Winston who has a brain disease and needs medication pleads with Bob Garbinger to help him, but Garbinger ignores him and Winston decides to rob BTH. However, Winston runs across The Killer Nutz who shoot Winston and throw his body into chemical waste and The Toxic Avenger is born.

Look The Toxic Avenger won't win awards but in keeping with the Troma spirit it is gory and funny. Bacon and Davis are allowed to have fun in totally OTT performances. Wood also, looks like he is enjoying himself and the whole cast lose themselves in the chaos as it unfolds. The Toxic Avenger isn't taxing on the brain, but it is a laugh.

If you want to know why British Cinema is at the helm, then watch **Wasteman - On general release**. The directorial debut of Cal McMau this is a no-holds barred look at the

prison system, and it certainly doesn't hold back as it shows a system at breaking point, overcrowded, underfunded, and undermanned.

Taylor is a drug-dealer who has spent most of his adult life behind bars. He has a son he hasn't seen, and he gets by scoring whatever he can from within the four walls. Taylor is thrown an unexpected lifeline when he is offered parole on licence giving him an opportunity to make contact with his son. Enter Dee a violent and confident convict who enters the prison covered in blood singing Frank Sinatra's 'The Good Life' Dee is determined to make prison life profitable and angers the current dealers by setting up shop. Taylor and Dee strike up an uneasy friendship as Dee provides Taylor with a mobile phone, but Taylor is weary of Dee's activities that could implement him and put his parole in jeopardy.



Wasteman is a powerful and frankly frightening portrayal of the British Prison Service. McMau has certainly done his homework and used ex-offenders in supporting roles. The videos of inmates are chilling as prisoners openly speak about killing fellow inmates. The staff look at breaking point, and you must question who really runs the prison. The violence is sporadic and brutal, and it all paints a picture of organised chaos.

David Jonsson is superb as Taylor a man out of his depth and desperate to be a decent Father but cannot break the prison life he has come to accept and hate. Tom Blyth is pure evil as Dee a man who is thriving in his environment and openly challenges the system that he seeks to exploit.

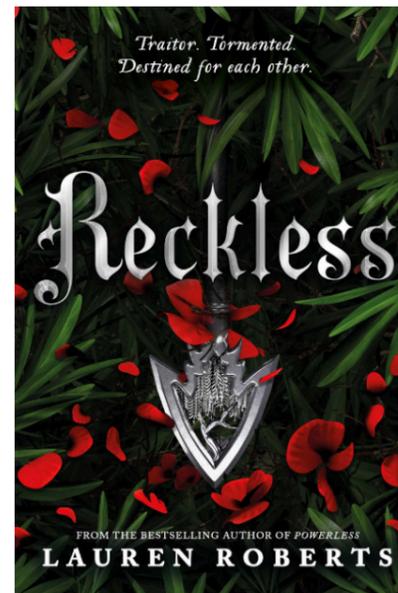
Wasteman is a difficult watch, but it is a powerful piece of filmmaking that highlights the talent in the British Film Industry on the screen and behind the camera. Wasteman won't be used as a prison officer recruitment film.

I'm sure that many a film writer has pitched a film with the words "It's a Jason Statham style action movie" "We can't afford Jason Statham" "What about Scott Adkins?"

Scott Adkins is the go-to man if you can't afford Statham and he has a couple of films currently on Sky/Now TV

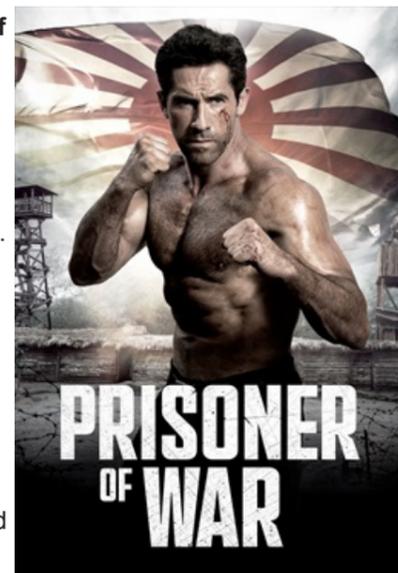
First up is **Reckless** a fast-paced crime thriller with Adkins cast as Devon a released convict on parole desperate to get his share of the heist he went to prison for. When he

visits a former associate George, he finds George assaulting Kimber, who kills George. The pair flee the scene as Devon seeks the rest of the crew. But in hot pursuit of Devon is Trent (Vinnie Jones) and Wilmott (Dean Gaffney) and the Police and as the body count rises so does the tension.



This is a standard Adkins action movie (think Statham in Crank) it's a no-brainer with lots of fighting and a bit of gore.

Next up is **Prisoner of War - Sky/Now TV** with Adkins cast as James Wright a RAF pilot who is shot down and captured by the Japanese and incarcerated in a Japanese POW camp.



The camp leader Ito orders that Wright be beheaded but Wright overpowers and kills the three Japanese soldiers before he is recapture. Ito decides to pit Wright in a series of to the death fights while Wright and his fellow allied prisoners plan their escape.

So is Prisoner of War a typical Adkins action film, well his fighting skills are on show as expected but this time he is tasked with a chooks away plummy British accent which slowly disappears as he gets angry. 'I say old chaps' is soon replaced by 'you slaag' The supposedly harsh conditions of the POW seem no worse than some places I've stayed in the UK, have the writers never seen Tenko or The Deer Hunter

Prisoner of War plays out like a Chuck Norris Missing in Action film with less explosions and gung-ho violence. Adkins is a little more refined with his stiff-upper lip accent but as always this is just another opportunity for Adkins to show off his martial arts.

The sassy and psychotic AI M3GAN is back two years after she turned on her maker and went on a murderous rampage but this time around, she has competition

**M3GAN 2.0 -Sky/Now TV** sees the AI built by Gemma return after an AI called Amelia and built by the pentagon for assassination purposes goes rogue. Gemma and her team along with niece Cady who still lives with Gemma, have just turned down an offer from billionaire Alton Appleton to work for him. When Gemma learns of Amelia's

existence, she is then shocked to learn that Megan has infiltrated Gemma's smart home and offers to help Gemma capture Amelia in return for a physical body. Gemma remembering the carnage from before restores Megan to a cartoon-like body. Megan warns Gemma that Amelia's next target is Appleton.



Gatecrashing a party we soon learn of a sub plot and when Cady is kidnapped by Amelia Gemma reluctantly upgrades Megan to help get her niece back.

M3GAN 2.0 is a more complex plot than the original film with AI taking a bigger role this time around. Megan still retains her charm, when not killing people and is joined by Amelia a fellow rogue AI for competition. The original was a better story and it's obvious the sequel had to come up with something original but loses out in the plot twists and turns as AI takes over which reduces Megan's impact on screen.

No doubt box-office success will determine if Megan returns although the ending suggested otherwise.

That's your lot for now but with some big films soon to be gracing the big screens I'll be back but until then happy viewing.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Email: [info@thelooker.co.uk](mailto:info@thelooker.co.uk)

Dear David,  
Many thanks David for answering my request to have your workforce repair our Lydd roundabout to its former glory. So many kind people helped in different ways to help this project, the first, or one of the first sponsored roundabouts on the marsh.

Thank-you, everyone.  
All good wishes,  
Vicki Dawson,  
Lydd.

Dear Editor,  
We probably all have opinions of the antics of the would-be dictator across the pond and his administration. Regarding them rampaging around the world, telling everyone how to run their countries, and trying to take over, I wonder if they ever read a history book? To date the US has never been on the winning side of any conflict since WW2. They always have to retreat with their tails between their legs, leaving behind appalling suffering and destruction. Think of any conflict they have been involved with and tremble!

Yours sincerely,  
June Gooch.

Dear Looker,  
was so heartened to read the cover story mooting ( somewhat cautiously) potential investigation into securing National Park Status for the unique Romney Marsh. Let's go for it! It wouldn't mean we'd be preserved in aspic or that future projects would be curtailed but it would mean careful consideration for any proposals and protections put in place to preserve the character of the area. Where are the negatives? Look at other NP's - they attract investment and diversity. The prospect of plastic, metal and glass solar panels covering such a spectacular piece of the UK should be enough to get everyone supporting this.

Wendy Peacock  
Greatstone

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# People From The Past

## CHARLES PAUL REED

Charles Paul Reed, always known as Paul Reed, was born in Wansted, Essex in 1952. He lived in Buckhurst Hill with his parents Alec and Barbara. He went to Forest Public School, Snaresbrook, the Loughton College of Further Education and then Shoreditch Teacher Training College.

After completing his teacher training, he applied for and was appointed a post at Southlands School in New Romney in 1974 and was appointed Deputy Head of Department of Craft, Design and Technology, which included the metalwork department. He was responsible for the introduction of electronics, plastics and modern technology into the department.

Paul left in 1989 and had three short term positions, including the Manager of the New Beach Holiday Camp near Dymchurch. In 1991, he joined the teaching staff of Ashford North Modern School for Girls where he taught Design and Food Technology. It was here that he met his future wife, Glynis. He then joined the Ashford Boys North School two years later before the amalgamation of the Girls and Boys Schools. Here, Paul taught Woodwork, Metalwork and Design Technology. He specialised in Electronics and Craft as well as instructing in Food Technology. He then took on the role of Head of Careers Department and left the North School in 2003.

Apart from his love of teaching, over the years he had many interests and hobbies. He did D.J. work and had his own disco for many years, and as 'Professor Paul', he delighted many young children over the years with Magic and also Punch and Judy. The magic included illusions and close-up magic and quite a few teachers were 'sawn in half'.

He liked his holidays on Gran Canaria, and he stood in as a cowboy on several occasions in the tourist attraction of Sioux City, a re-created Wild West town. It was something he loved to do, and at one point a 'Wanted' picture of Paul appeared in the Saloon in the main street of the town!

He was also involved in the 'Day of Syn' at Dymchurch and often took part in the duel. He built two cannons and one was used at the Day of Syn, and he later gave the larger one to the re-enactment society.

Paul was proud to be the Standard Bearer of the local branch of the British Legion for several years and another great love was the Littlestone Branch of the RNLi. Here he was involved for over 30 years and was awarded the Long Service Medal by the RNLi. He was also a member of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve and in 1982, received a South Atlantic Falklands medal with rosette for his actions on the island.

Paul died at the age of 52 after a long illness in 2005 and his ashes were scattered at sea. Both the Littlestone and Dungeness Lifeboats were involved and the Vicar of New Romney, the Rev. Martin Dale, conducted the ceremony at sea.

Paul left his mother Barbara, wife Glynis and his two daughters Natalie and Victoria from his previous marriage to Margaret.

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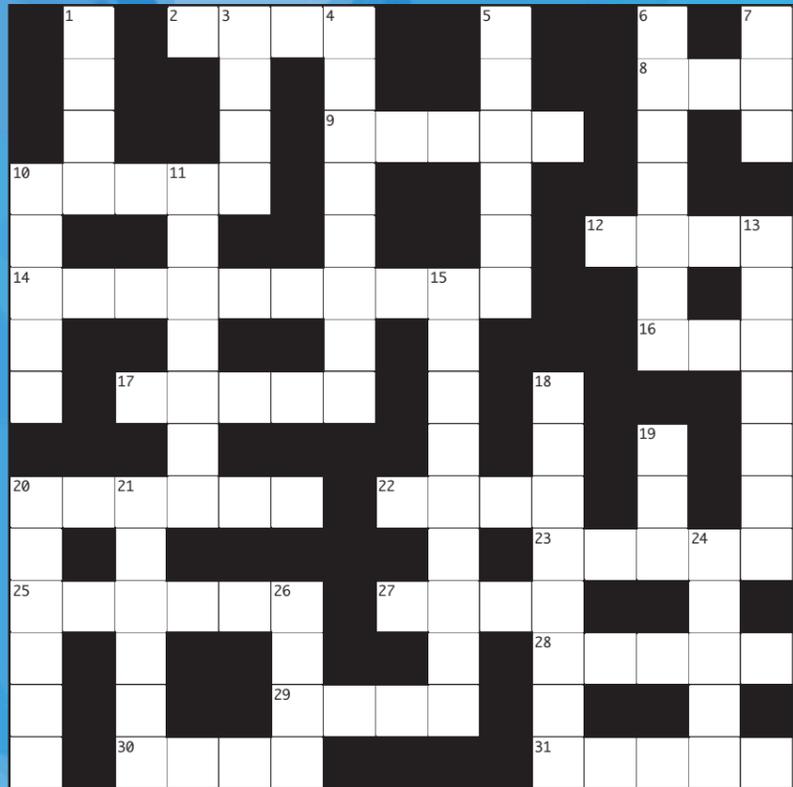
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# General Knowledge Crossword #062



- Across Clues:**  
 2. Operatic solo (4)  
 8. Small bundle (3)  
 9. Return a debt (5)  
 10. Throw casually (5)  
 12. Cook in an oven (4)  
 14. Substance that speeds up fire (10)  
 16. Domestic canine (3)  
 17. Outer cosmos (5)  
 20. Large sign (6)  
 22. Land surrounded by water (4)  
 23. Humble or degrade (5)  
 25. Maritime (6)  
 27. Prominent in print (4)  
 28. Symbol of rank or achievement (5)  
 29. Small skin opening (4)  
 30. Capture or remove (4)  
 31. Hospitality in ancient Greece (5)
- Down Clues:**  
 1. Great extent (4)  
 3. Chess piece (4)  
 4. Carried through the air (8)  
 5. Common allergy (6)  
 6. Difficult to handle (7)  
 7. Lyrical tribute (3)  
 10. Marsh-dwelling bird (5)  
 11. Make less prestigious (7)  
 13. Swell with fluid (7)  
 15. Close to the coast (9)  
 18. Small storage for loaves (8)  
 19. Afternoon refreshment (3)  
 20. Indian fig tree (6)  
 21. Candy with nuts (6)  
 24. Italian city (5)  
 26. Cloak-like garment (4)
- Answers:** Across: 2. Aria, 8. Wad, 9. Repay, 10. Chuck, 12. Bake, 14. Accelerant, 16. Dog, 17. Space, 20. Banner, 22. Isle, 23. Abuse, 25. Nautic, 27. Bold, 28. Badge, 29. Pore, 30. Take, 31. Xenia  
 Down: 1. Much, 3. Rook, 4. Airborne, 5. Peanut, 6. Awkward, 7. Ode, 10. Crane, 11. Cheapen, 13. Engorge, 15. Nearshore, 18. Breadbox, 19. Tea, 20. Banian, 21. Nougat, 24. Segni, 26. Cape

# Hidden Message Wordsearch

P W B E D A N I R A M S E H N  
 O B K R N R H S A W R T N S R  
 O A A E O V O S E E R R T R A  
 L H K S P O P J S N O A E A T  
 W C T R I R K E F W A I L M H  
 L O C H I N R C R E E T N W O  
 L L N N R V O E S T T H I O F  
 I A G A O V E W D L L A T E G  
 R E R I E F T R M A E R T S U  
 C S R D I C A L G N G O B L L  
 P R T H E J O O S D I P A R F  
 M E E W F L O L E N N A H C E  
 A O X E L N T I D A L P O O L  
 W L I S K Y R A U T S E D R Y  
 S B A Y A T O L L R O B R A H

**Bodies of Water**  
 Once you find all the words, copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

- |         |        |           |
|---------|--------|-----------|
| Atoll   | Harbor | Reservoir |
| Basin   | Inlet  | Rill      |
| Bay     | Lagoon | River     |
| Bog     | Lake   | Sea       |
| Brook   | Loch   | SeaLoch   |
| Channel | Marina | Spring    |
| Cove    | Marsh  | Strait    |
| Creek   | Ocean  | Stream    |
| Delta   | Ox     | Swamp     |
| Estuary | Pond   | Tarn      |
| Fjärd   | Pool   | TidalPool |
| Fjord   | Rapids | Wash      |
| Gulf    | Reef   | Wetland   |

Write the hidden message here:

3	2	4		7		8		
						7		
		8					2	3
	1			2			6	8
9	8		4			1		
4	3	6	5	1				2
8	6	3						
5	9		8				4	1
			7	9		3		

# Sudoku Challenge

# Spot the Difference!

There are 10 differences between the two images below. How many can you spot?



# THE RANT!!!



## STOP SERVING MY DINNER ON BUILDING MATERIALS

I will start by saying — in the interest of fairness that I have been very fortunate in life. I've eaten in some extraordinary places.

Fresh-caught lobster in Alaska, still twitching when it hit the pot.

Alligator steaks in Florida, which, by the way, taste like someone punched a chicken.

I've dined on things so exotic I'm still not entirely sure they weren't endangered.

But despite all these global culinary adventures, I was born in the 1960s a time when the Second World War was barely two decades in the rear-view mirror, and the idea of "fine dining" was a trip to Wimpy. Yes, Wimpy... where culinary decadence peaked with that exotic curly sausage on the Saturday morning breakfast. It looked like a Cumberland swirl but was, in fact, just a normal sausage bent into a circle and held together with nothing more than a cocktail stick and blind optimism.

And don't get me started on party food. If you turned up to a children's birthday party and the table wasn't covered in sausages on sticks or squares of cheese and pineapple, you'd demand to see someone's mother immediately. And if it was a really posh do? Ah yes the half-melon covered in foil, stabbed repeatedly with cocktail sticks until it resembled a hedgehog on the verge of a breakdown. That, my friends, was class.

Then came the 1980s.

Big hair.

Shell suits louder than a RAF flypast.

And, tragically, a teenage me prancing around an ice rink with my mate Nigel Crump, both of us in day-glo leg warmers pulled over our boots. Honestly, we looked like two escaped extras from

a low-budget aerobics video.

But despite the fashion crimes, the food scene began to flourish. Suddenly, we had a Chinese restaurant! An Indian restaurant! People were branching out, no longer confined to Tony's in the High Street or the Blue Dolphin where the biggest decision was whether the chips came with an umbrella stuck in them.

Dining out was exciting. Choice was exciting. Life was good.

And then... something happened.

Somewhere along the way, restaurants decided they were better than us. No longer was a normal plate acceptable. Oh no. Suddenly you'd sit down and be greeted by the finest patterned china known to mankind... only to watch it whipped away and replaced with a plate that looks like it was borrowed from a school canteen. A plate so small you're half expecting them to tell you to stack your peas vertically to save space.

But that was just the warm-up.

Then came the era of bowls.

Bowls. For everything.

Now, I will be quite clear:

A bowl is for soup.

Maybe...maybe... a runny curry or a chilli.

But bangers and mash in a bowl? Fish and chips in a bowl? Steak in a bowl? No. Absolutely not. That's a war crime.

Yet even this wasn't the lowest point.

Because then, somewhere in the warped minds of the "modern dining experience innovators," another thought emerged:

"Let's stop using plates entirely and serve the food on random objects we found round the back of the restaurant."

And suddenly, paying £165 for dinner entitles you to:

A starter on an old bit of scaffold plank.

A main course on a chunk of roof slate.

Dessert in a miniature wheelbarrow.

I'm sorry, but am I eating in a restaurant or at Travis Perkins?

And it's never just one item, is it? Oh no. The bread arrives on a chopping board the size of a coffee table. The butter is smeared artistically on a pebble. A tiny pot of oil appears balanced on what looks suspiciously like a reclaimed railway sleeper. You half expect the waiter to ask if you'd like your tap water served in a hollowed-out breeze block.

I once had chips presented in a small galvanised bucket — the sort you'd normally keep fence paint in. Another time, a friend was handed a burger skewered through the middle with something that resembled industrial scaffolding. It required the upper-body strength of a dockworker just to dismantle it before taking a bite. Dining should not require protective eyewear.

And can we talk about "deconstructed" desserts? If I order a lemon tart, I expect... brace yourself ...a tart. Not a crime scene. Not a splatter pattern that looks like someone dropped a trifle from height. I don't want to assemble my pudding like flat-pack furniture. I came out for dinner, not a practical exam on MasterChef.

I do not want my risotto sliding into the grain of a plank that once supported Dave the decorator during a house extension in 1992. I don't want

steak served on something that used to live on someone's roof. I don't want chips in a plant pot, gravy in a chemistry beaker, or bread delivered in a shoe (yes, that actually happened to someone I know).

Just stop.

Stop the nonsense.

Stop the rustic chic.

Stop the slate.

Stop the scaffolding.

Stop the hipster pottery that looks like it was made in the dark by a mildly concussed beaver.

Just... please. Serve. The food. On a plate.

You know. That round thing. Flat. Ceramic. Invented for eating off.

Dear restaurants: if I wanted to spend a night navigating timber, masonry and reclaimed roofing materials... I'd call a builder.

Dinner should be dinner.

Not an episode of Grand Designs.



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# Mulberry Harbour's Concrete Giant Still Guards the Kent Coast

By David Wimble



Just over half a mile off the shore at Littlestone-on-Sea, a vast concrete relic of the Second World War rests on the seabed — visible at low tide, silent but monumental.

The structure is a Phoenix caisson, part of the floating “Mulberry” harbours that played a decisive role in the D-Day landings of June 1944. Today it is recognised as a Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number 1415588), first listed on 8 November 2013, acknowledging both its rarity and its historic importance.

Situated in the Straits of Dover approximately 0.66km from the low water mark (National Grid Reference TR0949324640), the caisson remains where it was “parked” in 1944 after attempts to refloat and tow it across the Channel proved unsuccessful.

## A Harbour Built in Haste

The Mulberry harbours were one of the most ambitious engineering undertakings of the war. Conceived to allow Allied forces to land troops, vehicles and supplies without immediately capturing a heavily fortified port, they were constructed in secret and towed across the Channel in the days following D-Day.

D-Day, 6 June 1944, marked the start of the final phase of the war in Europe. Within just over three weeks of Operation Overlord’s assault phase — code-named Neptune — more than 850,000 men, nearly 150,000 vehicles and 570,000 tons of supplies had been landed in Normandy.

## Much of that success depended on the Mulberry system.

Two artificial harbours were assembled off the French coast: Mulberry A on Omaha Beach in the American sector, and Mulberry B on Gold Beach at Arromanches in the British

sector. Construction began on 9 June 1944. However, a violent storm on 19 June destroyed Mulberry A and severely damaged Mulberry B. Salvageable components were transferred to the British site.

Despite the losses, the harbours fulfilled their strategic purpose — enabling sustained supply without the immediate capture of a major port. Winston Churchill described them as “a principal part of the great plan” and decisive in the invasion’s first days.

## Engineering Innovation

The Phoenix caissons formed a crucial part of the breakwater system. These enormous reinforced-concrete structures were built in 1943–44 with steel frameworks and concrete walls approximately 0.3 metres thick. Designed with a boat-shaped hull for towing, they could be sunk and refloated using flooding apertures engineered to submerge the structures within fifteen minutes.

The Littlestone example measures roughly 200 feet (61 metres) long and 32 feet (10 metres) wide. Depending on its original classification, its height would have ranged between 24 and 60 feet (7–18 metres). Internally, it is divided into nine open sections, further split by a central spine wall to create 18 square cells. Some of the diagonal steel tension bars remain visible.

Originally fitted with anti-aircraft gun mountings for protection during transit, the Littlestone caisson has lost its metal fittings over time but survives structurally intact. Later navigation lights stand at each corner, though these are excluded from its scheduled protection.

To accommodate different seabed depths, caissons were constructed in six sizes. The largest weighed more than 6,000 tons. In total, 146 were built initially — eventually rising to 212 — using an estimated 330,000 cubic yards of concrete and 31,000 tons of steel.

## Parked and Forgotten

Before crossing the Channel, many caissons were temporarily sunk off the British coast at locations including Selsey and Dungeness due to a shortage of sheltered moorings during the naval build-up. Brigadier Bruce White had warned of the risks of grounding such massive structures on uneven seabeds.

His concerns proved prescient. The Littlestone caisson is believed to have suffered hull damage when first sunk, preventing it from being successfully refloated. Unlike its counterparts that formed the Normandy breakwaters, this unit never left Kent waters.

It now survives as one of only six known Phoenix caissons remaining in British waters — a rare and tangible reminder of the logistical scale behind Operation Overlord.

## Protected Legacy

The scheduled designation recognises four principal reasons: its historic significance as a physical reminder of D-Day; its innovative engineering; its rarity; and its remarkable survival.

The protected area covers only the structure itself, as no associated seabed archaeology is thought to remain from the failed refloating attempt in June 1944.

At low tide, when the outline of the concrete giant emerges against the horizon, it stands as an austere monument to ingenuity under pressure — a fragment of a floating harbour that helped change the course of world history, resting quietly just beyond the Kent shoreline.

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# Can William Harvey Hospital Cope? A Trust on the Brink?

When a hospital declares a “critical incident”, it is not theatre. It is a red warning light flashing across the local health system.

Earlier this month, William Harvey Hospital in Ashford was forced to declare such an incident after all beds were reported full and A&E departments overwhelmed. Patients were urged not to attend unless facing a genuine emergency. For families across Ashford, Tenterden and the wider East Kent area, it was a deeply unsettling moment.

The incident was later stood down. But the bigger question remains: can William Harvey Hospital truly cope — and why does it appear so fragile?

The hospital is run by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, which also manages the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital in Margate and the Kent & Canterbury Hospital. In public statements, the Trust attributed the emergency to exceptional demand, high numbers of patients attending A&E, and wards operating at full capacity. Winter illnesses — including flu and norovirus were cited as significant contributing factors.

That explanation is credible. Every winter, NHS hospitals across England experience surges in respiratory illness and seasonal infections. But what made this episode different was the speed with which the system appeared to tip from pressure into crisis.

## A&E Under Sustained Strain

William Harvey’s emergency department has been under pressure for years. Performance against national four-hour A&E targets has fluctuated, and like many NHS trusts, East Kent has struggled to consistently meet demand. Long waits in emergency departments are no longer exceptional they are increasingly routine.

In recent years, there have been reports of overflow measures being used when departments became overcrowded. While NHS leaders insist patient safety is always prioritised, the optics of using non-clinical spaces during peak pressure fuel public concern that the hospital is operating too close to the edge.

What this month’s critical incident revealed is not a one-off failure — but a system running hot, with little margin for error.

## The Bed Blockage Problem

At the heart of the issue lies a familiar bottleneck: beds.

When hospital wards are full, patients cannot be admitted from A&E. When patients cannot be admitted, ambulances queue. When ambulances queue, response times elsewhere suffer. It is a domino effect.

One of the major causes of full wards is delayed discharge.

Patients who are medically fit to leave hospital often remain because appropriate social care packages, rehabilitation beds or community placements are not immediately available. This is not solely a hospital failure — it reflects strain across adult social care, community nursing and primary care services.

In short, William Harvey Hospital does not operate in isolation. It is the acute end of a stretched chain.

## Staffing and Structural Pressures

Like much of the NHS, East Kent faces workforce challenges. Recruitment and retention of nurses, emergency clinicians and specialist staff remain ongoing concerns nationally. Staff absence during winter illness peaks further compounds the problem.

Add to this an ageing local population, rising levels of complex long-term illness, and increasing use of emergency services as a fallback when GP appointments are difficult to secure — and the equation becomes clearer.

Demand has steadily risen. Capacity has not risen at the same pace.

## A Fragile Balance

To the Trust’s credit, the critical incident was stood down within days. That suggests operational resilience and staff working under immense pressure to stabilise the system. It also demonstrates that emergency protocols function as designed.

But the declaration itself is telling. Hospitals do not declare critical incidents lightly. It is a recognition that patient safety could be compromised if pressures continue unchecked.

## So can William Harvey cope?

On ordinary days, yes. On peak days, just about. But when winter viruses collide with systemic capacity limits, the margin becomes razor thin.

The real danger is not a single crisis — it is the normalisation of crisis.

## Editorial Note

If William Harvey Hospital is to move beyond firefighting, three things must happen.

First, discharge pathways must be strengthened. That means investment in social care and community step-down beds so patients are not left occupying acute wards unnecessarily.

Second, workforce resilience must improve. Recruitment drives are important, but so too is retention, morale and safe staffing ratios.

Third, honesty is essential. The public understands that the NHS faces national challenges. What they struggle with is the sense that each winter brings surprise at predictable pressure.

Critical incidents should be rare. If they become seasonal fixtures, then the system is not coping — it is enduring.

William Harvey Hospital matters profoundly to this community. The question now is whether policymakers — locally and nationally — are prepared to ensure it has the capacity not merely to survive winter, but to serve East Kent safely all year round.

# A Centenary Tribute: David Attenborough Honoured on Romney Marsh

A quiet corner of Romney Marsh has become the setting for a national first, as a locally based arts charity unveils a tribute to one of Britain’s most revered naturalists.



The IMOS Foundation has marked the 100th birthday of David Attenborough with the installation of a commemorative bust at the Hope All Saints Sculpture Park, located on the old Ashford Road between New Romney and Ivychurch. The foundation says it is the first organisation in the country to honour the broadcaster and environmental campaigner in this way during his centenary year.

The bust has been positioned on the bank of the narrow moat that surrounds the ruined church at Hope All Saints, a historic and atmospheric site that has become home to more than thirty sculptures celebrating individuals who have contributed significantly to humanity through their life’s work.



IMOS Foundation's Briony Kapoor & Minah Al Halabi

Created by New Zealand artist Minhal Al Halabi, the sculpture depicts Attenborough in late middle age. He is shown smiling, yet with a deeply thoughtful expression, capturing the reflective authority that has characterised his decades-long career in broadcasting and conservation.

The figure is presented as a head-and-shoulders study and faces east toward the church. Observers describe the work as having a sense of fullness and generosity, suggesting that the impact of Attenborough’s life’s work extends beyond the confines of the sculpture itself and outward toward those who come to view it.

Although the positioning of the bust on the bank of the



moat makes close inspection difficult, attentive visitors will notice subtle details worked into the piece. Two of Attenborough’s favourite animals — a butterfly and a bird — are embroidered onto the front of his shirt, a quiet nod to his lifelong passion for the natural world.

The sculpture joins a diverse collection of works already on display at the park. Each piece represents a man or woman whose achievements are considered to have benefited humanity. More recent additions include depictions of Pablo Picasso, Al-Biruni and Johannes Gutenberg. They stand alongside long-established favourites such as Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, figures familiar to regular visitors.

Set against the backdrop of the Romney Marsh landscape, the sculpture park has developed into a distinctive cultural destination, blending art, history and reflection in a rural setting. The ruined church, encircled by its moat, provides a striking focal point for the site and lends an added sense of permanence and contemplation to the works displayed there.

Visitors are advised that recent winter rainfall has left the ground around the park waterlogged and difficult underfoot. The IMOS Foundation suggests waiting for several days of dry weather before planning a visit. Once conditions improve, the park will once again welcome members of the public.

Guided tours can be arranged through the IMOS Foundation by calling 01797 363099 or 07972 826129.

For Romney Marsh, a landscape long associated with wide skies, wildlife and quiet resilience, the installation of a tribute to Sir David Attenborough feels fitting. As a figure who has spent a lifetime documenting and defending the natural world, his presence — even in sculpted form — sits comfortably among the open horizons and ecological richness of the Marsh.

# Church Update

By June Gooch

**Food Bank.** The main food bank for the area, continues in Romney Marsh Community Church on Tuesdays from 4-5.30pm. If you are struggling to feed yourself or your family, ring for a voucher to the Citizens Advice Bureau on 08082 082138. This will enable you to have 3 days' worth of dried and tinned food adapted for the size of your family. Fresh food is also now being made available.

The food bank relies on donations, which can be left in the foyer of the church on North Street during the morning. Most supermarkets have food bank bins.

The demand, unfortunately is not slowing down, and the following items are in short supply. Longlife juice, long life milk, cereals, (not porridge), Corned beef, coffee, squash, crisps, sugar, mayonnaise, washing capsules, tampons, washing up liquid and toilet rolls. Fresh food is now being distributed, but depends on availability.

At present they have plenty of tinned soup and potatoes, tinned tuna, pasta and rice.

**The mobile pantry van** calls at All Saints Church in Lydd, on Mondays from 10-11am. You can register as a member by calling 07913 573403 (the Rainbow centre) or CAB, number above. After that you can buy a bag of basics for between £5 and £7 depending on the size of your family.

The Mobile pantry van is also calling at the Sunflower Community Hub on Rolfe Lane, New Romney, on Fridays between 10.30-11.30am. The conditions are the same, as for the Lydd van.

**Village Halls.** Many villages and towns on the Marsh have new village halls, which are always available for one off occasions or regular hire. The high costs we are all facing have affected them as well, so they will be very happy to host your event/s. The contact will be on the notice board outside the hall.

## Brookland, St Augustine.

The full sung Evensong will recommence on March 8<sup>th</sup>, at 6.30pm. For those involved in the choir, there will be a practice on the previous Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at 1.15pm.

Don't forget the pantry table in the church porch, both for donations and those in need.

## Dymchurch, St Peter and Paul.

The church is still in need of help with prayers and intercessions, and an organist to play for the Sunday services. A bible Study group meets at the church on Tuesdays at 10.30am for refreshments and the study starts at 11am and finishes about noon.

Sacristan training (helping with communion) is being offered, so anyone who is interested can let Chris Clark know and your name can be added to the list. The World Day of Prayer, an interdenominational and international event, will this year be held in St Peter and Paul church, on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. This year the prayers are written by the women of Nigeria.

**Dymchurch Catholic church.** St Monica's on Chapel Road, is open for worship. There will be a regular Sunday mass at 9am.

**Dymchurch Methodist church.** This is now part of 'Marsh Methodist Church' with a central administration, and services will be on a rotating pattern.

## Greatstone, St Peter.

The church hall, attached to the church, is very well used for midweek events. There are clubs and societies of all sorts, which include a Wednesday morning drop in, which welcomes pre-school children and their Carers. There is wide variety of toys and chances for chats and refreshments. With more free places for small children at nurseries, the numbers are dwindling, so there are spaces, for anyone who would like to join the group on Wednesday mornings.

The regular Marsh Makers craft fairs restarted in February, and the next one will be on Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup> from 10am to 2pm. The shoppers were steady for this fair, and the next one, will be on the March 21<sup>st</sup>, which will be a Spring Fair. All welcome.

The parishes of Lydd and Greatstone belong to the same benefice and are looking for a treasurer to look after the church's' money. Although you don't need to be an accountant, knowledge of modern management of finance would be a benefit. Contact Joe Butterworth on [joebutterworth448@gmail.com](mailto:joebutterworth448@gmail.com)

## Ivychurch, St George.

The work inside the church, has been completed, and thanks are given to the Romney Marsh Historic Churches Trust for their grant to cover the work. The workmen did a bit of weeding on the path in their breaks, so if anyone felt they wanted to carry on the work, feel free to offer!

The clock is being repaired. During the work, a 200-year-old piece of mechanism has had to be replaced, with additional expense. If anyone would like to help this fund, the account can be accessed online by The Parochial Church Council of Ivychurch. The account number is 59164042 and the sort code is 60.01.21.

There will be a presentation of 'Jane Eyre' on Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> in the church, at 7pm by a travelling theatre company. All very welcome to this traditional story of love, passion and intrigue. Tickets are £16 and can be obtained from 07732 253311. See flyers for more details.

## Lydd, All Saints.

The church hall for all Saints is the Hardy Hall on the Rype. It is, happily, very much used, with events happening nearly day. See the notice board for details. To hire, for one off events, or regular events, ring Maggie Clifton on 07905 433302.

Known as the Cathedral of the Marsh, the church is a very large building, which needs a lot of looking after. The maintenance team always welcome new helpers, even if it only an hour a month. Even if you don't go to church, but

feel for the history of the building, contact warden Pat Carter on 01797 320108. Please note that Chris Aubrey is no longer a church warden, although it says so in the magazine.

A group of people in Lydd, collect items to help in Ukraine. They accept practically everything, in good condition, that would be useful to people in need. Big items like bikes and sewing machines, medical supplies, toiletries, household equipment etc. They don't want general clothing, (provided by other charities) but hoodies, jog bottoms, T shirts, thick socks, hats and scarves. They buy and convert 4 \* 4s as ambulances. If interested in helping or donating, ring Gina on 07874 399422. Things are especially grim at the moment because of the bad weather. Imagine living in a tent, with the temperature down to -20dC.

**Lydd Methodist Church.** This is now part of Marsh Methodist Church, under one administration, with rotating services.

## New Romney, St Nicholas.

Like Lydd church, St Nicholas' is very large and needs a lot of cleaning and care. If anyone has an hour to spare, the church would be very grateful for any help. Maybe you don't attend regularly, but feel for the history of this ancient church, your help would be much appreciated. Call Ann Rolfe on 362719.

On Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup> there will be an Easter Fayre, from 10am-noon. The Seaside singers will be there, and lots of tasty Easter themed goodies and crafts for sale.

## New Romney Methodist Church.

The Saturday morning coffee mornings have resumed, and the Meeting Point on Thursday mornings from 10-12md are continuing. All welcome.

The church is now part of 'Marsh Methodist Church' and services are on a rotating basis. See notices for details.

## Newchurch, St Peter and Paul.

After 2 years, the boarded up south window has been 'unveiled' and the scaffolding removed to everyone's appreciation. February and March will be quiet months. The Easter Fair will be on Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup> from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Contact Diana on 01303 311779 if you would like a stall to sell your own goods. After this, the monthly coffee mornings on the first Saturday of the month will continue.

## Snargate, St Dunstons.

The Holy Communion services on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays continue, so the next one will be on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

## Romney Marsh Community Church.

There is a Sunday service every week at 10.30am, followed by refreshments and fellowship. Youth and Children's teaching available during the service. Come and visit this time of vibrant worship and say hello, you will be very welcome. For any help or advice ring the church office on 01797 366855 during the morning. The church is also the local food bank, so see head of column for details. The next Building Block Church will be on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10am for a light breakfast, and 10.30am for the beginning of the informal service.

All preschool children and their parents, nans and carers very welcome to the toddler group from 8.45am to 11am on Thursday mornings. Fully equipped, helpers police checked and spaces available. Cost is £3 per family.

The Youth Space sessions on Thursdays have commenced at 3.30pm, after school for years 5,6. And 7. All children in those year groups welcome. Children must be dropped off and collected by a parent or responsible adult.

An Alpha course will be starting on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January for 12 weeks. This is an exploratory course on Christianity, with plenty of chance for discussion and questions. It will run from 1-2.30pm suitable for anyone who has to collect children from school, or prefers to come out in the daytime. There will be a short video, and then discussion notes and space for questions.

## St Mary's Bay, All Saints.

The normal fund raisers have resumed, and the Café church, on Mondays and Wednesday morning get togethers continue to flourish, with increasing number, and a tremendous time of fellowship is enjoyed by all.

**Lent course.** This started on Wednesday February 18<sup>th</sup> at heological10.15 for 10.30am and continues for 5 weeks. The theme is prayer, and everyone is welcome to join, not just the theological minded! Lots of time for discussion and questions.

## St Mary in the Marsh.

The Haywardians Choir practices every Friday evening in the church at 7.30pm. They raise large amounts for Charity and have regular local concerts. After a busy December they are back to routine practices, and the next advertised concert is in May 26.

## Church Chuckle.

Jesus Christ must be Lord of all, or he is not Lord at all. St Augustine of Hippo.

## Wit and Wisdom.

Do not complain about growing old. It is a privilege denied to many. Mark Twain.

## Contact :THE LOOKER

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