

The Lenham Focus

FEBRUARY 2025 issue



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Early snowdrops

Charing Races

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Editorial

FOCUS is also online (Click on 'Lenham Focus') www.lenhamparish.org.uk

On Saturday evening, 15th February, there is a fund-raising dance being held at the community centre in aid of the Lenham Nursery. The Maidstone band 'Chicory Tip', seen here, is performing – some will remember their



hit 'Son of my father' which topped the singles chart for 3 weeks in February 1972. Details inside.

Also, the nursery is launching its very own lottery as part of their efforts to raise funds, with weekly prizes of up to £25,000. Inside, you will see how you can take part.

This month we have another **FREE TO ENTER** draw for tickets to the February **Faversham Literary Festival!**

All you have to do is send an email to the Editor, using either the editorial email **editorialsf@outlook.com** or send a text to **07714-311008** with your name and contact details. The winner will receive **two free tickets worth £32 to the talk by Sebastian Faulks for Thursday 27th February at 7pm (best-selling author of 'Birdsong' and 'Charlotte Gray')** talking about his latest book '**The Seventh Son**'. Winners will be notified direct – but you need to hurry as the deadline for applying is **17th February**. See inside for full details of the draw and also the advert for more details of other events at the Festival. Good luck!

Take a look inside at the impressive Maidstone literary festival contribution written by The Lenham School's talented Louise Bullen. Clearly a young lady with a bright future.

David Jackson | Editor

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By 1st of the preceding month to **editorialsf@outlook.com** or by phone/text on **07714 311008**. Photos of the village and local events are welcome.

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We welcome your input and comments please email me at editorialsf@outlook.com

You've Got Mail



**LENHAM
FILM CLUB**

at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

Friday February 14th

**Performance begins 19.30,
doors open 19.00**

Running time 1hr 59 mins

Friday 14th February is a night for romance and greeting us will of course be St Valentine. What better way to salute him than by watching the romantic **You've Got Mail** (PG, 1998), starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks, which was our audience's choice for this season. Tom Hanks plays Joe Fox, the go-ahead owner of a chain of bookstores, who is dismissive of the nearby quaint little bookshop owned by his bitter rival Kathleen Kelly, played by Meg Ryan. They are at odds with each other in real life to say the least. Things are very different when they meet online, however, as they have no idea of

the other's identity and there's no such animosity between them. On the contrary, they fall in love. But what will happen when their true identifies are revealed? The film is directed by Nora Ephron and is an unforgettable comedy; do come along and share the story with us.

Our film for March is **The Miracle Club** (12, 2023) a comedy drama with a difference, in which three women, later joined by a fourth, win the chance to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. Friday, 14th March is the date for your chance to see an all-star cast in this riveting film.

Please get in touch for more information or to join our mailing list.

Admission: Adults £5, under 16s £2; cash only, card payments not accepted.



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The Friends of
St Mary's Church, Lenham

SUPPER QUIZ

SATURDAY 5TH APRIL

We're holding a Supper Quiz, on Saturday 5th April. This is our first fundraising event of 2025 and it's one we're really looking forward to. Some of you may remember our last quiz, way back in 2019, which was a very popular and enjoyable evening.

The quiz takes place at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way; doors open at 18.30pm and the quiz starts at 19.00pm. There will be quiz rounds on a variety of topics plus some fun table rounds. Come along as part of a team of up to 8 people or just come and join a table – who knows, you could join a group and make a winning combination!

We'll be serving a delicious ploughman's supper during a break; please bring your own drinks.

Tickets are £10 per person and are on sale 15th February from Kent Loves..., 11 High Street Lenham. Tickets are advance purchase only and numbers are limited, so get yours before they sell out. All funds raised will go towards our work to maintain and preserve the beautiful Grade I listed church of St Mary's, Lenham. None of our funds are used for the daily running costs of the church, our funds are used for preservation projects such as restoration of the West Door and repair to the tower roof. We look forward to seeing you.



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The Community Centre, Groom Way, Lenham
Doors open 18.30, quiz begins 19.00

Tables of 6/8 or just come along & join a table

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Did you send Christmas cards this time?

If not, you may be thinking of sending one in time for Valentine's Day on 14th February.

Did you know that, after Christmas, Valentine's Day is said to be the second most popular day to send a card and that the date never changes? Whatever country or place you call home, Valentine's Day is always February 14th.

It's also called *Saint Valentine's Day* or the *Feast of Saint Valentine*, is a globally celebrated holiday and is a way to let that special someone know how much you care with a thoughtful message, a fun activity or a handcrafted card.

Before it was known as Valentine's Day, a pagan fertility ritual was held in Rome every February until the Pope abolished it and replaced the festival with *Saint Valentine's Day*. From then, it was a feast day in the Catholic Calendar of Saints.

It was linked to romantic love following Chaucer's late 14th century poem called '*Parliament of Fowls*', which describes a group of birds that gathered together to find their mates on 'seynt valentyne's day'.

Valentine's Day celebrates all types of love in the modern day - including between friends and family.

Legend has it Valentine's Day is on the 14th because a priest called Valentine was performing secret marriages that had been forbidden by Emperor Claudius II of Rome. Because of this legend, Saint Valentine became known as the patron saint of love.



However, another legend says that Saint Valentine refused to convert to paganism and was executed by Roman Emperor Claudius II. Prior to his execution, he was able to miraculously heal the daughter of his jailer, who then converted to Christianity along with his family.

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Free Tickets To The Faversham Literary Festival!

FOCUS is offering 2 FREE tickets worth £32 to the talk by best-selling author Sebastian Faulks at the Festival's evening event. Details are below.

To enter the **FREE DRAW** for the tickets, send your name and contact number to the *FOCUS* editor at editorialsf@outlook.com or send a text to **07714-311008** by **17th February 2025**. The winner will be selected at random and will receive the two tickets for this event.

Sebastian Faulks

Thursday 27 Feb 2025

7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

at St Mary of Charity Church, Faversham



Sebastian Faulks (Photo by Muir Vidler)

Sebastian Faulks, the author of bestsellers including *'Birdsong'* and *'Charlotte Gray'*, talks to Alex Preston about his latest work, *'The Seventh Son'*, the story of a young academic as she agrees to carry another woman's child.

Sebastian was born and brought up in Newbury, Berkshire. He worked in journalism before starting to write books. He is the author of the French trilogy, *'The Girl at the Lion d'Or, Birdsong* and *Charlotte Gray'* (1989–1997); a triple biography, *'The Fatal Englishman'* (1996); a small book of literary parodies, *'Pistache'* (2006); and many novels, including *'Human Traces'* (2005); *'Engleby'* (2007); *'A Week in December'* (2009); *'Paris Echo'* (2018); and *'Snow Country'* (2021).

Look out for the Faversham Literary Festival advert within the *Focus*.



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Carol Singing in Lenham Heath



A 'thank you for 2024' from Gail Duff

New Year has come and gone and the days are getting longer. Christmas and its carols are a long way away, but I couldn't let them completely disappear without saying a big 'thank you'.

First, to the singers who sang willingly and happily as they trudged through the rain around Lenham Heath and Charing Heath in the dark days of late December. We had seven singers at each end this time, which was a record for Lenham Heath.

Second, to all those people who opened their doors to us and put donations into our tin, and to those who provided us with generous hospitality, both on our rounds and at our final destinations.

Thirdly, to people who came from surrounding villages especially to see us and join in with us at our final stop at the Red Lion in Charing Heath, including some from Harrietsham who came after seeing our articles in this magazine.

And the result? Collections from round the lanes and at our final stops were added to by two generous donations, sent in even before we had started. Put altogether, this made a total of **£385.32** to donate to *The Martha Trust*.

So many, many thanks to all involved, and here's to next year!



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Lenham Nursery

Some exciting resolutions for the new year ahead!

As always, we're looking for ways to deliver an amazing education to our under 4 year olds, with the best staff and in a stimulating environment. To help with this our outside play area needs some work, but it's a tricky balancing act as we aim to be in our new nursery in the not too distant future. So, if there are any local gardeners or landscapers who can help us with our outside surface and fencing, please get in touch.

Also, an exciting addition to our fundraising efforts is that we have joined a lottery! The *Giving Lottery* will hopefully help us achieve our fundraising target of £100k, which we need to furnish and equip the new nursery. Anyone can enter using the link or by scanning the QR code (see opposite) and there are good chances to win between £25 and £25,000 each week. It costs £1 per ticket and the nursery will receive 40% of that. Please do what you can to support this project which will benefit families in Lenham and may even make you rich!

Although we haven't had any major events in the past few months, life has continued to be busy and productive in the nursery. The children loved the build up to Christmas and came back rested and ready to learn (mostly!). We were also thrilled to be awarded the Lenham Town Crier Award (see picture) for the winning Christmas window for Lenham.



There have been a few staff changes of late. We would like to give a fond farewell and big thank you to Pam, who retired just before Christmas and a friendly welcome to our two new members of staff (both called Amy) who will be getting to know the children and team this term.

Exciting news!

We have an event coming up this month; Barbara Kypmanoy is organising an evening with **Chicory Tip** performing at the community centre in Lenham on Saturday 15th February. Please see page 24 for details. We're very grateful to Barbara for organising this, as well as the generous raffle prize donations we have received so far, including a stay at a Shepherd Neame pub donated by The Dog and Bear. Perhaps consider treating your other half to a Valentine's night out and benefitting a good cause at the same time!

Another event on the horizon and one for the children this time is **The Wheely Fun Club** will be organising a fundraising event to be held in the community centre in March – keep an eye out for further details.

We hope to have some more funding news in the near future as we eagerly wait for building to start on the nursery later this year.



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The Hambly family of Lenham - Part 2

Continuing the generations of the Hamblys serialised for *Focus* by Chris Allen



Arthur William family photo

Arthur William was the first son in the Hambly family and, like his father, was a man of the railways. In 1881 when he was born, the railways were at the very forefront of technology; it was a complete revolution that opened up the country with fast reliable travel that had never before been possible. Arthur lived to 97 and he witnessed the complete life of steam on the railways.

He went to school in Lenham and his first job was as a junior clerk with the London, Chatham & Dover Railway at Sheerness station. There he met and married his wife Elizabeth and they had two daughters Muriel and Dorothy. Arthur worked hard

and secured the position of chief clerk at Bromley South Station.

The picture (below) of the staff at this station shows Arthur sitting on the bench third from left in the bowler hat. On the extreme right is the cabbie in the days of horse drawn taxis.



The family travelled widely in Europe; they were great theatre goers and were all life members at Glyndebourne. Dorothy and Muriel embarked on a European tour in a rickety old bus to visit nine countries in 1938 when Hitler was sweeping through the region.

The girls' love of travel was not limited to the railways as can be seen from the picture (top right) of their first car and their enthusiasm to show it off in the most fashionable style of the day.

During WW1, Muriel knitted for the troops and was awarded an Empire Day certificate for each year of the war. She received a 'Thank You' letter from a Sergeant Marsh who had been given

the scarf when in the trenches a few days before Christmas 1914. The letter was written on lightweight paper with an indelible pencil and shows how very much it meant to receive a Christmas gift in what must have seemed an almost impossible situation.

The war effort was enhanced greatly by troops that volunteered from the Commonwealth. One of these was Billie who came from New Zealand and was lucky enough to come through the war unscathed. He fell in love with May (Bertha) Hambly and they decided to return to New Zealand together and never returned to the UK.

Arthur completed his days with the railways as Station Master at Hayes where one could be whisked into the centre of London on the new fast electric service.



On completion of his railway service, he retired to Whitstable and was elected as a member of Canterbury City Council. The girls both secured positions with the Whitstable Oyster Company and they all continued to visit Lenham on a regular basis.

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Lenham Nursery Fundraising Dance

Lenham Community Centre

Saturday 15th February

Dancing to Chicory Tip

Tickets £15

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Raffle

7.30pm to 11pm

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The Trust carries out vital work in the community to protect, preserve and maintain the open land in and around Lenham. The Trust is run by volunteers and we need your help to fill a number of roles currently available. These include:


- **Trust Secretary.** This role would include taking minutes for both the management team and trustee's meetings, confirming times, distributing agendas and copying minutes containing action and decisions to the Trust team.
- **Events Manager.** Arranging and coordinating fundraising events, talks, walks and open days, etc.
- **Volunteer Coordinator.** To liaison closely with the team and to make contact with those on our volunteer list to ensure maximum turn out for events

- **Membership Secretary.** To manage and maintain the Trust's membership list (i.e. 'Friends of Lenham Meadows Trust') – including issuing renewal notices and new membership packs, liaising with the finance secretary as necessary. Also to consider options and initiatives to encourage an expanded membership.

All appointed volunteers would ideally attend the monthly management meetings and participate in the Trust's discussions and decisions.

For a '*without commitment*' more detailed explanation of the various roles, including the approximate time likely to be needed for each of the posts, please contact the Trust's Chairman, **Danny Matthews**, either by phone on **07831-308267** or email: **enquiries@lenhammeadowstrust.org** who will be happy to discuss.

Please email us if you'd like to know more about the Trust or to join our mailing list.
Follow us on social media for the latest news, details of events and photos of our projects

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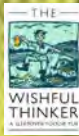
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Part 2: If walls could talk... A Youth at Court Lodge¹

From Henry Shotter

Herbert Todd's (born 1893) childhood memories



Court Lodge played more civilised games. Shown here are the Todd children with their uncle Harold Ellis of the Dog & Bear.

One of the children's pastimes was catching and killing vermin; rats, of course, but also sparrows, which raided the stored corn, and bullfinches, which stripped the buds from the fruit trees. Those with the highest number of kills got a prize at the "Rats and Sparrows Club".

The tenant farmers were allowed to shoot rabbits and hares but no game birds or deer, which was a privilege of the squire. His gamekeepers reared the pheasants for the yearly shoot and young Herbert stood with his gun at his side and watched, longing to be old enough to join in. His father and mother, however, were occasionally invited

to the deer hunt and there his mother rode, a typical Scottish farmer's wife, side-saddle.

Being a Scottish family, the Todds socialised at first mostly with other Scottish families. One of Herbert's earliest memories was being

taken to dances given by one of these Scottish farmers. It seemed to be the custom to "socialise" together when but few English guests were invited.

The Todds had attended the Kirk of Scotland for worship and, in Lenham, they went at first to the Congregational Chapel, which stood where it is today in Tolhurst Way. However, after a while the family started going to the Church of St. Mary in Lenham. There they had their very own box pew, which was a privilege of the tenant of Court Lodge. Others, like the Barrs from East Lenham, also enjoyed the privilege of having a pew reserved for them.

The squire, Akers Douglas, was driven to church in a two-horse brougham and sat with his family in an elevated position in the chancel area, well above the rest of the congregation.

Herbert received his first schooling in the chapel but then he and his sister Elizabeth attended the village

Reference:

1. The article is based on the unpublished memoirs of Sir Henry Todd, which were gratefully received from the Todd family.

school, which was run by 'Old Thunder Bottom', the headmaster Mr. Underwood, here pictured with a class of boys (date unknown).



Later, Herbert went to Brunswick School in Maidstone. The family was not wealthy enough to allow him to go to university, so he took a correspondence course and studied from home in the comfortable office

of Court Lodge. He worked from 9am to 4pm, only having a break for lunch. The school holidays were a welcome change when he could enjoy the haymaking, harvesting and some ploughing matches.

Herbert Todd looked back at this time with mixed feelings because the farm made, like many farms at the time, just enough money to maintain the family. His father was very worried about this and took to drink. He eventually became an alcoholic. After a very difficult time for the family, he was sent away to a home and came back 'cured'.

He lived out his time at Court Lodge and his coffin was carried on top of one of the wagons. It was led by the head ploughman, followed by many farmers from the area.



We welcome once again **Imogen Corrigan** who can lighten the most serious of topics with her understated humour.

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Recipe of the Month

Mrs Wood's Potato Chowder

Ingredients:

6 medium potatoes
 Knob of margarine
 2oz streaky bacon
 Chopped parsley
 1 sliced onion
 Seasoning
 Dessert spoon (D'spn) plain flour
 ½ pint milk
 D'spn margarine
 ½ pint boiling water

Method: (Serves 4-6)

Dice the potatoes, onion and bacon and fry in the margarine for a few minutes.



Add seasoning, parsley and ½ pint boiling water. Simmer for 20 minutes until potatoes are soft. Make a white sauce using the flour and milk and add to the potato mix taking care to keep the potato dice intact. Serve with crusty bread.



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An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

I've been inundated with emails about the impact of the budget from businesses and farmers - but also from our local doctors. In December I held a round table with GPs to hear from them directly.

GPs and practice managers told me how the rise in National Insurance Contributions announced in the Budget will increase their costs by tens of thousands of pounds.

As a result, plans to recruit extra doctors are now on hold. Instead, redundancies may be on the cards.

This is the last thing patients want to hear when it's already hard to get an appointment in many doctors' surgeries. After that meeting I have sent letters to the Secretary of State for Health and the Chancellor urging them to listen to GPs – together with Care Homes and Hospices who are also being hard-hit by the NI rise.

Assisted Dying Bill

As I write, the assisted dying bill is making its way through Parliament. Many people have strong views on both sides of the argument. So, for this month's parish update, I thought it would be a good idea to write about this. I am grateful to everyone who contacted me to share their personal experiences and views. I thought hard and read widely before deciding how to vote on the bill.

As an MP I want to make life better for people. I believe people should be free to make their own choices. But we should also look out for people. The world can be cruel. Not everyone is kind or good. I support assisted dying in principle. I am



lucky that my own experiences of death have not been traumatic, but I know about horrific deaths that no amount of palliative care could alleviate. I have heard from constituents who see a cruel death coming and have asked me to vote for assisted dying for their sake. In that situation I believe I would want the choice of assisted dying for myself.

Despite that, I voted against the assisted dying bill before Christmas because it was not good enough and the safeguards were not really safeguards. One flaw is the definition of Terminal Illness. This is much broader than it might at first appear. It could, for instance, include diabetes, and other diseases which quickly become terminal if someone decides to stop their treatment.

Another problem is the approach to mental capacity. The bill uses the approach in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 which aims to give people as much control as possible over living their lives. It errs on the side of maximising

**‘I have safeguarding
and coercion concerns
and the definition of
‘Terminal Illness’ in
the Bill’**

capacity because it was never intended for use when the question is about hastening death. The bill does not properly safeguard against coercion. A doctor involved could be concerned a patient is being coerced. But if they denied the application for assisted dying, it could just be made to another doctor. No one is under any obligation to investigate whether coercion is occurring.

This law will not just affect those who want it. It will affect everyone and particularly anyone who may be nearing the end of their life or living with serious illness or disability. The choice will be there whether you want it or not; the choice to continue to live or to opt for an early death. It will change our society and we must get it right. I will be looking to Kim Leadbeater and the bill committee to make the bill better before it returns for third reading.

There are more details on my website if you are interested at
www.helenwhately.org.uk.

As ever, if I can help in any way, please reach out.

Best wishes, Helen

e: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk
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The Council meet on the first Wednesday of each month.

Our committees also meet once a month.

These are:-

*Finance & General Purposes
Planning & Implementation*

Please see the notice boards and website for the dates of these.

All meetings are held at the Lenham Community Centre at 7:30pm.

Parishioners may attend all meetings.

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Badminton Club Feathers	Geoff Lord	07794-488331
Borough Councillors	Tom & Janetta Sams	01622-859412 / 0789-1901831
Bowling Club	Lyn Fuller	01622-851538
Bridge Club	Keith Rylands	01622-891964
Brownies (2nd Lenham)	Andrea French	01622-851646
Cat Protection	Mid-Kent Branch	0345-3712758
Church Office	Sarah Hills	01622-850604
Dog Warden (Louise Duke)	Community Protection	01622-602117
Drama	Gail Kelly	01622-850671
Friends of St Mary's Church	Andrew Barr	enquiries@friendsofstmaryslenham.org
Gardening Society	Margaret Baines	01622-431649
Guides (1 st Lenham)	Jo Homes	07887-877814
Ham Lane Allotment Association	Doug Matthews	01622-297692
HAMS productions	David Penny	07731-455677
Harrietsham & Lenham Beavers	Duncan Keenan	07768-926654
Harrietsham & Lenham Cubs	Mrs A Seales	01622-859829
Hub Club	Nina Kent	01622-851970
KCC for Maidstone Rural East	Shellina Prendergast	Shellina.Prendergast@kent.gov.uk
Kent Highway Services	Roads, paths etc.	03000-418181
Kent Wildlife Trust		01622-662012
Lenham Country Market	Sandra Woodfall	07775-736116
Lenham Community Centre	Carol Higgins	01622-853800 (am)
Lenham Cricket Club	Alex Gray	07760-132803
Lenham Film Club	Danny Coorsh	lenhamfilmclub@gmail.com
Lenham Heath Memorial Hall	Rosemarie Pomeroy	01752-911396
Lenham Heritage Society	Henny Shotter	01622-851355
Lenham Lifts scheme	Phil Hollier	01622-859154 / 07542 625277
Lenham Meadows Trust	Danny Matthews	enquiries@lenhammeadowstrust.org
Lenham Nursery	Sarah Siddens	07967 128056
Lenham Parish Council	Lisa Westcott	01622-829034 (M-F 9am-1pm) clerk@lenhamparishcouncil.org.uk
Lenham Quilters & Stitchers	Pamela Gillard	01233-879507
Lenham Social Club	Sue Neaves	01622-532409
Lenham Toddlers Group	Irene Hine	01622-858919
Lenham Wanderers FC	Anna Russell	07747-844785
Len Valley FC	Paul Hewish	07795-324062
Len Valley Health Walks	Jan Enever	01622-851623
Len Valley Practice	GP surgery	01622-858341 / 859204
Member of Parliament	Helen Whately	helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk
Mothers' Union	Mrs J Thomsett	01622-947938
Patient Participation Group	Teresa New	01622-858341
Pilates Classes	Vivien Elcomb	01622-853887
Redback Explorer Scouts	Mark Horlock	redbackesu@hotmail.com
St Edmunds; Platts Heath	Kate Stansfield	07500-895831
Save Our Heathlands (SOHL)	Kate Hammond	07925-606236
Sing & Shake / Make & Shake	Steph Richardson	07894-160906
Vicar	Rev Dr. John Huggins	01622-850280
Wellbeing Community Group	Ellie Stevens	07952-594655 / (Vladimir 07877-143088)
Women's Institute	Chris Godden	01622-858658

Lenham Community Centre - Regular Clubs/Classes/Societies - February 2025

ACTIVITY	WHEN HELD	TIME	CONTACT NO
Abundant Energy Tai Chi	Weekly Monday	0930-1030	07985 001782
Abundant Energy Qigong	Weekly Monday	1045-1145	07985 001782
Baby Ballet	Friday	0930-1045	07866 316056
Country Ways Knitting	2nd Monday	1330-1630	01622 858658
Country Ways Quilting	1 st & 3 rd Tuesday	1330-1630	01233 879507
Country Ways Rugmaking	2nd & last Wednesday	0900-1300	07784 892160
Feathers Badminton	Weekly Monday	2000-2200	07866 151370
Gardening Society	3rd Thursday	1845-2200	01622 430649
Hatha Yoga	Weekly Monday	1815-1945	07850 355918
Kent School of Bridge	Weekly Thursday	1330-1730	01622 891964
LenARA Bowling	Weekly Tuesday	1330-1700	01622 858439
LenARA Line Dancing	Weekly Wednesday	1900-2115	01622 859725
LenARA Members	4 th Wednesday	1230-1700	01622 851763
LenARA Petanque	Thursday if weather permits	0900-1300	01622 858439
LenARA Zumba Gold	Weekly Wednesday	0900-1030	01622 850228
Lenham Art Group	Weekly Thursday	1000-1300	01622 858238
Lenham Badminton	Weekly Tuesday	2000-2200	07866 316056
Lenham Ballet School	Monday / Tuesday	1700-2030	07866 316056
Lenham Ballet School	Thursday	1630-2100	07866 316056
Lenham Ballet School	Weekly Saturday	0900-1530	07866 316056
Lenham Heritage	4 th Thursday	1900-2130	01622 850228
Lenham Toddlers Preschool	Weekly Tuesday	0930-1130	01622 858919
Lenham WI	2 nd Thursday	1845-2200	01622 858658
Make & Shake (Pre-school)	Weekly Wednesday	1030-1300	07894 160906
Parish Council	1 st Wednesday	1930-2230	01622 829034
Parish Council F & G P	3rd Wednesday	1930-2200	01622 829034
Pilates	Weekly Tuesday	0900-11.00	07495 481726
Parish Council Planning	1st Monday	1930-2200	01622 829034
Pathways Church	1 st & 3 rd Sunday	0830-1330	07914 156685
Sing & Shake (Pre-school)	Weekly Monday	0930-1300	07894 160906
Telisa Tai Chi	Weekly Wednesday	1730-1830	07734 108683
Zumba with Rosie	2x Month Tuesday / Friday	1830-1930	07809 490982



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The Common Law Marriage Myth: Why Cohabiting Partners Need a Will

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Each year in England and Wales, a significant proportion of people die without a valid Will. In fact, two-thirds of people die without having made any provisions for how their estate should be distributed. When this happens, the deceased's assets are divided according to the Intestacy Rules. Under these rules, the deceased's estate is generally distributed to their spouse or civil partner first, then descendants, and so forth.

However, cohabiting partners (those in a romantic relationship and living together) are not included in the rules, which can lead to distressing and unexpected consequences for a surviving partner.

The misconception of the "Common Law Marriage"

Research conducted by the Universities of Sheffield and Cardiff highlights that many individuals are under the impression that living together for a certain period of time confers the same legal and financial rights similar to those of a married couple or a couple in a civil partnership. However, this is a misconception. Cohabitation does not



equate to marriage or a civil partnership under UK law, and there is no legal status granting cohabiting couples the same rights as married couples or those in a civil partnership, despite the length of time they have been together, lived together, or if they share children.

The lack of legal recognition under the intestacy rules can lead to significant financial hardship. If one partner dies without a valid will, the surviving partner may find themselves excluded from the estate entirely. In this case, the surviving partner may need to pursue a legal claim for a share of the estate, which can be both time-consuming and costly.

Importance of Making a Will

With marriage rates steadily declining and the proportion of cohabiting couples on the rise – from 20.6% in the 2011 census to 24.3% in the 2021 census – more and more people will face the unfortunate reality that, under the intestacy rules, their cohabiting partner will not receive anything from their estate, leaving surviving partners in a troublesome position and the deceased’s true wishes being dismissed.

The Law Commission previously called for reform of the intestacy rules; however, all suggestions have been rejected by Parliament on the grounds that implementing such change would introduce unnecessary complexity to the system.

The Women and Equalities Committee are still fighting for change to the legislation; however, the intestacy rules are still not able to be relied on for cohabiting couples and the importance of creating a will cannot be overstated. A Will provides the only sure way for individuals to ensure that their estate is distributed according to their wishes.

By making a will, cohabiting couples can avoid the risks and uncertainties associated with intestacy and ensure that their partner is provided for upon their death. Please contact one of our solicitors for more information.



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Lenham WI

The latest news from Chris Godden

It is so nice to think that spring will soon be here. There are bulbs coming up now giving us hope for longer days and better weather. Our members enjoyed going to the panto at the Community Centre last month. The cast are all so talented. We also had a games evening where we had a quiz or two and a Beetle Drive.



This month we are welcoming back **Kim White OBE** who is going to give us a talk on the Gypsy and Traveller Culture. She became a

fully-fledged police officer in 1977. Her ambition was to join the CID. Kent Police were the first force in England to introduce Intelligence Led Policing and she was tasked with recruiting informers. She worked with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Team and learned a lot about gypsy culture. She spent 30 years in the service and ended up with an OBE for her work.

Next month we will be going to the **Federation Annual General Meeting at Gravesend**. The speakers are *Adam Frost*, presenter on *Gardeners World*. He has also featured on *The One Show*, *DIY SOS* and the *Alan Titchmarsh Show*. The other speaker is *Janie Ramsay* who will talk about why she became a WI member and why a speaker.

Every member is entitled to vote for one of the resolutions put forward by the National Federation of WI's.

There are four resolutions:-

1. Let's talk about incontinence.
2. Bystanders can be Lifesavers.
3. Join the Repair Revolution.
4. Eliminate Landfill of Medication Packaging.

The resolution with the most votes will go forward to the National AGM in June and will be the next campaign to take to the Government.

Our speaker at our meeting in March is **Amanda-Jane Doran** who is speaking about "*Beauty, Duty and Trench Coats*".

Amanda-Jane has been Collections and House Manager at Ightham Mote. Previously as a freelance curator, editor and writer



she specialised in the area of 19th and 20th century illustrated books and magazines. She's worked in the Historic Book Collection of the Royal Academy since 2010 cataloguing books and prints. In June 2014 the Bodleian published her book "*The Huns have got my Gramophone*".

She has also worked at Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery as part of the Visitor's Services team, developing resources for children based on the museum's Natural History collection, fossils and dinosaurs. Sounds interesting.

If you want to join us we meet at Lenham Community Centre on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. Please come along and see what we get up to. To find out more please contact rrgodden@btinternet.com



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Climate Change

Pat Crawford reports – “NO FARMING, NO FOOD”

Alerted by the simple but lucidly powerful message ‘No farming, no food’, more of the general public are protesting the government’s tax onslaught on family farms.

At the time of going to press the government continues to claim that changes to tax won’t affect the ‘vast majority’ of farmers; this despite research undertaken by the NFU (National Farmers’ Union) indicating that 75% of family farms will suffer.

The term ‘asset rich, cash poor’ is often applied to farming. According to the Office of National Statistics, 30% of farms made a loss in 2023-24 while a further 25% had an income of less than £25,000. Equating this to an hourly rate opens a clear window on ‘cash poor’!

Looked at from a different angle; many rural-related organisations are expressing concern that the tax will have catastrophic consequences for the UK’s ability to protect food security. Currently we produce approximately 60% of the food consumed in this country - the other 40% is imported from countries where farming is increasingly affected by climate change. It isn’t necessary to be a statistician (or politician) to predict future challenges!

Children have written letters to the Prime Minister detailing what they want to happen to British farming this year. You can make your voice heard by rallying your MP to support our region’s farms.

‘...rally your MP
to support our
region’s farms.’



Kent continues to have the most farms and smallholdings in the south east – getting on for three thousand. We can rely on our farmers to produce nutritious, safe food, employ the highest livestock husbandry standards in the world and add multiple benefits to our beautiful countryside.

Flooding and bad weather in the New Year affected farms in various parts of the UK creating similar conditions to those

experienced at the beginning of 2024. The generally warmer winters are likely to impact on fruit crops such as apples and pears (recall that Kent stands supreme in production of top fruit) because the number of ‘chill hours’ needed to ensure plentiful healthy blossom and buds are threatened by the changing climate.

Does this mean some of our treasured favourites will eventually have to be replaced with varieties that require less chill hours?



FAVERSHAM LITERARY FESTIVAL

21 FEB – 2 MARCH 2025

Line-up includes:

Sebastian Faulks

Jackie Kay

Alison Steadman

Danny Robins

Pam Ayres

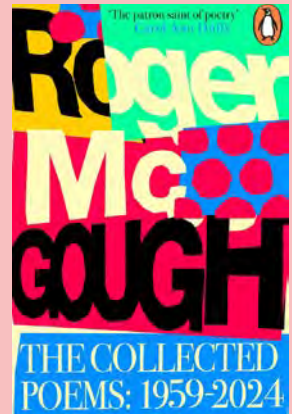
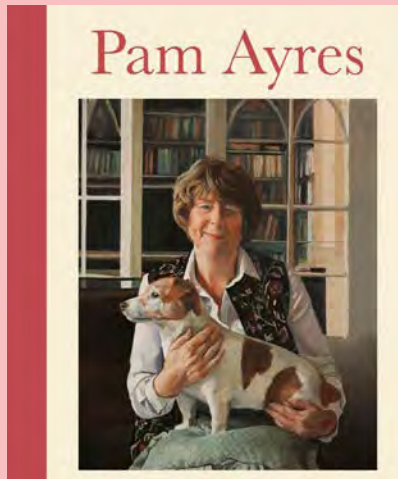
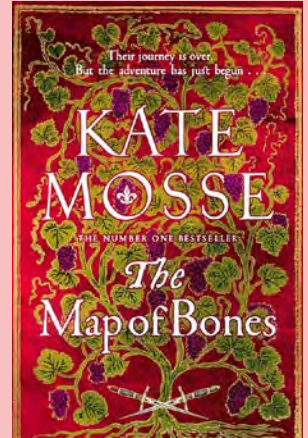
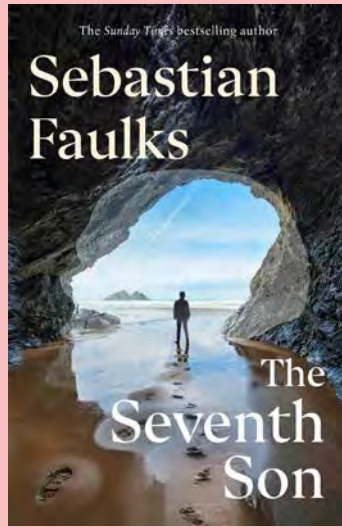
Harry Baker

Eliza Clark

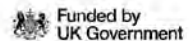
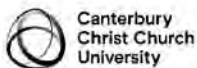
Will Self

Bettany Hughes

Plus lots of Kent
authors; family &
children's events



Tickets available via the website:
www.favershamliteraryfestival.org



The Lenham School is lucky to be blessed with a number of very talented creative writers.

In July 2024, Louise Bullen was placed 6th in the Maidstone Literary Festival for young writers.

Below is her award-winning entry:

Who's There?

I awaken but not in my bed, instead on a heap of damp mud on the floor of a place I know too well; sitting up and looking around at the towering timber around me.

Frosty sludge sinks into my pyjamas as I stand up, sticking to my skin. I hear my name ring among the mouldy and pungent bark, tightening the knot in my stomach. I start walking – although I don't know where I am going. Everything looks the same like I'm surrounded with mirrors; am I even moving? Or am I dreaming still?

My mind doesn't wander for long before I hear it again and this time it's closer. I start sprinting, more briskly with each echo in the thicket until I'm darting through the frigid clouds. Darting through the vast labyrinth of vague and slender trees and wheezing from the deprivation of air; I feel my feet slip from beneath me.

The mist is thick, surrounding the landscape, trailing the horizon and blanketing my eyes. The sonorous silence is not as reassuring as silence is supposed to be, but rather eerie and alarming. I splatter ripples of blistering torrent as I hasten from whatever is tormenting my ears, whatever is piercing my back, whatever is seeking my terror.

The musky, yet fragrant, bitter breeze hugs my nostrils as if freezing my airways. Impaling the fog; light cracks through and I feel the trepidation lift off



my shoulders, the sunlight was my saviour – or so I thought.

Getting closer to the source, I break out into a cold sweat; adrenaline pumps through my veins as I pray for the warmth of summertime to take me, to steal me, from this boundless nightmare.

No more will the hush of the haunting face taunt me. Memories swim in, weighing on me, the only thing that can dim my summer nights. A sudden agonising sensation hits my head and I plummet to the floor, I feel a sudden warmth starting from my head, but not from the sub-tropical, blazing sun. Rather from the oozing of my own blood, rolling over and looking up to the inky, midnight sky.

Not a single star could shine as bright as the woman I see before me. My bride, my love.

*'...take me...steal me,
from this boundless
nightmare.'*

Help beat the scammers in 2025

According to 'Stop Scams UK', criminal gangs stole over £470 million from individuals and small businesses last year by pretending to be a bank or other service provider, encouraging consumers to falsely make a payment or transfer money.

Intended for use by consumers, dialling 159 provides an easy route back to safety when you get an unexpected phone call about a financial matter.

Easy to remember, the short code number now connects customers of more than **99% of the UK's retail bank current accounts** safely and directly with their bank. Unlike many long-form numbers, 159 cannot be spoofed or impersonated.

To avoid financial fraud you now have a secure and easy-to-remember phone number to contact your banks to avoid painful scams. It could be the safest way for many to contact your provider if you have suspicions and concerns about your accounts, or even if you're struggling to find a customer services number.

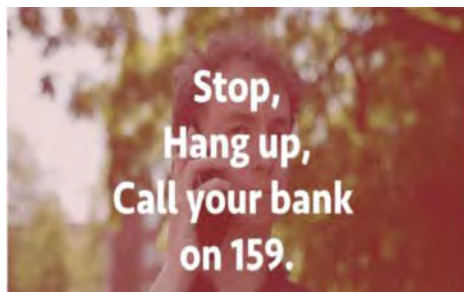
So if you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details – **stop, hang up and call 159** to speak directly to your bank. It plays a vital



Dial 159

role in keeping you safe and has been used by more than half a million people since the scheme started.

Since its inception, the scheme has been expanded to bring in new banking destinations, including Bank of Scotland, Barclays, Co-operative Bank, Chase, First Direct, Halifax, HSBC, Lloyds Bank, Metro Bank, Modulr Finance, Monzo, Nationwide Building Society, NatWest, Revolut, Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander, Starling, Tide, TSB and Ulster Bank.





Lenham Primary School report

From Headteacher Andrea McCluskey

Year 6's Immersive WWII Experience at Kent Life. Written by Year 6.

Year 6 had an unforgettable trip to Kent Life as part of their WWII project.

Dressed as evacuees, the children stepped back in time to experience life during the 1940s.

The day began with an exciting activity; pretending to be on a train, being sent away from their homes as evacuees.

This set the tone for a day packed with learning and hands-on workshops.

The first task involved writing heartfelt letters to their families, imagining the emotions of being far from loved ones. Next, the children explored the strategic routes that planes flew during the war and learned about the challenges of food rationing. This session highlighted the

resourcefulness required to live during wartime.

Before enjoying their packed lunches, the group participated in a Rag Rug-making workshop. Using bodgers to create their own rag rug patches proved to be a tricky challenge, but it was one they tackled with enthusiasm and creativity.

The day concluded with an engaging session on air raids and safety during the Blitz. Students even had a go at marching like the Home Guard. While keeping their legs and arms in time was no easy feat, it was certainly a fun and memorable way to end the trip.

Year 6's visit to Kent Life brought their World War Two learning to life.



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NEXT SESSION 20th February (1:30–3pm) Lenham Community Centre

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From Pamela Gillard

Last month we were easing our new members into our program with a simple project.

In February I'll teach you how to design and create a shopping bag from a bit of scrap fabric and some batting. We meet on February 4th and 18th.

I hope you'll come join us and try your hand at something new or just enjoy the company, have a chat and a cup of tea. An enjoyable way to spend an afternoon.



We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of every month except December and would love to see you. We meet usually in the Osborne room in the Lenham Community Centre from 1:30 to 4:30. If you'd like information on our group or a copy of our 2025 programme please contact me, Pamela Gillard, at 07914 809946 or email moonbeamspinner@gmail.com

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The meeting this month is for members only.

Our winter social is being held on **Thursday 20th February** in the Community Centre.

Tickets are available from Pat Hollis, if not already obtained.

All are welcome to the meetings except February, July and November which are for members only. Members pay £1 entrance with non-members paying £1.50. Annual subscription is £7 per person.

Tea/coffee and biscuits are available in the interval and a raffle is held before the evenings close.



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Book Review

'The Older I get' by Fern Britton - How I repowered my life

Many television celebrities often embrace a second career as an author in middle age and Fern Britton is no exception.

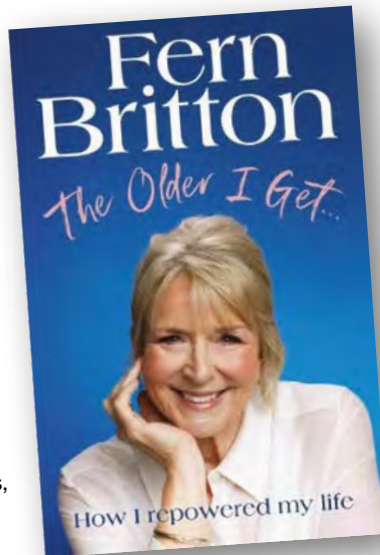
Her books are appreciated for their warmth and wisdom; so join Fern as she navigates life in her 60s faced with a series of life-altering events.

Losing her parents, her 20-year marriage ending and brushes with serious illness, Fern decided to reconnect with her true self and, instead of fearing getting older, chose to create a new life full of friendship, fun and adventure.

Whatever your situation, this stage of life opens a world of possibilities. As women we sometimes put our needs to the side as we take on different roles, such as 'mum' or 'wife', but it's time for us to reclaim our power and rediscover who we are and what makes us happy.

Join Fern as she explores both the joys and challenges of midlife with warmth and humour. Fern is at her happiest in her small cottage in Cornwall embracing community life and adjusting to being single once more and living on her own. Each chapter explores a new theme and Fern candidly shares her experiences of grief and loss, rebuilding confidence and exploring new passions.

Here she lays bare, with remarkable candour, her fears about growing older, her traumas, her battle to cope with lockdown and her



quest to repower herself whilst inspiring others to do the same.

All this is presented with the warmth, the honesty and the integrity we have come to expect from her. I love the thought-provoking synopsis at the end of each chapter. How we all make mistakes and, in the end, we have to forgive ourselves and move on.

She describes her difficult childhood, the challenges of raising four children with a career in television and her battle with depression.

Most of us can relate to incidents in Fern's life but we all cannot have the opportunity to cycle around the world or perform on *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Celebrity Big Brother* - perhaps just as well!

Still, it makes for interesting reading and we can all take a leaf out of Fern's book. Come 2025 we all need a little self-help and this non-fiction book is available from your local library.

Come and explore what we have to offer.

**You can borrow
this thought-provoking
book from the local
Lenham library.**

A View from across the Pond

By Diane Bonfonte, Waterloo, Ontario

February 15, 1965 Canada's cherished single red maple leaf flag became its first 'official' flag – flown for the first time at noon on Parliament Hill and across the nation and on this date in 1996, National Flag Day of Canada became 'official'.

Never formally adopted, three successive, formal designs of the 'Canadian Red Ensign' were flown as the 'distinctive Canadian flag' from 1868 to 1965.



1957 – 1965 design

Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson's 1963 election promise was for Canada to have its own flag. The clock was ticking. In 1967, Canada celebrated its 100th birthday of Confederation by hosting the World's Fair - Expo '67 in Montreal. How could Canada welcome the world without its own flag? The drama that ensued to achieve this goal is a thrilling chapter in Canadian history.

A parliamentary committee of 15 MP's was struck in 1964 - the "Great Flag Debate" began with plenty of political hullabaloo + national angst + 4,000 design submissions. Two finalist's designs were dubbed 'Pearson's Pennant' and 'Pearson's bloody rag'. Various details, especially from 'behind the scenes' during this process, will never be entirely known. Now deceased, many closely connected kept silent and others penned their versions.

Sample designs follow below:



The final 3 contenders were:



December, 1964, the present design was approved by Canada's Parliament. In London to attend Churchill's funeral, Pearson went to Buckingham Palace on January 28, 1965 to witness Her Majesty sign the Proclamation. Canada's flag became official! Now 60 years later, I believe it remains the best choice for ALL Canadians to proudly wave!

YOUTUBE's, *'Let's Celebrate Canada's Flag'* is my documentary filled with fun facts and 5 short interviews with unique perspectives and insights.



DID YOU KNOW...

Canada's flag flown atop the Peace Tower, Parliament Hill, Ottawa is changed daily. Since 1994, Canadians

can apply to receive one. Due to increased interest in the past decade, the wait is 100 years

(maybe). Her Majesty was 'gifted' the flown July 1st Canada Day 2017 flag (150th birthday of Confederation). YOUTUBE shows a short video of Flag Master of Parliament Hill, Robert Labonte, at work.



You will see regular updates on all the parish council's activities in the *Focus*, our website and social media.

Government “Devolution” plans and what that means for us

At the end of December, the government published a White Paper which set out its plans for the reorganisation of local government. This is a far-reaching document with implications for the Kent and Medway area. If you wish to see the text of the announcement, given by Angela Rayner, MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, you can find that here: Deputy Prime Minister's speech on the Devolution White Paper - **GOV.UK**

The area known as Kent has one “*first tier/strategic*” authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and 12 borough/district councils, of which Maidstone is one. Then, across Kent, there are over 300 parish and town councils as well, Lenham being one of these.

The county and borough/district councils, along with the parish and town councils, are responsible for all the local authority-based services the citizens in the Kent area receive such as social care, education, highways maintenance, housing, planning, refuse collection, maintenance of parks and green spaces and many more.

Medway is already a Unitary Authority, which means it is responsible for delivering all the sort of services in Medway that are presently delivered by the county and borough councils in the Kent area.

The White Paper proposes that the top two tiers of county and borough/district councils which deliver the current local government arrangements across Kent will be abolished

and new Unitary areas will be set up to deliver all the services, in the same way that Medway runs.

At this point it is not clear exactly how Kent will be reconfigured, but the possibility is that there will be three or four new unitary areas, with several of the current borough and district councils merging to form these. It is also possible there may be an elected regional Mayor to cover the whole of the restructured Kent/Medway area.

What the White Paper was “silent” on was the role of parish and town councils; no doubt this will emerge as details are firmed up.

It's understood that the leaders of both KCC and Medway Unitary Authority are in favour of supporting this change. It's also possible that the area may submit an early expression of interest to the Secretary of State to progress the proposed changes during the first

round. If that happens then it is possible that the County Council elections planned for this May may be cancelled.

The ambition for these significant changes to come into being is currently projected as 2026/27.

Achieving such change within this timeframe is going to be

a mammoth task. There are, though, already services such as Kent Fire and Rescue, the Police, and the Kent and Medway Health Care Partnership, which operate across the whole area and hopefully incorporating lessons learned from these services will assist with the re-organisational proposals.

We will endeavour to keep everyone informed as the details become clearer.

.....the White Paper is silent on role of parish councils under any restructuring....

HOLY TRINITY CHARING HEATH "QUIZ NIGHT"



SATURDAY 22nd FEBRUARY 2025
7pm FOR 7.30pm Start
CHARING HEATH MEMORIAL HALL

With Quiz Master – Rev Richard Webb (& helpers!)

Teams/tables – up to 6 people

Can't make up a table? Call Bob and he will try to fit you in!

£12 per person to include:

"Jumbo Sausage & Chips"

Please bring your own drinks & nibbles

There will be a raffle!

All proceeds from this event and raffle will go to Holy Trinity Building Repairs Fund – to help pay for essential external work recently carried out – as identified by our architect in our latest quinquennial inspection.

ADVANCE BOOKING ESSENTIAL!

Tickets will **NOT** be available on the door.

Booking is now OPEN – for catering purposes
please book by **Saturday 15th February!**

Call Bob Cale – 01233 712819 – or
email: bob.cale@btinternet.com to book your place!

Jury Service

How it works and what to do if called

How it works

Jurors are chosen randomly from the electoral register. You'll be part of a jury of 12 people to decide the outcome of a criminal trial.

If you are called to attend jury service, you'll get a summons in the post and you must respond within 7 days and confirm if you can attend. If you don't respond (either on-line or by returning the form by post) you can be fined up to £1,000.

After you respond, the Jury Central Summoning Bureau will send you a letter to confirm details of your service, including when and where it will take place. If you asked to change the date or to be excused, the letter will explain if your request was accepted. You'll need to bring your summons or confirmation letter to court with you on your first day of service.

How long jury service lasts

Jury service usually lasts up to 10 working days. If the trial is likely to last longer than 10 days, jury staff will let you know. If the trial is shorter than 10 days, you may be asked to be a juror on other trials. You'll usually need to be at court from 10am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday, but times can vary. On the first day you will need to arrive earlier. The summons letter will specify the exact time.

Get help

Contact the Jury Central Summoning Bureau if you have questions about jury service or about a decision. It may be possible to change the location of your jury service if you've been summoned to a court far from where you live, e.g., if you've recently moved house or if you're at university and you've been summoned to a court near your family home.



Discussing the trial

You must **NOT** discuss the trial with anyone until it's finished, except with other jury members in the deliberation room. After the trial you must not talk about what happened in the deliberation room, even with family members. You can talk about what happened in the courtroom. In particular you must **NOT** post comments about the trial on social media, even after the trial's finished. This is contempt of court and you can be fined or sent to prison.

If anyone approaches you about the trial, tell a court officer. If you're approached outside court, tell a police officer.

What you can claim if you're an employee

You'll not be paid for doing jury service, but you can claim some money back if your earnings are affected. Many employers will continue to pay you as normal, but are not required to do so. If there's a shortfall, for each day you're at court, you can usually claim:

- up to £64.95 to help cover your loss of earnings and the cost of any care or childcare outside of your usual arrangements

- £5.71 for food and drink
- the cost of travel to and from court

You'll continue to get financial support and benefits (such as Universal Credit) for the first 8 weeks. After that, the court will give you a loss of earnings form to give to your benefit office or work coach.

Taking time off work

Give a copy of your jury summons to your employer. Your employer must let you have time off work, but can ask you to delay your jury service if your absence will have a serious effect on their business.

Loss of earnings, childcare and other care costs

How much you can claim to cover loss of earnings and care costs depends on the length of your jury service and how many hours you spend at court each day.

For the first 10 days of jury service, you can claim up to:

- £64.95 a day if you spend more than 4 hours at court
- £32.47 a day if you spend 4 hours or less at court

If your jury service lasts longer than 10 working days, the amount you can claim increases. You'll be able to claim up to:

- £129.91 a day if you spend more than 4 hours at court
- £64.95 a day if you spend 4 hours or less at court

Travel and parking costs

How much you can claim depends on how you travel to court.

PLOT OR NOT?

If you think your land or property has development potential, why not give us a call without obligation and in confidence.



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Nature Watch

From Darren Hammond

'Tis the season to be breeding!

Even though we are still in the grips of winter with snow flying and the temperatures low, we can now look to the time of year that the wildlife that surrounds us will be starting to strut their stuff to attract mates and start the new generation. The exact times that the breeding season starts is slightly different for each species and even within that species times will differ, but loosely you can say that breeding season goes from spring to summer.

Just how soon can the breeding season start?



From February we start to see some of the smaller creatures begin the process. Usually

the ones that are hiding under the fallen leaves and logs on the ground and in the damp and dark places. Here we have some slug eggs that have been laid under a log at a place in Lenham Heath. Laid in little clusters they look like little globes of jelly. Depending on when they were laid they can take longer to hatch and can take 10 to 100 days to hatch.

Not just the tiny creatures

Both newts (pictured above) and frogs will start to lay their eggs as early as February in ponds and other bodies of water. They will take varying times to hatch but by March you will see tadpoles swimming



through the water in search of food. Usually you will see the eggs as a mass of jelly spheres all clumped together with black centres and you can actually see the embryos develop.

As the weather warms during spring we will begin to see signs of other small bugs and creepy crawlies begin the new cycle like these butterfly eggs.



One of the things we can do to help our wonderful wildlife is planting plants that butterflies and other insects would use for food and breeding. This would also help our birds and other small wildlife by providing food during their breeding seasons.

Preparing for the new arrivals

While the general period for breeding seasons is given as spring to summer, according to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 the official start is February and lasts till 30 September. During this time it's forbidden to damage eggs or nests that are in use. Ways to help out our feathered friends are by installing nest boxes to give



them a safe place to raise a family or by not trimming hedges as they often use places like hedges to nest (like this goldfinch with fluff for the nest) which offer

protection from things like cats or birds of prey.

Nesting birds and their young

When the eggs start hatching the parent birds will start to collect food to feed the babies. This is when our efforts to encourage plant life to grow to help the insects will pay off. Here a blackbird (below) has a beak full of assorted bugs that it is carrying off to the nest. Often you will see the parent birds start to look quite bedraggled as they fly to and from the nests continually feeding the young ones.



They think it's all over, but alas it may not be

So after all the hard work providing everything their babies need to grow, you may think the parents have a rest, but often if it's early enough in the season there may be another brood to be had. The young birds still might ask for food even though they are fledged. Pictured below is a baby blue tit begging for food even though I had seen it feeding on its own.

Occasionally you may find a baby bird that has fallen from its nest. If this is the case you are allowed to find the nest and put it back if you are not disturbing the nest too much. It may be prudent to wait for a couple of hours though to see if the baby can fly or get back on its own.

So even though it's still gloomy and a bit dark, the new season of baby animals is on its way.



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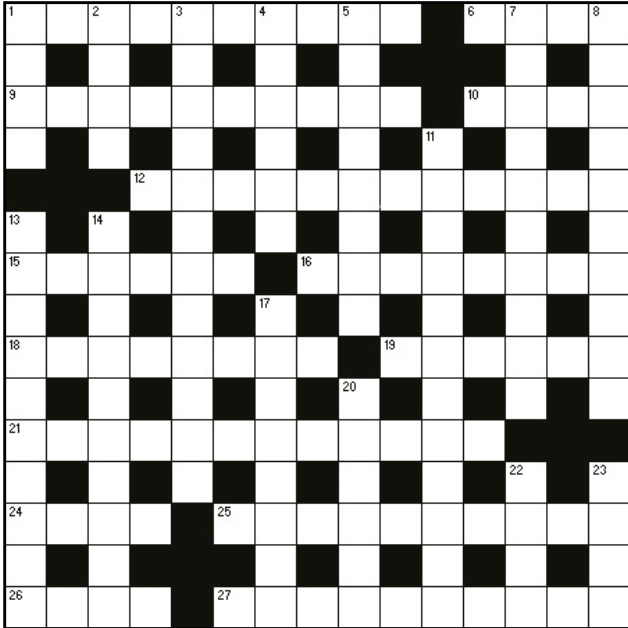
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Focus PRIZE Crossword February 2025

The December 2024 winner is Jennifer Alleyne of Lenham – well done!



Across clues

1. Branched table or ceiling lights. (10)
6. A sign of what lies in the future. (4)
9. Procedures carried out by the military and surgeons. (10)
10. What you are looking at now. (4)
12. Meal consisting of meat and what chickens lay. (5,3,4)
15. Words used in a song. (6)
16. A term used to describe a newly coined word. (8)
18. Fill the bath with it, maybe. (3,5)
19. Famous Irish thoroughbred steeplechaser. (3,3)
21. Military unit that gets rid of dangerous explosive devices. (4,8)
24. Small measures of whisky, for example. (4)
25. Repressing one's feeling over time. (8,2)
26. Leaves of this plant are often chewed in South America. (4)
27. Put in a perilous situation. (10)

Down clues

1. Cut hair short. (4)
2. An alternative name for Christmas. (4)
3. Postmen use these to hold letters together for delivery. (7,5)
4. A living creature that can move is called this. (6)
5. A round African hut. (8)
7. Borrowers, typically house owners. (10)
8. Clothes are not worn here. (6,4)
11. Rendering poorer. (12)
13. Concerning the use and arrangement of letters. (10)
14. Branch of mathematics concerning numbers. (10)
17. A 5ml measure. (8)
20. Against. (6)
22. Jelly made from some species of algae. (4)
23. Common name for a potato. (4)

Answers for January 2025 Focus Crossword



A £10 voucher, donated by your crossword compiler, will go to the first correctly completed crossword picked from your entries. Please complete the box below and hand your entries into the Lenham Parish Council offices at 1a High Street Lenham or into the Lenham library by **no later than 19 February** where they'll be placed in an envelope. The winner will be notified direct and announced in a future issue of *Focus*.

Name Phone No
Address

Christian Message

From Rev Canon Lorraine Apps-Huggins

February - the season of lambs, spring flowers, valentines, and Lincoln's birthday, my diary tells me. February 12th is still a state holiday if you happen to live in one of three states in the US.

It seems strange to us in Britain to imagine getting a day off for a prime minister's birthday, however famous. We do have various 'Bank Holidays' over the year and I am not sure of their origin, I just know how much I appreciate them when they pop up!

The word '*holidays*' actually stems from their original source, they were the '*holy days*' of the year when you were not expected to work but rather take time out and refocus on what really matters.

Many of our annual days off are still related to remembering and celebrating certain Christian feasts, events, traditions and rituals – Easter and Christmas, for instance. Naturally we are glad to have these days interspersed in our year. Without them where would the natural breaks be? They give us time to be thankful, to slow down and to be with friends and family; to draw aside from ordinary life and possibly think about matters of a different nature – spiritual, ethereal, liminal.

As Christians, and I will say as humans, believers or not, we are also encouraged to do this with one seventh of our week – shabbat, sabbath, Sunday, a day of rest. A day when 'thou shalt do no work, wherever you live'. See *Exodus 20:10*.

Sunday rest has been stolen from us in the past 40 or 50 years – tho' we did not see that coming. We just wanted to break away from legalism and religious enforcement. And that wasn't wrong. But I do wonder how this lack of rest has contributed to burn out, anxiety, disease, agitation, rage, conflict, depression and exhaustion – it is so prevalent among us.

Fascinating stuff – I can see over and over how faith and the practices attached to it of simplification, prayer, mindfulness, rest, generosity, hospitality, magnanimity and humility – living justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God are actually good for us. (*Micah 6:7*)

God is not a tyrant – quite the opposite; He is desirous of healthy community, wellbeing for those He created and loves, and time – time for all of us and each of us to spend with Him, with each other and even with ourselves. This way we flourish. Simple.

Enjoy February, take a long slow look at the lambs over in the field – they know how to rest and reset by in green pastures by still waters..... *The Lord really is our Good Shepherd.*

Len Valley Benefice

Everybody is welcome

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you. *Isaiah 41:13*

Sunday 2 February

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Wednesday 5 February

9.30am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

Sunday 9 February

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 16 February

8.00am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Morning Worship

Sunday 23 February

11.00am Benefice Holy Communion at St Mary's, Lenham

'Re-Sourced in Christ - Stillness'

Check local notice boards for more details

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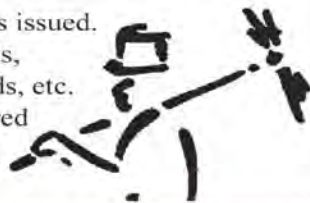
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Make preparations for possible flooding

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is encouraging everyone to prepare for potential flooding **now**.

The Council is asking Maidstone residents to take steps and sign up for flood warnings. If people know what to do in a flood it can significantly reduce risk to life, damage to property and the suffering from mental health impacts in the future.

Only 27% of the properties at risk of flooding in Maidstone have registered for flood alerts:

Properties at risk: 5370: Number of people signed-up for alerts: 1406

The Council is reminding residents that they are responsible for their own flood protection equipment which may include sandbags. If anyone believes their home is at risk they should purchase these from builders' merchants now and store them at home ready to react quickly if there's a problem.

Cllr Clive English, MBC Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Enforcement said: "By taking just one action people can reduce the effects of flooding on their homes, families and even save a life. The best way to protect yourself from flooding is to know what to do in advance, follow the simple steps on the Environment Agency website.

"In many flood risk areas, you can sign up for flood warnings. These warn of the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea and groundwater. You'll be alerted by phone, email or text when flooding is expected. Why not sign up now."



When areas across the borough are at risk of flooding MBC continues to support the Environment Agency (EA) to carry out its humanitarian responsibilities. Preventative steps for possible flooding include:

- To sign up for flood warnings: **www.flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings**
- Have a flood kit of essential items at home
- Check the Environment Agency website for flood warning information: **<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>**
- If they see any blockages in watercourses to report them to the EA's through a free 24-hour incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60
- Keep up to date on social media: **@EnvAgencySE**

Further flooding advice can be found on the Maidstone Borough Council website: **www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/seasonal-advice/tier-2-primary-areas/flooding-advice**



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