

The Lenham Focus

SEPTEMBER 2026 issue



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Owl at Leeds Castle by Nick White

Editorial

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

What a success at the **Lenham Fest** in August! Huge crowds enjoying the fun and games on a day of perfect weather – hot and sunny. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event, the variety of stalls, the food and drink stands and the music. It was a great example of a 'village fete' and community togetherness.

Not only that, it turned out to be a fabulous fund-raising event for the local village charitable groups with over £400 raised for St Mary's church on the tea and cake stand, £300 for the Christmas lights organisation from the raffle and over £450 for Lenham Meadows Trust funds from the wine-or-water stall. A big **THANK YOU** to you all.

September's key event is the **Friends of St Mary's Annual Barn Dance** on the 19th. Tickets are going fast but still available from Kent Loves...

AND NOW A PLEA FOR HELP!

We need a volunteer to take bundles of FOCUS magazines to around 13 distributors in and around the Ham Lane area. It will take about 20 minutes to do the task, once a month, on arrival of the magazines. Jon, the lead distribution volunteer, will explain all and be happy to accompany you to show you the ropes if needed. If you can help, just email me on editorialslf@outlook.com or ring Jon direct on **07971-249137**.

ALSO we're looking for help for your editor! A couple of hours a month would be an enormous help to keeping the **FOCUS** going. **Interested?** Use the same email above and we can discuss.

David Jackson
 Editor

Email the editor if
 you have an entry
 for next month's
 'What's On' page...

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

WHAT'S ON SEPTEMBER

Here's a quick look at the events around Lenham in the coming month. There may be more information inside.....

Got an event you'd like included next month? Send an email to the Editor.

- **Every Friday during spring and summer:** Westwell Winery 'Pizza Fridays' 4pm - 9pm.
Venue: Westwell Wine Estates, Charing.
Cost: Varies – check website.
- **Every day in September** 'Sublime Sculpture trail'. **Venue:** Leeds Castle. **Cost:** Included in entrance ticket
- **4 September evening** 'White Party karaoke'
Venue: Lenham Social club Free entry
- **5 September 6pm – 9pm** 'Barn dance for 11+'s' **Venue:** Charing parish hall **Cost:** Members £10, non-members £15, 11-16's £3
- **5 & 6 September** 'All day Headcorn Southern Model Show' **Venue:** Headcorn Airport
See article inside this issue
- **5 & 6 September** 'All day Faversham hop festival' **Venue:** Various sites in Faversham.
FREE
- **9 September @ 2:30pm** 'Art Society – Creating an imaginary world' **Venue:** Egerton Millennium Hall. **Cost:** FREE for members £8 guests
- **11 September @ 7pm** Film Club – final ever event 'Michael' **Venue:** Community centre
Cost: £5 - £2 under 16s (CASH ONLY)
- **18 September @ 8:30pm** 'Avanzi live music'
Venue: Lenham Social club FREE entry
- **18 September @ 10am – 3pm** Charity 'cuppa and cake day' for Heart of Kent hospice
Venue: Kent Loves... High Street, Lenham
Donations welcome.
- **18 September, evening** 'Quiz night'
Venue: Dog & Bear
- **18 September from 6:30pm** 'Lenham nursery – Celebrity sports stars quiz night' **Venue:** The Wishful Thinker. See article inside this issue
- **18 September @ 7pm** Rotary 'Murder, they wrote' evening. **Venue:** Headcorn Village Hall
Cost: £10 from tinyurl.com
- **19 September from 7pm** 'Friends of St Mary's Annual village barn dance'. **Venue:** Tithe Barn, Lenham **Cost:** £15 adults/£5 under 16s Tickets from Kent Loves....
- **24 September, evening** 'Quiz night'
Venue: Lenham Social club. FREE entry
- **24 September 7pm** 'Heritage Society talk – Domesday Kent and the Norman Conquest'.
Venue: Community Centre **Cost:** FREE for members £5 guests
- **25 September @ 11am** 'McMillan coffee'
Venue: Who'd A Thought It. FREE entry
- **26 September, evening** 'Bingo'
Venue: Lenham Social club
- **26 September** 'Harvest Festival'
Venue: Wildshark Winery. See website for more details
- **27 September from 12 noon** 'First ever fun dog show'. 8 classes. Stalls, raffle, tombola, bar. **Venue:** Lenham Social Club
Cost: £2 per class or 3 classes for £5





The Friends of
St Mary's Church, Lenham

THE ANNUAL VILLAGE BARN DANCE, 19TH SEPTEMBER

There are still tickets available for one of the highlights of the village calendar, **The Annual Village Barn Dance**. The event takes place in the stunning setting of the Tithe Barn, ME17 2QD on Saturday 19th September. It's sure to be a great night as usual, with dancing to 'Whirling Skirmish' and instructions from their excellent caller.

The dance is a wonderful family-friendly event and it's great fun for all ages. No barn dance experience is necessary, the caller will provide plenty of guidance and lots of encouragement throughout! In addition to being an important fundraising activity for The Friends, the dance really is a fabulous social occasion, so round up friends and family and join us for a great evening. And of course there will be our superb raffle during the interval.

Tickets are £15 for adults and £5 for under 16's; they are available from Kent Loves... 11 High Street, Lenham,

payment is cash only. Bring your own drinks & picnic along to the dance and enjoy the music. Doors open at 19.00 and the dancing begins at 19.30. There will be some parking available at the barn, however there is also parking in and around the square.

The Friends of St Mary's is a registered charity, set up with the single purpose of preserving and maintaining our Grade I listed church building, so that it can stand at the centre of the village for future generations. Events like the Barn Dance are vital in helping us raise funds to be able to fund our work, like the recent major renovations to the tower roof.

Please email us if you would like to sign up to receive regular updates about our latest projects or if you would like to become a member. You'll also find more information about us and a membership application form on our website.



www.friendsofstmaryslenham.org



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The Friends of St Mary's, Lenham

presents

THE ANNUAL VILLAGE

BARN DANCE

★ Saturday 19th September ★

Tithe Barn, Lenham ME17 2QD
Doors open 19.00 ★ Dancing to 'Whirling
Skirmish' starts 19.30 ★ Fabulous raffle

Adults: £15 Under 16s: £5

On sale now : Kent Loves... 11 High St, Lenham

Limited availability, advance purchase only

**Bring your own drinks &
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Maidstone Borough Council opens Book of Condolence for Honorary Freeman the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe

We were saddened to learn of the passing of the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe, Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Maidstone since 2007.

For more than two decades, Ann was a passionate advocate for Maidstone and its communities. Her commitment to public service, fierce dedication to her constituents and unmistakable presence in public life left a lasting mark on our borough.

People are being invited to sign a digital Book of Condolence following her passing.

Maidstone Borough Council Leader Cllr Stuart Jeffery said: "Ann was a formidable parliamentarian, a dedicated constituency MP and a strong champion for Maidstone. The affection she held for the borough was clear throughout her years of service.

"The Freedom of the Borough is the highest honour we can bestow and was awarded in recognition of her eminent service to Maidstone and her long and distinguished career representing the area in Parliament."

When receiving the Freedom of the Borough, Ann reflected on her time representing Maidstone, saying: "What has not changed is the warmth of people in Maidstone and the dedication of its public servants."

The digital Book of Condolence has now been opened for residents,

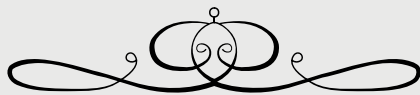


former constituents and members of the community who wish to share their memories, tributes and messages of sympathy.

The book is intended as a space for people to reflect on Ann's life, public service and contribution to Maidstone.

Our thoughts and condolences are with Ann's family, friends and all those who knew her.

To leave a message, please go online to:
<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/other-services/campaigns-and-projects/ann-widdecombe-remembrance-memorial>



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**LENHAM
FILM CLUB**

at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

Michael

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

Friday SEPTEMBER 11TH

**Performance begins 19.30,
doors open 19.00**

**Running time 2 hrs 7 mins
Directed by Antoine Fuqua**

Michael (12, 2026) is the story of the extraordinary career of the 'King of Pop', the superstar Michael Jackson, who is played in this outstanding film by his real-life nephew, Jaafar Jackson. We re-live Michael's triumphs, tragedies and iconic performances from his debut aged six in the Jackson 5 and share the story of how he relentlessly sang and danced his way to the top, becoming the greatest entertainer in the world and changing the world of pop music for ever.

This musical extravaganza is a fitting conclusion to Lenham Film Club's years of pleasure in presenting a diverse range of films, some known, many new to our audience.

We're extremely sad to confirm that this will be the final Lenham Film Club performance.

Our team is facing significant changes; our Chair and Secretary have left the village and several others on our team are no longer in a position to contribute as they once did. We're very grateful for the support of the new team members who have joined us recently, however, there are simply not enough people on the team to keep the club running smoothly every month. We've tried to resolve this problem for some time and despite exploring a number of avenues to see if others would take on running the club, we've not been able to get the required assistance.

The club began in February 2019 and even though we had to take an enforced break due to Covid, we've put on a total of 74 performances and welcomed many keen audience members! We're so very grateful to everyone who has come along and supported the club over the last 7 years.

Thank you

The Lenham Film Club team



lenhamfilmclub@gmail.com



www.lenhamfilmclub.org



[@lenhamfilmclub](https://www.facebook.com/lenhamfilmclub)

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Lenham Social Club – More Than Just a Club



Nestled in the heart of the village, Lenham Social Club is a welcoming community venue where everyone can enjoy a warm, friendly atmosphere. Whether you're popping in for a quiet drink, catching up with friends, or taking part in one of our many social events, you'll always receive a warm welcome.

Our spacious clubhouse and beautiful enclosed garden provide the perfect place to relax all year round. With a fully licensed bar, pool table, darts, snooker, jukebox and regular entertainment, there's always something happening.

Weekly Activities

Tuesday – Free Pool Open from 5.00pm
Challenge your friends and enjoy free use of our pool table.

Wednesday – Darts Night Club opens 5.00pm Darts starts at 8.00pm Players of all abilities are welcome.

Thursday – Community Hub & Coffee Morning Join us for tea, coffee and a friendly chat. On the first Thursday of every month, our Hub becomes an afternoon social with a different activity each month, including:

- Card making
- Fish & chips afternoons
- Quiz afternoons
- Live music and entertainment

Monthly Events

There's always something to look forward to with our popular monthly events:

- Karaoke Nights
- Quiz Nights
- Bingo

- Darts Competitions

- Live Music

Coming Up This September

Friday 4th September

• Karaoke • White Party • Disco
Ask behind the bar for full details.

Friday 18th September

Live Music with Avanzi

Thursday 24th September

Quiz Night

Saturday 26th September

Bingo

Sunday 27th September

Lenham Social Club's
First Ever Fun Dog Show!

Bring your four-legged friends along for a fantastic family day out. **Registration:** 12 noon – 1.00pm, **Judging starts:** 1.15pm. Around 8 fun classes with a Best in Show Finale. Dogs can enter multiple classes:

- £2 per class or 3 classes for £5
- Stalls, raffle, tombola, refreshments and our licensed bar
- Safe, enclosed garden
- Everyone is welcome – you do not need to be a member to attend.

Whether you're looking for regular weekly activities, live entertainment, community events or simply a friendly place to unwind, Lenham Social Club has something for everyone.

Come along, meet new friends, and discover why Lenham Social Club is at the heart of our community. We look forward to welcoming you!

Lenham Nursery

Let the Building Begin!! Says Sally Barr

I feel like I have been writing about how we are awaiting updates regarding funding for our Big Build at Lenham Nursery for many years now!

We originally thought we'd be able to achieve our new build project through applying for grants and charity funding. However, on hearing the cost of the build would be in the region of one million pounds and realising how hard it was even to receive £5,000, we thought we may have to abandon the project. Fortunately, three years ago Lenham Parish Council came on board with our project and after working closely with Nick Osbourne we gratefully accepted financial support from them and the Big Build once again was within our grasp.

After a second attempt at applying for strategic CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money from Maidstone Borough Council and after two and half years of waiting, we finally received the amazing news that our bid had been accepted and that we now have (nearly all) the money to start building the new nursery! Meetings are underway and we hope to be starting the build very soon.

We have been so grateful to receive support through our many fundraising events over the years and that money has been saved ready to start the project.

The building will be owned by the Parish Council, but Lenham Nursery will need to fund the internal aspects of the nursery, including furniture and fittings, as well as funding the outside space. We will therefore be ramping up our fundraising efforts as well as applying for grants to make the dream a reality. We thank everyone, especially Lenham Parish Council for all their hard work and support so far.

Speaking of fundraising...

We are very excited to be working with **The Wishful Thinker** and **All Star Access**, hosting a **Quiz night** with *special celebrity sports star guests* on **September 18th** at The Wishful Thinker. It promises to be a great night with a range of table options, including the option to have a 3-course meal, take part in the quiz and speak with the 4 sports celebrities. Adverts are out on social media with details of prices and how to book your table. Please see Lenham Nursery's Facebook page or look on Elite pubs' website.



Lenham Gardening Society

From Margaret Baines

Our meeting this month is on **17th September at 7.30pm** in the Community Centre. Our speakers, *Jeff & Sylvia*, will be giving a talk on 'Chateaux and Gardens of the Loire Valley'.

The competition will be for 1 dahlia and/or 1 jar of lemon curd.

Tickets will be on sale for the *AGM/Cheese & Wine evening* on **19th November**.



Diary Dates:

8th September

Day trip to Leonards Lee

£35pp to include a cream tea.

19th November

AGM/Cheese & Wine Evening

Members only

Membership costs £8 annually with £1 entrance fee at monthly meetings. Refreshments served after the talk. Visitors are welcome to meetings except February, July and November that are members' only social events.

For further information: Email: gardenlenham@gmail.com or Tel: 07917401228

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Friday 18th September
10am - 3pm

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More homes coming soon to Liberty View

A message from Abbey New Homes

Exciting times are ahead at Liberty View in Lenham, with Phase 3 about to get underway.

The next phase will bring more than 100 new homes to this popular development, offering a choice of energy-efficient homes designed to help keep monthly running costs down, with the reassurance of a 10-year warranty.

For those looking to move sooner, there is currently **one 4-bedroom home** remaining from Phase 2. So whether you're ready to move now or looking ahead to a new home in the next phase, it offers the opportunity to become part of a fantastic growing community.



Julie's Top Eco Tips...

White vinegar isn't just for chips! It's a natural, eco-friendly cleaner that's tough on dirt but kinder to the planet.

Great for:

- ✪ Cutting through grease
- ✪ Removing limescale
- ✪ Neutralising odours
- ✪ Cleaning windows, washing machines and dishwashers
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- ✪ Cleaning garden tools and even helping deter weeds and ants

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The Faversham Hop Festival

5-6th September

The annual Faversham Hop Festival takes place on **5th and 6th September**, covering the area of Preston Street, West Street, East Street and the central car park. There is also a festival camping village and parking facility at the Abbey School.

All stalls in those areas are placed there by the festival. Faversham Market runs its own area over the Saturday and Sunday of the festival and Shepherd Neame pays for and runs its own stage and bar in Court Street. The festival's own stages are in Preston Street, the Market Place, West Street and the central car park alongside the children's area and food court.

The official festival runs from **10am to approximately 5.30pm**. Over the festival weekend there are over 70 bands and performers providing 80 hours of live music across 5 stages, dedicated busker areas and alternate venues like the Festival Village. And the great thing is that it's all **FREE!**

There is entertainment and dance showcasing Morris and other styles, a fairground, magic shows, juggling, balloon twisting, Harry(iet) the Hop and more. The map here provides the location details of the main events.

If you would like information about any aspect of the festival, please contact the festival organisers on **01795 700132** or email **adminsupport@favershamhopfestival.org**



Maidstone Litfest is Back for its Biggest Programme Yet



Maidstone LitFest is back for its fourth year and is full to the brim with amazing writers, from well-known names to emerging voices. It will run from **1 to 11 October** across a range of venues in and around Maidstone.

The festival has firmly established itself as an annual event in Maidstone's culture and events calendar and won't disappoint this year with a stellar line up of events. This year's extensive programme features broadcasters and historians, self-publishing and writers' workshops, wine-tasting and romantic fiction. The festival team's ambition has always been to include a wide range of genres to appeal to all audiences and, this year, will include the return of the popular Suspense after Dark dinner event with thriller writers Adele Parks and Louise Candlish.

Broadcaster Sian Williams will be topping the programme at the Hazlitt Theatre in discussion with BBC newsreader Ellie Crisell to challenge everything you knew about anxiety in a fascinating conversation inspired by her Sunday Times bestseller *The Power of Anxiety*.

This year also features an inaugural poetry competition judged by the esteemed Kent poet and former head of Creative Writing at University of Kent, Dr. Dorothy Lenhane. The shortlisted entries and the winner will be invited to an event held on National Poetry Day (Oct 1) to kick off the festival run.



Launched in 2023 to bring world-class authors to Kent's county town and inspire a love of reading, Maidstone LitFest has expanded its children's programme as part of the National Year of Reading with the introduction of Kids LitFest. This exciting new addition offers a full day of book-inspired events, workshops and activities featuring award-winning authors, designed to engage, entertain and inspire young readers, writers of all ages.

Many of Maidstone's premium venues will once again host festival authors and speakers, with a collection of historical based events featuring at Maidstone Museum, including, Shane Waterman: Maidstone's Dark History, Elinor Cleghorn: A Woman's Work and Clare Chambers author of *Shy Creatures*, who is working on a new book set in Maidstone.

Popular authors will be appearing at a number of after-hours events at Waterstones, including **Stephanie Yeboah, Vaseem Khan, Erin Kelly, Milly Johnson and Kate Storey**. Political broadcaster **Iain Dale** will reflect on spending decades at the heart of British politics at an event in the Town Hall.

And Saturday Kitchen's **Helen McGinn** (pictured) will share her wine expertise and book *The Supermarket Wine Guide* with a wine-tasting event at Mu Mu Maidstone.

Visit the festival website for details of the full programme and to buy your tickets!

www.maidstonelitfest.org

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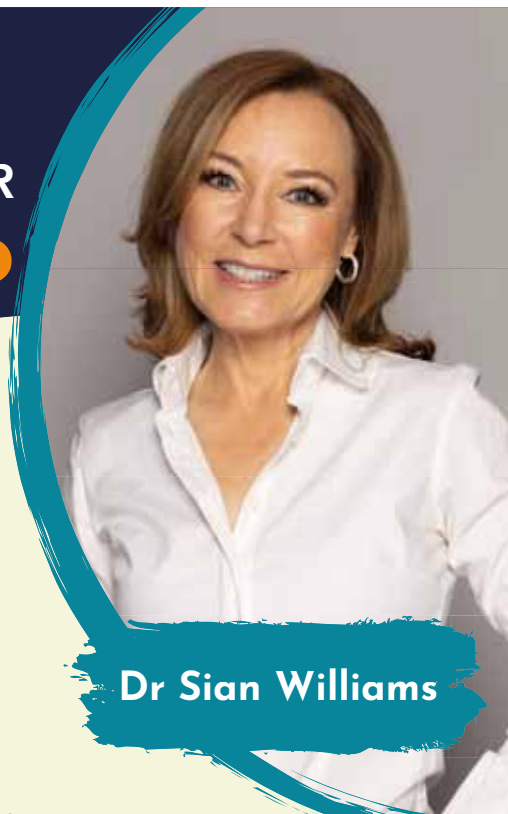




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Headcorn Southern Model Show

5th & 6th September 2026

Headcornsouthernmodelshow.uk

Enjoy a brilliant weekend at one of the South East's most established family events.

This show is a favourite with visitors, exhibitors and model enthusiasts.

Combining spectacular displays, hands on activities, shopping opportunities and family entertainment, providing a great opportunity to spend a day or a weekend with us to explore the modelling world.

One of the major highlights is the breathtaking RC aircraft flying. Throughout the day, visitors can watch a continuous stream of aircraft fly from scale models to jets, and some of the country's most talented pilots perform with us.

On Saturday, the excitement for the evening show begins with pyrotechnic flying which is stunning, the finale for Saturday is the fantastic musical firework display which never disappoints.

In addition to the flying, visitors can explore a dedicated marquee showcasing an impressive collection of model trucks, commercial vehicles and construction machinery busy working in the model town. There is a pond where visitors can watch beautifully crafted model boats navigate around and the club members are happy to discuss their hobby.

If you would like to "have-a-go" and try operating radio-controlled boats, planes, cars and rock crawlers, these opportunities are available under the guidance of our experts.

The show also celebrates a variety of modelling interests beyond radio control. Visitors can enjoy displays of miniature hot air balloons, railway enthusiasts are catered for with small gauge railway displays and an opportunity to enjoy rides on a miniature steam railway.

Shoppers will find a wide range of trade stands selling everything from complete models, kits, tools and spare parts. There is also a wide choice of craft and gift stalls to give variety for all. A range of food outlets are available to complete the day.

Families are at the heart of the show and there are plenty of attractions specifically for younger visitors. The children's funfair offers a selection of rides and attractions for smaller children. Combined with the interactive activities, displays and open space, the show offers a welcoming and enjoyable time for families to spend together.





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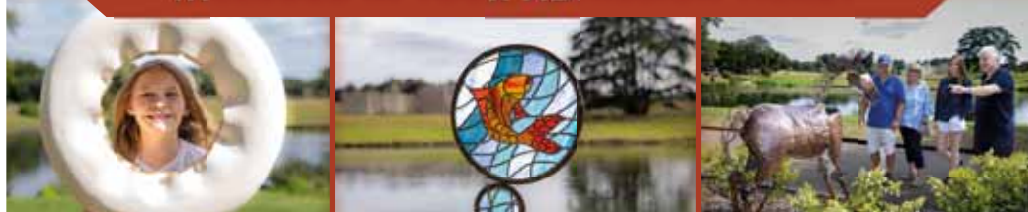
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*Images shown are highlights from previous Leeds Castle sculpture trails.

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Rural Togetherness



(Part 2) by Henny Shotter

Who were the 'Foresters'?

In times before state benefits and National Insurance, it was down to the individual to provide for times of hardship, illness or funeral expenses.

Agricultural workers could not afford this as their income was too low. The Corn Laws of 1846 had introduced free trade and allowed cheap imports, which caused a major agricultural recession. Many rural workers ended up in the Hollingbourne workhouse, which was a far cry from the more humane regime of the old workhouse in Lenham.

It was in response to such hardship that, in September 1866, a Court of Foresters was set up in the 'Dog and Bear' in Lenham. It was named 'Perseverance 4949' and later changed its name to 'Court Douglas' in honour of James Douglas Stoddart of Chilston Park, whose name and legacy lives on in the Douglas alms houses on Faversham Road.

In 1883, the court had 200 members. The 'Dog and Bear' is closely connected to the Foresters and has been described as their 'clubhouse'. In 1882, the then landlord, Mr. Wollett, was ill (he passed away later that year) and the usual dinner had to be postponed.

The "Fest" in olden days always started off with a church service and a festive dinner at the 'Dog and Bear'. Pomp and circumstance was provided by a parade in



Photo from the years after Mr. Wollett but before 1891

which the members proudly carried their flags and banners to music by the Lenham brass band... There were races on foot (handicaps over 150 yards, 300 yards, 800 yards and even 1 mile). There were also bike races and hurdle races. Competitors came from London and many Kentish villages and towns. The locals only had one guaranteed chance to win by having their own race for locals only! However, there were not only sports. In 1883, the famous Adèle Libra performed with great success her Slack Wire and Trapeze Act to an excited audience. It didn't stop there: 'The dancing, and the kissing and swinging and tossing and coconut throwing and trying of strength.... went on until dusk put a stop to it all'.

We don't know exactly when the Forester's Fete came to an end and the Carnival started but the boater hat had long gone and the flat cap had taken its place.



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Kent and Medway to be served by four completely new councils from April 2028



In the biggest shake up of local authority arrangements in 50 years, the government is replacing Kent County Council, Medway Council and the 12 district, borough and city councils that currently deliver services in the county with four new unitary councils.

See the map on the next page.

The new councils will deliver all of the services in their area, much like Medway Council does today, including education, social services, highways, libraries, emptying your bins, leisure centres and housing services.

Following a government consultation, which attracted around 3,000 responses, the Secretary of State has opted for:

- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Dartford, Gravesham and Medway in the north
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells in the west
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Swale, Ashford and Folkestone and Hythe in the middle of Kent
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Canterbury, Thanet and Dover in the east

Kent and Medway's council leaders said: "We want to reassure our residents that not one of our services will change overnight – you will still be dealing with the same council staff tomorrow and the day after that.

The new councils will not come into being until 1 April 2028.

All of the councils in Kent and Medway have a long history of working closely together to do the very best for the people we serve and that will not change one bit.

This is the start of the process of bringing our different teams together with the aim of designing then delivering the best possible services for the people we serve.

Of course, this change affects the thousands of council staff across the county who work incredibly hard day in and day out.

Our focus will be supporting them through this change while helping them to carry on delivering our business-as-usual services seamlessly.

There is a lot of work to do but we will make sure we take every opportunity to make our services the very best they can be".



A map of the four new councils in Kent, opted for by the government

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An update from Councillors Mariela, Chris & Steve – your Maidstone BC Councillors



Environmental & Community

- Parish Council Environmental Network met in June.
- Update on the **Scenic Green Trail** – a 43 mile circular walking route around Maidstone, split into seven day walk sections and fully waymarked. Guide: scenic_green_trail_walkers_guide_203.pdf
- Climate Action Network (CAN) upcoming events:
 - **05/09/2026** – *Recycling art & nature* art at Maidstone West
 - **07/11/2026** – *Sustainable Christmas crafts & kids' costumes*. More info: <https://maidstonecan.eco/>

Community Support

- New *Bread and Butter Thing* food hub opened at Blackthorn Charity.
- Residents can access **£35+ worth of groceries for £8.50**.
- **Free membership** and weekly bags include fresh, chilled and cupboard items.
- **Fourth hub** in Maidstone, reducing food waste and supporting household budgets.

Community Safety

- **Kent Police reminder:** report incidents via www.kent.police.uk, or online web chat, or 101 (non-emergency).
- Anonymous reporting: Crimestoppers 0800 555 111 or <https://crimestoppers-uk.org>

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

- Kent & Medway councils will be replaced by **4 new unitary authorities** from 1 April 2028:
 - **North Kent:** Dartford, Gravesham, Medway
 - **West Kent:** Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells
 - **Middle/Central Kent:** Swale, Ashford, Folkestone & Hythe
 - **East Kent:** Canterbury, Thanet, Dover
- All local services will be delivered by the new unitary councils.
- Current services continue unchanged during transition.
- Longterm plan includes a regional mayoral authority for devolved funding.

Summer Message

Please contact us as your local representatives – we are here to assist you. Wishing all residents a happy and enjoyable summer.

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submits plans to replace former Marley Works

Panattoni, the world's largest privately owned developer of industrial real estate, has submitted a hybrid planning application to create Panattoni Park, Maidstone, a major industrial and logistics development on a brownfield site in Lenham, Kent.

The vacant 70-acre site at Lenham was, until recently, the home of Aliaxis; and formerly the Marley Works. The application includes detailed proposals for a first phase, comprising two units, one 100,000 sq ft and one 150,000 sq ft. Outline permission is also being sought for the second phase of 790,000 sq ft, which will provide customers with the opportunity to secure flexible built-to-suit facilities tailored to their operational requirements.

It's estimated that the Panattoni Park Maidstone development would sustain 600 construction jobs during the two-year construction programme. When completed the development could employ between 1,040 and 2,695 direct jobs on the site, which is estimated to be worth up to £404m to the Kent economy.

Panattoni has set itself high environmental performance targets for this Maidstone scheme; including BREEAM 'Excellent' and EPC A+ ratings, with buildings designed to support modern logistics, manufacturing, and distribution operations.

David McGougan, Senior Development Director for the South East at Panattoni, said: "This is a significant planning application that will repurpose and redevelop more than one million square feet of high-quality industrial and logistics space on a site already earmarked for employment.

"With the ongoing supply of high-quality commercial property market constrained, Panattoni will be able to deliver the combination of immediately available units, as well as flexible built-to-suit opportunities required by a broad range of businesses. Panattoni Park is exceptionally well located for businesses serving London, the South East, and European markets."

These proposals will take Panattoni's wider investment in Kent to more than £625m. This follows its successful redevelopment of the former 90-acre Aylesford Newsprint site into Panattoni Park, Aylesford. Panattoni has also delivered Panattoni Park, Sittingbourne, transforming a site - vacant for 20 years - into 645,000 sq ft of high-quality logistics and distribution space, and the largest speculative development in Kent for many years. A smaller 8-acre site at Wrotham is also being brought forward by Panattoni, and is currently progressing through the planning process.

For further information on the Maidstone project, visit:
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Countryways Quilters and Stitchers

From Pamela Gillard



During August and September we have our summer garden meetings. Four fun meetings hosted by different members of our group. We can't use sewing machines so our projects are hand stitched. In September we will be hand quilting satin fabric to make into a pretty zippered make-up bag.

Our summer meetings are always rather fluid as we have to worry about weather conditions. We used to worry about being rained out but more often now it's about the risk of extreme hot weather warnings. So unless you're a current member on our group chat, dropping in

is not an option. But do drop in when we are back in Lenham Community Centre in October.

Come and join us at one of our meetings 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.



Our meetings on the first and third Tuesdays of every month except December and we'd love to see you. We meet in the Osborne room in the Lenham Community Centre from 1:30 to 4:30. If you'd like more info on our group or a copy of our 2026 programme, please contact me, Pamela Gillard at 07914 809946 or email moonbeamspinner@gmail.com

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Lenham Meadows Trust 2027 Calendar

Now Available!

A 'must' for you, your family, your friends and neighbours! The 2027 calendar features 16 illustrations, all painted or drawn by the pupils at **The Lenham School** under the guidance of their art teachers.

The process was not straight forward! The original works of art were all destroyed following a serious flood in the school's art room and the project had to start all over again – but the pupils and their teachers rallied round and produced a great set of pictures, some of which you see here.

At only **£8.99 a copy**, it has to be seen as a bargain. And the great thing is that **EVERY PENNY RAISED** will go to the Lenham Meadows Trust to help their on-going work to maintain and protect the green spaces around our village.

The printing costs have all been pre-paid by your *FOCUS* magazine.

How to get a copy. SIMPLE!

- Kent Loves... or the Lenham Parish Council office, both located in Lenham High Street, have stock ready for you to buy.
- OR just email or text the *FOCUS* editor on editorialsf@outlook.com / **07714 311008** with your name and telephone number or email address and someone will contact you to arrange delivery and payment.

- The calendar will also be available at the next Meadows Trust events – notably the **Quiz Night** and **Apple Pressing Fun Day**, both held later in October (see details in this magazine's issue).

It's a great opportunity to buy as a Christmas present, showing homes, businesses and places of interest in Lenham village. A great keep-sake.





JOIN THE LENHAM MEADOWS COMMUNITY THIS OCTOBER!

APPLE PRESSING DAY



Date: 11 October
Venue: Tithe Barn
Time: 11am to 3pm
 Bring your apples to be pressed, sample fresh juice. Family-friendly fun!

QUIZ NIGHT



Date: 24 October
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A View From Across The Pond

By Diane Bonfonte, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

A real estate purchase or a travel decision is influenced
by "Location, location, location".

Let's consider how you may choose a town called WINDSOR

WINDSOR - In the UK: A centuries old livable Castle and a few Royals.

In **ONTARIO**: For decades, heralded as Canada's automotive manufacturing engine impacted by proximity to Detroit, USA. Historic Essex and Kent Counties with Townships of Maidstone, Gosfield and Malden boast the southernmost point in

Canada - flanked by lakes Erie/St. Clair. During the late 1850's, American immigrants contributed greatly such as Hiram Walker & Sons - distillers, who in 1910, developed the bevy **Canadian Club Whiskey**. The bustling community of 'Walkerville' is now a suburb of the City of Windsor.

In **NOVA SCOTIA**: A typical historic maritime harbour town! Prior to United Empire Loyalists permanently settling, it was Fort Edward - a British stronghold with a relief force that defeated the Americans at the Battle of Fort Cumberland in November, 1776. Yup, 250 years undisputed Canadian sovereign territory!



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"...Though we may roam, be it ever so humble...Which seek thro' the world, Is ne'er met with elsewhere...There's no place like home..."

(John Howard Payne composed, 1822)



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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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Recipe of the Month

Sicilian Bean Salad

Ingredients:

1 medium red onion	Wine vinegar
1 tin white beans	Salt
1 tin Tuna (or 2 fridge ready pots)	Fresh parsley
	Good olive oil

Method:

Halve then finely slice the red onion, place in a bowl with a little vinegar and a pinch of salt. Give it a good mix to separate the slices and set aside for 5 minutes. Chop the parsley finely setting aside a little to use as a garnish. Drain the tuna and break into chunks, add to the onions. Add the beans, including the juice then add the parsley. Give a good glug of olive oil and mix thoroughly. Ideally this should sit overnight in the fridge but try to give it a few hours if possible



– it tastes good just as it is though so don't worry if it's a last minute preparation.

It can be served on a bed of sliced tomatoes, olive oil and a sprinkling of salt.



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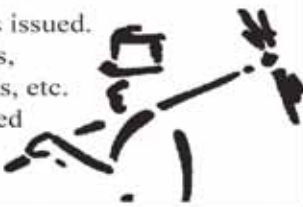
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Update from Len Valley Practice

From Georgia Lane, Operations Manager

Following the recent improvement works at our Harrietsham branch, we are pleased to announce that our new 24/7 Pharmabox prescription collection point is now available, offering eligible patients greater flexibility when collecting their repeat medication.

If you would like to register to use the Pharmabox, consent forms are available from our dispensary team or on posters displayed around the practice. Further information can also be found on our website.

We are also delighted to welcome our new Nurse Lead to the practice and look forward to the experience and leadership they will bring to our nursing team.

Our **Patient Participation Group (PPG) Annual General Meeting** will take place

on **Wednesday 9th September at 7pm** at Lenham Community Centre.

All patients are welcome to attend, and we encourage anyone interested in supporting the future development of the practice to come along.

As we move into the autumn months, preparations are underway for our annual Flu and Covid vaccination programmes. Eligible patients will be contacted when appointments become available, so please ensure your contact details, including your mobile number, email address and home address, are up to date. Further information about our vaccination clinics will be shared on our website and social media channels in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your continued support.



Len Valley Practice – Patient Participation Group (PPG) Annual General Meeting (AGM) & Guest Speakers Lenham Community Centre 9th September at 7pm

A Patient Participation Group (PPG) is a volunteer group of patients and GP practice staff who work together to improve local health services, foster communication, and ensure the patient voice is heard. They help shape services, support health education, and provide feedback, ensuring high-quality, patient-centred care.

On **Wednesday 9th September 2026 at 7pm** we will be holding our AGM and have some health-related speakers.

If you are a patient at Len Valley Practice we would love to see you there.

Peter Hasler – Chair lvppg@nhs.net

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Nature Watch

By Darren Hammond

Rewilding to attract nature, little and large

Rewilding areas of one's garden has become more popular in recent years and offers local wildlife a place to find food and shelter, perhaps even making a home for themselves. **Rewilding** is about building natural areas to help nature regain a bit of balance. It does this by allowing the wildlife and even plant life to create a living, working ecosystem. This can be on a very large scale as with national parks or as little as a planter box underneath a window.



So what is it?

Rewilding restores natural types of landscapes like meadows, heathland or similar, to areas of land that often takes the place of disappearing habitat and then just letting nature manage itself. Rewilding a UK garden means systematically replacing mown lawn and ornamental borders with native habitats. Converting just 30% of your garden to wild areas can support over 500 invertebrate species.

How do you go about it?

Rewilding isn't neglect. It's choosing a natural garden over a landscaped one. A

traditional wildlife garden installs feeders and nest boxes onto existing features and may include installing ponds.

Rewilding, however, changes the layout itself. You reduce hard surfaces, let lawn revert to meadow, plant native species, and create connected habitats that look after themselves. Key steps can include reducing lawn space, for example no mow zones or creating a wildflower patch, planting a native hedge, adding a pond, or building log piles for creatures to shelter in.

What are the benefits from rewilding?

A rewilded garden once recorded 47 bird species, 22 butterfly species, 8 bumblebee



species, 3 amphibian species, and over 400 invertebrate species across a single year. Before rewilding, the same garden, then mostly lawn with ornamental borders, recorded 19 bird species and 6 butterfly species.

Which species will get the most from rewilding?

There are many different creatures that will make a rewilded garden their home. Hedgehogs, solitary bees (bees that nest alone and not in hives), birds like song thrushes, stag beetles and even slow worms. A lot of Britain's wildlife is facing problems of disappearing habitat and numbers dropping due to that loss. A rewilded garden will give them a place to live or provide areas for the food they seek to grow.

Some mistakes to avoid when trying to rewild.

Rewilding can fail when people make mistakes trying to set it up.

Things to avoid can include sowing wildflowers on fertile soil. Most wildflowers need poor, low-nutrient soil; taking the topsoil off can help. Avoid planting non-native meadow mixes,

as some seed mixes sneak in North American or continental species, which may not feed or encourage our wildlife.

Also avoid isolating the rewilded area as one rewilded garden surrounded by paved plots and solid fences won't achieve much. However, if you cut hedgehog highways and plant boundary hedging that can lead to success. Don't cut the meadow too early, wait until late August, as a June cut destroys nesting habitat and stops seeds from setting.

Do you need to have a big garden to rewild?

The short answer is no.

Even a potted plant trough will help out and encourage birds and insects like butterflies, bees and beetles.

The long answer is that technically rewilding generally means returning a large plot of land to the wild, for example places like the Knepp wilding project.

However the RHS Bringing Nature Home campaign launched in 2026 reports that rewilding even a fraction of UK gardens will create habitat corridors linking green spaces across towns and cities.

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Parish Council news

Chair – Cllr John Britt

You will see regular updates on all the parish council's activities in the *Focus*, www.lenhamparish.org.uk and social media.

As we enter autumn, the parish council will be busy after our summer break.

Not only are we preparing for the new local government arrangements and digesting the new planning arrangements (more of which next month), but we will be embarking on some significant capital projects.

First, though, a few thoughts on the reorganisation of how local government will work from May 2028.

Local Government Reorganisation

In an earlier article in the June edition of the *Focus*, I set out what would happen when the decision was announced relating to the new structures for the Kent area.

That article is still available online at www.lenhamparish.org.uk.

We now have that information: Kent will be divided into four new Unitary Authorities (See map in the article from Maidstone Borough Council in this issue) and the existing arrangements (Kent County Council and the 12 boroughs and districts) will cease to exist on 1 May 2028. Lenham will be in a new Unitary Authority which includes the current areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks. The elections for this new administrative area will likely take place in May 2027.

Although there is an explanation from MBC elsewhere in this edition, what still remains unclear is the role which parish and town councils will play under the new arrangements. We will keep everyone updated as new information becomes available.

New Capital Projects

The parish council agreed to scope out three new projects this year and all three are now moving forward.

■ Resurfacing of the Maidstone Road

car park. The parish council is in the process of gaining bids for the resurfacing of the car park which will include the reconfiguration of the drainage. The technical specification for this is available on the public contracts portal and the parish council will be reviewing the sealed bids from contractors in due course. Once this has been agreed more information about the timeframe will be publicised, as the car park will need to close for the work to be undertaken.

■ Resurfacing and adjusting the

cemetery road. The parish council is aware the road surface at the Lenham cemetery needs attention. It also needs to be adapted to accommodate the larger funeral vehicles which are now in use. The technical specification for this is available on the public contracts portal and the parish council will be reviewing the sealed bids from contractors in due course. Once this has been agreed more information about the timeframe will be publicised, as access to the cemetery may need to be restricted for the work to be undertaken.

■ **New Lenham Nursery.** The parish council was successful in obtaining a grant from the borough council's strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation. The £450,000 grant will be match-funded by the parish council to

create a new two-form entry nursery on the site of the former St John's building in the allotment site off Ham Lane. This delivers a major facet of the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, to provide new, updated nursery facilities, and by doing so release space in the primary school. The parish council is working closely with all the parties concerned to ensure a smooth delivery.

The technical specification will be available on the public contracts portal, and the parish council will be reviewing the sealed bids from contractors in due course. Once this has been agreed more information about the timeframe will be publicised.

Setting the parish budget

This year, now that the parish has adopted the General Power of Competency, we will

be seeking feedback on the priorities for spending in the parish for the financial year 2027/28. Look out for information as to how you can give your feedback on social media and through the parish council website.

... and finally

We would like to send out a hearty "thank you" to all the volunteers who helped make the first Lenham Fest happen. As usual, people rallied round and helped make it a memorable day.

We'd also like to thank the volunteers who stepped in to keep the planters watered while our Parish Caretaker was enjoying a well-earned break; that was most appreciated!

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Council giveaway could save over 300,000 litres of water a year



A council giveaway could save enough water to fill a 25 metre swimming pool once fully rolled out.

Maidstone Borough Council is expanding its rainwater harvesting giveaway scheme, offering around 1,000 free water butts to residents across the area to help capture and reuse rainwater. When added to the 555 water butts given out earlier this year, the project has the potential to save 315,000 litres of water a year – enough to fill 7,000 bathtubs!

The initiative is aimed at reducing reliance on mains water during dry periods while helping to slow the effects of surface water flooding during periods of heavy rainfall. The expanded scheme follows the success of a pilot launched last year, which saw over 500 water butts distributed to Maidstone households. After these were snapped up by residents the council has extended its partnership with Wickes Maidstone to provide the additional units free of charge for residents on a first come first served basis.

For households impacted by flooding or facing increasing pressure on water supplies during extended dry spells and hosepipe bans, water butts can provide a simple but effective solution. By collecting rainwater from roofs and guttering, they help maintain gardens and green spaces without using treated drinking water, while also reducing the volume of rainwater entering drains during storms.

Cllr Rachel Rodwell, Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Nature



and Climate Transition, said: "When lots of households take small steps like this, the benefits add up. Water butts can help reduce flood risk during heavy rainfall, conserve water during droughts and support our wider work to make Maidstone more resilient to a changing climate."

In the first giveaway 555 water butts were given away and this time there are **974** available.

Gary Kibble, Chief Marketing and Digital Officer at Wickes, added: "Our partnership with Maidstone Borough Council demonstrates how businesses and local authorities can work together to support climate adaptation in practical ways.

"We are proud to be expanding this project through our Maidstone store and helping residents manage both drought and

flooding risks while making better use of water resources”.

Each water butt is manufactured in the UK and has a capacity of 210 litres. They are supplied with a stand and filler kit for easy connection to existing guttering. Residents must be able to provide proof of a Maidstone address to take part. Collection will be from Wickes Maidstone, St Peter's Street, ME16 0SN, and installation is not included.

Before applying, residents are encouraged to check they have suitable outdoor space for a 210-litre water butt and access to guttering from a house, shed or outbuilding.

Alongside the scheme, Maidstone Borough Council is introducing rainwater harvesting measures across its own buildings and sites. The Council is also exploring further opportunities to reduce demand on treated drinking water supplies by identifying alternative non-potable water sources where appropriate, reducing the need to draw on mains water supplies.

Residents can apply for a water butt by completing a short online application form. Those unable to complete the form online can email climateandbiodiversity@maidstone.gov.uk or call 01622 602000.



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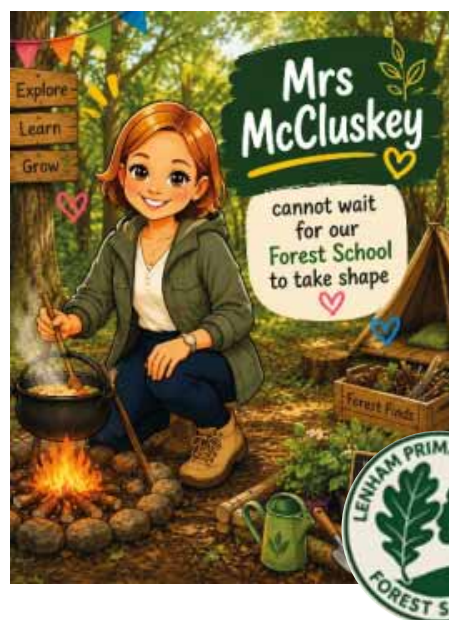
In the last edition, I expressed a huge thank you to our community for all of their support. Over the summer holidays, some very exciting developments have taken place at Lenham Primary with the creation of our very own Forest School site – made possible thanks to the generosity and commitment of the wonderful Lenham community. Thank you!

The **PTA** has been incredible, organising a wide range of fundraising activities that have been enthusiastically supported by our families. We have also been overwhelmed by the generosity of the **Parish Council**, whose match-funding support has been invaluable. In addition, we have been fortunate to receive support from the **Hatch Charity**, the **Lenham Focus** and **KCC Community Grant**.



We have also had kind donations from families and volunteers.

Thanks to these combined efforts, the area has been transformed. Brambles have been cleared, tree branches removed, extensive weeding has taken place, and boundary fencing has been installed. Funding has also enabled us to purchase all the equipment we need, along with a shed for secure storage.



We are incredibly excited to get started. Initially, we will be working with a Forest School coach who will deliver sessions on our new site. This will allow our children to enjoy Forest School experiences much more frequently than the once-a-year opportunities previously available. Our long-term aim is to train a member of our own staff to lead Forest School sessions, but this takes time, and we are keen for the children to begin benefiting from the new site as soon as possible.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported our **Forest School**

project. Without their generosity and commitment, this exciting venture would not be starting in September.

To celebrate this achievement, we are planning an opening ceremony in early September and hope to welcome local community groups and supporters to the event. While the Forest School will continue to evolve with the children helping to create and develop different areas of the site, the land will be prepared and essential equipment will be in place, allowing visitors to see the foundations of what promises to be a wonderful learning environment. In a future edition, I will share photographs of the site and its development.

We are also thrilled to have received the **Gold School Games Mark** again this year. This prestigious award recognises our dedication to promoting physical

activity and ensuring children participate in at least two hours of exercise every week – often considerably more.

We are incredibly proud that our commitment to health, wellbeing and sport continues to be recognised at this level.



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An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

Another hot summer and just like clockwork, we had another hosepipe ban to go with it. Water outages and hosepipe bans are becoming the new normal for us in Kent. Three times in the last year hundreds of my constituents were left without water for days on end.

Households had the choice of buying water from the supermarket - until they ran out - or travelling miles to far flung distribution points. Businesses were left in the lurch, forced to cancel bookings and close their premises. Livestock owners spent hours filling up water containers, relying on friends outside the outage areas.

In the UK we expect to be able to turn on the tap and get drinkable water, it doesn't seem a lot to ask. But no longer.

My instinct is generally to look for an answer rather than pinning blame on an individual. But this has been different. Last year David Hinton, the Chief Executive of South East Water promised he would fix the problems – especially with the poor emergency response. Except for livestock, which he told me was not a priority. I disagreed.

Then we had the next outage and none of the problems had been fixed. That's when I called for the Chief Executive to go. I had lost all confidence in him. He showed no sign of caring about the impact of water outages on households, businesses or farmers. And there was no reason to believe he would fix the problems. It took a while, including several debates in Parliament, but eventually he got the message and resigned.



Helen talking to Dargate businesses at Lamberhurst Farm about recent water outages

Since his departure, I have held two meetings with South East Water – one with local businesses and one with livestock owners. The livestock meeting was encouraging. South East Water staff listened and sounded concerned. They have set up a livestock register for people with larger animals like horses. You can find this by searching for 'South East Water agricultural community'.

At the business meeting we discussed the loss of revenue they have suffered as well

as extra costs. I have pushed for more compensation. No answer as yet – so I will follow this up with the new Chief Executive. We also discussed better back-up supplies of water for businesses in the event of outages.

New leadership at the top of South East Water gives us an opportunity to influence the future direction of the company. That is why I am asking for your views. I would be grateful if you could take a few moments to complete the survey on my website by searching 'Helen Whately Water survey'.

I will collate all the feedback and take this to the new Chief Executive, John Halsall, so he can take your views into account as he shapes the future direction of the company.

Best wishes

e: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk
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Helen's Water survey online

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A day in the Osteopath Clinic

With Chris Tempest "The Lenham Osteopath"

No.28 High Street, Lenham ME17 2QD

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Welcome to this edition of a day in the clinic with the Lenham Osteopath. Recently I have found a number of patients coming to see me with sacroiliac joint pain- thankfully most will resolve within weeks/months but unfortunately, we have seen that sacroiliac (S.I.) joint issues are on the rise. Be careful when lifting!

SACRO-ILLIAC PAIN

Sacroiliac pain/Sacroiliitis is a painful condition that affects one or both sacroiliac joints. These joints are located where the lower spine and pelvis meet. Sacroiliitis can cause pain and stiffness in the buttocks or lower back, and the pain may travel down one or both legs. Pain involves degenerative changes of the intervertebral discs (the squidgy part in between the bones of the spine & pelvis) including structural defects that can result in bio-mechanical instability and inflammation.

What are the main causes?

- **Injury.** A sudden impact, such as a motor vehicle accident or a fall, can damage the sacroiliac joints.
- **Arthritis.** Wear-and-tear arthritis, also known as osteoarthritis, can occur in sacroiliac joints.
- **Pregnancy.** The sacroiliac joints loosen and stretch.

• Infection.

Although this is uncommon.

Pain arising from the sacroiliac joint is one of the potential causes of axial low back pain. The current figures show that 25% of low back pain could be originating from the sacroiliac joint. Sacroiliac joint pain can also be a complication after spinal surgery.

How long can S.I. pain last?

Unfortunately, if you cause inflammation to the S.I. joint it can take months not weeks to recover. This could be caused by a radical injury such as lifting a heavy cement mixer on a building site, lifting far too heavy in a gym environment (squats/deadlifts) or overloading the spine by trauma induced pressure. The dull diffused pain may last for months, but any associated pain (pins and needles/parasthesia) hopefully should be able to be treated and therefore resolved faster.

How can it be treated?

There are various techniques in practice that we use to resolve and speed up the symptoms/process of S.I. pain. The main would be decompressive manual therapy, followed by and complemented with exercises, non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs and



painkillers if needed. Medical acupuncture can also really excel in this condition - we've had some incredible results using this method. It aims to reduce inflammation and improve mobility.

What about long term effects?

Most patients will make a full recovery within the timescales discussed, however, there may be rare cases not reaching 100%.

How do I avoid getting it?

Lifestyle modifications to prevent S.I. joint pain from flaring up. Practice good posture. Good posture can help reduce the strain on the SI joint. Exercise regularly. Practice correct lifting techniques. Maintain a healthy weight. Use supporting pillows if needed.

So to summarise, be very cautious when lifting heavy objects and be sure not to over do it! Keep the spine/S.I. strong but also supple - flexibility/stretching will help tremendously, & obviously regular osteopathic treatment will help to achieve this.

For more help or to book a consultation

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Christian Message

From Reverend Millie Hart

A picture I had in my mind is of swallows when they gather on telephone lines in preparation, I think, for their annual migration.

At first it is just one or two of them, and then there are several, and then - for just a few short days - it seems to be hundreds, before suddenly it seems that every swallow in the vicinity vanishes as they set off on their long and challenging flight back to Africa or other warmer climates for the winter. I have read that their journey from the UK might take about six weeks as they cross Europe, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert.

It's as though something calls them to depart, and so, of course, they do. It seems to be that voice from within. As the days shorten, the temperatures cool and the number of flying insects diminishes, they know that the time has come to move on.

The gospels speak of that instinctive response which, I suggest, should also be ours. We read how the disciples were called to follow Jesus immediately, and they did! Why? Because something about

his summons rang true deep within. His words and his deeds gave them a yearning for meaning to their lives.

Yes, like us, they still struggled at times with faith. They still had their doubts and questions, yet they knew they had to answer that call, which they, like us, should respond to. Jesus says - 'he who has ears, let him hear'.

I have been struggling to act on a message that I feel I have been given. But I have found inspiration from the picture of the swallows as they decide to obey their instincts. Also, from the disciples who were told to follow Jesus immediately, leaving behind what was familiar and venturing out into their unknown futures.

I wonder if you too have struggled to act on whatever you might be called into doing. When Jesus is saying to us 'he who has ears, let him hear' it is a call to us for action where he is saying 'listen up and pay attention'.

Is he saying to you 'embrace this message and let it change how you live'? His message is always there for those who are truly seeking.

Len Valley Benefice

Everybody is welcome

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.
1 John 4 v7 (part)

Wednesday 2 September

9.30am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 6 September

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion with Baptism

Sunday 13 September

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 20 September

8.00am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00am Lenham: Morning Worship

Sunday 27 September

11.00am Benefice Holy Communion Service at Boughton Malherbe

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Focus PRIZE Crossword September 2026

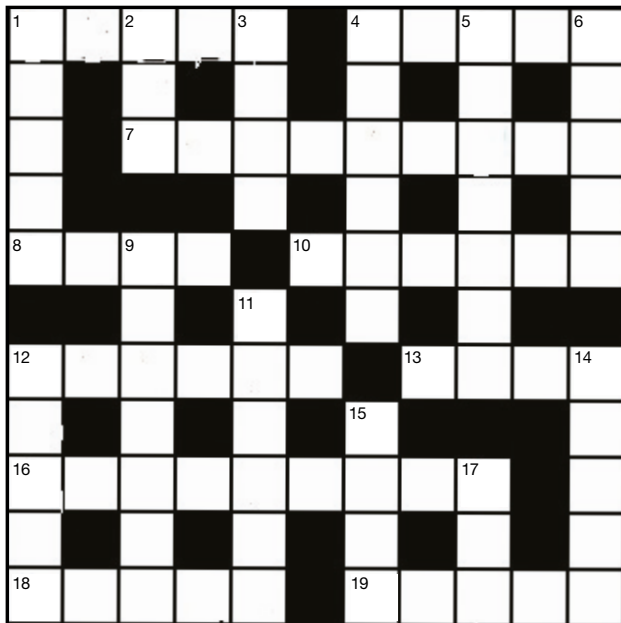
The winner of July 2026 is Peter Johnson of Harrietsham, *Well done!*

Across clues

1. Name for a female goat. (5)
4. Where the printing goes in books. (5)
7. What Jack climbs in a pantomime. (9)
8. When scores are the same they are called this. (4)
10. Rooms on ship for sleeping in. (6)
12. Not something wanted in a stocking. (6)
13. Do this to make yourself a pair of socks. (4)
16. Tables and chairs in your house. (9)
18. Deceitfully. (5)
19. Adolescent. (5)

Down clues

1. Person looking after a patient. (5)
2. The tip of a pen. (3)
3. Usually 365 days. (4)
4. Overtakes. (6)
5. Small village in Rutland, near Uppingham. (7)
6. Eric Comedian associated with Hattie Jaques. (5)
9. Senior citizens may be referred to as this. (7)
11. Confirm the truth of. (6)
12. Elevates. (5)
14. A projection on a cog. (5)
15. Inter. (4)
17. Flightless Australian bird. (3)



Answers for August 2026
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 22 September** where they'll be placed in an envelope. The winner will be notified direct and announced in a future issue of *Focus*.

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