

# The Lenham Focus

DECEMBER 2025 issue

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Christmas in Lenham Square

**FOCUS** is also online at  
[www.lenhamparish.org.uk](http://www.lenhamparish.org.uk)  
 (Click on 'Lenham Focus')

# Editorial



**B**y the time this edition of *Focus* is printed and delivered to you, the Lenham lights 'switch-on' event will have taken place and, suddenly, it will feel a lot closer to the Christmas festivities.

**May I take the opportunity, on behalf of the editorial team, of wishing all our readers and contributors very best wishes for your Christmas and good health for 2026.** And a special 'thank you' to the 50+ volunteers who ensure you get your monthly issue of our magazine delivered to your door.

Struggling to know what gifts to buy for your friends and families? Take a look at some ideas we've put together for around £10, £25 and up to £50 – these, and many other unique and locally produced crafts, are available from local outlet, **Kent Loves...**



Inside this edition you'll see the various events taking place in and around Lenham this month, such as carol singing, nativity family socials organised by our churches and the Holigans Christmas concert, plus details of the ever-popular January pantomime run by the HAMS players.

**Don't forget** – if YOU are organising a future event, such as a charity walk, coffee morning, local boot-fair or something else you'd like us to cover here, simply email me and I will try to include details (FREE!) in the next issue.

**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 [editorialsf@outlook.com](mailto:editorialsf@outlook.com)**

# WHAT'S ON

## The Lenham Focus



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.

- **All December through to 4<sup>th</sup> January** 'Neverland'. **Venue:** Leeds Castle. **Cost:** Entry cost applies.
- **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup>** – *All inclusive Party night.* **Venue:** Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel. **Cost:** £69pp. Other *party nights*, various dates, from £19.99pp. *New Year's Eve* from £55pp.
- **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> 7pm** – *Holigans Christmas concert.* **Venue:** St Mary's Church. **Cost:** £5.
- **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> 8pm** – *First ever Karaoke.* **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Cost:** Free entry, all welcome.
- **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> 11am – 7pm:** *Christmas market at Maidstone.* **Venue:** Jubilee Square. **Cost:** Free.
- **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> 2-4pm** – *Children's Christmas party* (age 3-11 yrs). **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Cost:** Check website.
- **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> 2:30pm** – *Art Society presentation, "The art of celebrating: carols, consuming and shopping between 1820-1930."* **Venue:** Egerton Millenium Hall. **Cost:** £8, refunded if you join.
- **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> 7pm** – *Lenham Film Club.* 'The Friend'. **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Cost:** £5 (under 16's, £2).
- **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> 7pm** – *Alpine Fondue night.* **Venue:** Wildshark Winery. **Cost:** See website.
- **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>** – *Charing Races from 12 noon.* **Venue:** A20, Charing Hill. **Cost:** £15 (under 16's free).
- **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> 2pm** – *Darts tournament.* **Venue:** Sign up at Lenham Social Club. **Cost:** £10.
- **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> 10:30am – 4.30pm** – *Christmas Craft Fair.* **Venue:** Wildshark Winery. **Cost:** See website.
- **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> & Friday 19<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm** – *Carol singing* at Lenham Heath & Charing Heath – **FREE.**
- **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> 7pm** – *Bingo.* **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Costs apply.**
- **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> 8pm** – *Christmas walk* – check Facebook for details. **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Cost:** Free.
- **Each weekend** – *Santa's Grotto.* **Venue:** Kingswood Christmas Trees, Gravelly Bottom Road. **Cost:** Pre-book via website.
- **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026 from 1pm** – *Red Riding Hood Pantomime* – performed by professional touring cast. **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. Contact the Social Club for tickets. **Cost:** £18 adult, £15 children.





LENHAM  
FILM CLUB

at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way



## The Friend

**Friday DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>**

**Performance begins 19.30,  
doors open 19.00**

***Running time: 2 hrs, Directors:  
Scott McGehee, David Siegel***

**The Friend** (15, 2025) is a tale of love, friendship, grief and healing – and to cap it all, one of the stars of this unforgettable story is a Great Dane named Apollo. When his owner (played by the wonderful Bill Murray) dies he bequeaths his beloved dog Apollo to his closest friend Iris (Naomi Watts). There's only one hitch. Iris is a writer and teacher who lives a quiet, solitary existence – or she did, until Apollo bounces in to wreck it, throwing her comfortable New York life into disarray. The regal yet intractable 150lb beast immediately creates problems for Iris,

from furniture destruction to eviction notices. Yet as Iris finds herself unexpectedly bonding with Apollo, she begins to come to terms with her past, her life and the loss of her friend. What better for the Christmas season than this remarkable film, don't miss this Christmas treat!

And then comes the new year. 2026 begins in grand style with **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid**. Yes, Robert Redford and Paul Newman will be with us again in this well-loved classic on 9<sup>th</sup> January.

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.



[lenhamfilmclub@gmail.com](mailto:lenhamfilmclub@gmail.com)



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# Your Community Warden



Community wardens help make stronger, safer communities. Community wardens will try and help you and your community no matter what the issue. If they don't have the answer they will know someone who will.

Our community wardens are out between 7:30am and 10pm every day in communities across Kent. Their aim is to:

- Improve community resilience
- Support the elderly and vulnerable
- Foster community cohesion and wellbeing
- Assist with navigating community services.

**Name:** Laura Worthington-Plant

**Warden For:** Lenham, Harrietsham and North Downs

**Tel:** 07812 086465

**Email:** [laura.worthington-plant@kent.gov.uk](mailto:laura.worthington-plant@kent.gov.uk)



**COMMUNITY  
WARDENS**

[www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens](http://www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens)

# Lenham Village Hub update



The team have been busy over the past few months, in the main we have been in contact with several local charities, letting them know our plans & requesting their financial assistance.

Encouragingly, we have made steady progress and we are moving very much in the right direction, towards the final sum we aim for, to enable us to complete this community project.

Please bear with us, we should have even more encouraging news in the new year!



## Hi Kent

Sound Support for People Living with Hearing Loss

Reg. Charity No. 1052036



**NEXT SESSION 18 December (1:30–3pm) Lenham Community Centre**

## HI KENT NEWSLETTER

If you'd like to subscribe to our regular newsletter which gives you all the latest updates and news from Hi Kent - who are your local charity here to help people living with hearing loss - just go to our website and find the 'Bulletin' section towards the bottom of the left hand side of the Home page and leave your details there.

**Contact us to make a referral at [enquiries@hikent.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hikent.org.uk) or 01622 691151 and we will invite you to come to one of our centres.**

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07866 316356  
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PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

# HOLIGANS CHRISTMAS CONCERT

DECEMBER **5th** AT 7:00 PM

**ST MARY'S CHURCH, LENHAM**

*Singing - Raffle - Refreshments*

**FOR THE MOST CHRISMASSEY EVENING  
£5 ADULTS, CHILDREN FREE**

**BUY TICKETS AT THE HEART OF KENT HOSPICE SHOP  
OR SATURDAY MORNING AT ST MARY'S CHURCH**

*Let's celebrate together!*







# Basking in Connection:

## Building a Support Village in the Weald of Kent

**H**ello! My name is Gemma and I'm the proud owner of **Basking Babies Weald of Kent**.

As a mum of two, I know first-hand how beautiful, challenging and transformative the journey into parenthood can be. That's why I'm so passionate about creating a space filled with *love, care, and purpose* – to support parents through one of life's biggest adventures: pregnancy and early parenthood.

The idea to join the Basking Babies family grew from both personal experience and my professional background in primary school teaching and leadership.

I've always been drawn to helping families thrive – and Basking Babies perfectly combines this passion with my desire to nurture and connect parents in my community.

Like so many, my first experience of motherhood came during the COVID lockdowns – a time that highlighted



just how much we need connection and support. When my second baby arrived, I couldn't wait to attend classes and share those precious early days with others who understood exactly what I was feeling.

The reassurance, friendship, and care I found there were invaluable, and I knew I wanted to make that same experience available to more local families.

**Basking Babies Weald of Kent** isn't just about baby massage or yoga - it's about building your support village. It's a place where every parent feels seen, supported and empowered, from bump to baby and beyond. Whether you're expecting your first child or welcoming another little one, my mission is to help you find joy, confidence, and connection in every stage of your parenting journey.

Together, we're not just growing babies – we're growing communities.

For more information call me on **07305 882972**, email: **gemmadebnam@baskingbabies.co.uk** and see the advert on the next page.



Join our classes  
for pregnancy,  
baby and beyond

# Basking Babies®

## Find your village, have fun & bond with your baby

Friendly, relaxed & informative classes,  
beneficial for both adult & baby.

### During pregnancy

- ✿ Mama-to-be sharing & support circles
- ✿ Pregnancy relaxation
- ✿ Intro to baby massage

### With baby

- ✿ Baby massage, reflexology and colic alleviation (birth-crawling)
- ✿ Mama sharing & support circles
- ✿ Baby yoga (3 months to pre-school)

### Events

- ✿ Parties
- ✿ Coffee mornings

AWARD  
WINNING  
CLASSES

Join Gemma's classes in Weald of Kent:  
**Gemma Debnam**

*Qualified Basking Babies Instructor*

07305 882 972

[gemmaдебnam@baskingbabies.co.uk](mailto:gemmaдебnam@baskingbabies.co.uk)  
[baskingbabies.co.uk/wealdofkent](http://baskingbabies.co.uk/wealdofkent)



We thoroughly enjoyed our Basking Babies 'Nurture Me' course. It was great to learn massage and reflexology techniques to help with common complaints such as teething and colds. Me and my baby were so relaxed after each session. It was lovely to get to meet other mums and babies, and be able to chat over a cup of tea each week.





## Chilston Park Hotel.

### dining

#### Christmas Day Lunch

Your experience begins with Champagne and canapés before a delicious six course Christmas feast.

**£185 per person, £95 per child**

#### Festive Afternoon Tea

Afternoon tea with a dose of Christmas cheer – a refined festive treat!

**£40 per adult, £20 per child**

### escape

#### Christmas Eve

Arrive from 1pm and settle into your home away from home, and a little later enjoy an indulgent afternoon tea. The black tie evening starts with a Champagne cocktail and canapés followed by a three course dinner and fireworks to end.

#### Christmas Day

Start with a light breakfast and Buck's Fizz, then spend the morning at your leisure. At 1pm join us for Champagne and canapés followed by a six course feast with wine. A delicious evening buffet will be served to tempt even the most indulgent guest.

#### Boxing Day

Enjoy breakfast and a late check out, or extend your celebrations and stay a third night, with a sharing platter and a glass of Champagne, and a delicious buffet dinner to finish off your festivities.

**01622-859803**

**[Handpickedhotels.co.uk/chilstonpark](http://Handpickedhotels.co.uk/chilstonpark)**

#### Boxing Day Lunch

After the excitement of the big day join us for a Champagne reception before a tasty lunch.

**£65 per person, £35 per child**

#### Festive Dining

Our tempting seasonal lunch and dinner menus are served throughout December.

**Two course from £35 per person**

**Three course from £40 per person**

**Private dining from £65 per person**

**Two nights from £1,610 per room, £233 per child**  
**Three nights from £2,260 per room, £333 per child**  
**Arrival 24th December**

Price based on two people sharing a Classic double or twin bedroom, including all meals as stated. Children's price is a total price for the whole stay. Single occupancy supplements apply and upgrades are available.



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**Santa's Grotto opens weekends starting 20<sup>th</sup> November**

**Please pre-book the Grotto – see website**

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Email: [info@kingswoodchristmastrees.co.uk](mailto:info@kingswoodchristmastrees.co.uk) Tel: 01622 843780

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

Gravelly Bottom Road, Kingswood, ME17 3NU

**IT'S CHRISTMAS – KEEP IT REAL**

# Affordable Christmas Gifts from 'Kent Loves...'

## The local showcase for Kent-based independent designers

There's a huge selection of great gifts from jewellery, ceramics and artwork to homeware and foodstuffs. Here's a variety of gifts under £10, up to £25 and up to £50 for you.



### UNDER £10



1.



2.



3.



### £10 to £25



4.



5.



6.

1. Guinness marmalade **£4.00** Chutney **£3.75**  
Raspberry Jam **£3.75**
2. Wide variety of bracelets and trinkets **£4 – £8**
3. Hand-painted vase **£9** Wax melts **£8**  
Hand & nail oil/Beard oil **£10** Bookmark **£8.50**  
Face mask **£10** Angel necklace **£8** Coaster **£5**

4. Hand-painted glass jewellery **£15-£20.00**
5. Notebook **£15** Small plate **£24** Felted bear **£25**  
Jenny Rogers earrings **£18-£25**  
Small framed prints from **£20**  
Fused glass dish **£24.50** Mosaic Christmas Tree **£13**
6. Selection of pens with pouches **£25.00**



7. Hand-printed Harris Tweed storage baskets from **£35**

8. Beech and Sapele mixing bowls from **£36**

9. 'Pod Squat' shopping bags **£35**



# CHRISTMAS MARKET AT MAIDSTONE

Experience the Magic  
of Christmas!

Saturday 6 & 13 December

11:00 AM – 7:00 PM

Jubilee Square, Maidstone, ME14 1SA

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# SAXON WARRIOR PHARMACY established 1987

## NHS Flu and COVID Vaccinations

Following one of the warmest summers on record, autumn has arrived and seasonal vaccinations began on 1st October 2025.

Your pharmacy is once again offering NHS Seasonal Flu and COVID Vaccination services to all eligible patients on a walk-in basis at no cost, regardless of where you live. Those who prefer to book ahead can make appointments through the NHS National Booking System using your NHS App.

### Who is eligible?

- **Age 65 and over?** Anyone aged 65 and over (Flu). COVID vaccinations only available to those 75 and over or immunosuppressed
- **Clinical Risk Groups:** Those aged 18 and older with specific clinical conditions as defined by the Green Book
- **Pregnant Women:** All pregnant women
- **Care Home Residents:** People living in long-stay residential care homes

- **Carers:** Individuals receiving carer's allowance or who are the main carer for an older or disabled person
- **Household Contacts:** Those living with immunocompromised individuals
- **Frontline Staff:** All frontline health and social care staff

**New this year:** We're also offering nasal vaccines for children.

### Supporting the NHS

Community pharmacies have been asked by the NHS to help improve the uptake of vaccinations. By using our pharmacy service, you're helping to free up valuable GP appointments for other patients who need them.

### Getting Your Vaccination

Simply walk in at a time convenient for you – no appointment necessary.

### Questions?

**Contact Saxon Warrior**  
pharmacy via WhatsApp:  
**07508932398.**



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# Memories are Made of This

by Gail Duff

**S**ome memories from childhood stick with us forever and may define what we do way into the future. This is one of mine.

*I was five years old (yes, a very long time ago). I had just been put to bed one night leading up to Christmas, when there came a shuffling of footsteps and muted chattering and laughter from outside. I pulled back the curtain and looked out. A group of people, well wrapped-up, were assembling under the lamp post, which stood right outside our house. It was the local Church choir. A voice, which turned out to be my Aunt, said, 'We'll sing Silent Night outside this house'. So they did, and I have always remembered that scene and the singing.*

Now, when our band of singers visits houses in Charing Heath and Lenham Heath at Christmas time, and children in dressing gowns and pyjamas come to the door or look out of the windows, I always wonder if, one day, we will be a part of their Christmas memories.

So we invite you to come and sing and make a memorable Christmas. All are welcome. There is no age limit, up or down. There is no practice. You don't have to go to Church. All the Carols are the most familiar and words are provided. Wrap up warm and wear stout shoes or boots (we go out in all weathers) and bring a torch. High vis gear is optional.

## Lenham Heath

**Wednesday, 17th December, 6.30 pm.**

Meet on the Lenham Heath Road at the bottom of Crabtree Lane. We will sing our way from house to house along the



**...we invite you to come  
and sing and make a  
memorable Christmas...**

Lenham Heath Road towards Butchers Corner. Then we will make a brief foray to the houses down the farm track on the right. After that, providing we have enough people, we will head for Rose Cottages. To round off the evening, we will drive to Burgess Fields to sing some more and enjoy the generous hospitality of our friends there.

## Charing Heath

**Friday, 19th December, 6.30 pm.**

Meet at the front of the Red Lion. Our route is first the houses on the Charing Heath Road that are directly opposite the pub, then up Tile Lodge Road to Windhill Lane and around Cherry Tree Road. We will return to the Red Lion between 8.15 and 8.30 and, once inside, give out song sheets and encourage all the customers to make requests and to join in the singing.

We hope to make a generous collection for our charity, **The Martha Trust**, an organisation based in Deal which provides inclusive, lifelong care for people with profound physical and multiple learning difficulties.

**[www.marthatrust.org.uk](http://www.marthatrust.org.uk)**

If you would definitely like us to call at your house, please give me or Peta a ring (numbers below). Likewise, if, for whatever reason, you do not wish us to call. This will help us to make the best use of our time.

**Contact: Gail, 07720 592126 (phone or text) or Peta, 01233 713495**





# Lenham Meadows Trust

## Countryside and community

### ANOTHER HUGE TURNOUT FOR THE APPLE PRESSING DAY

**M**uch needed funds were raised during the annual apple-pressing fun day held on 12<sup>th</sup> October. Initial calculations indicate that **over £3,000** was raised in donations, money collected at the stalls, the tea and cake stand and from the BBQ (costs to be deducted!) which is a huge help towards the ever-increasing price of maintaining the green spaces around the village owned or managed by the *Trust*. And more good news! For next year, we've kindly been donated a whole new apple-pressing kit, courtesy of Geoff Newsome and Gail (shown top right) – many thanks to you both from the *Trust*.

A number of people also 'signed-up' as friends of the *Trust* – at a cost of only £25 a year. Others were given leaflets explaining our aims and objectives and how to join. Please consider taking this forward. Details on how to join are on our website, or drop an email with your details to us using either of the email addresses below and our membership secretary will get in touch with you.

As always, we need **volunteers** to help organise events like this or with the general management of the *Trust*. If you can help, our chairman, **Danny Matthews**, on **chairman@lenhammeadowstrust.org** would love to hear from you.



*Geoff and Gail kindly donated a complete new apple-pressing kit*



*BBQ hosted by the Ashford Rotary Club*



*Singing from the Holigans*



*L-R: Apples kindly donated by Gotham & Son / Our Chairman and Town Cryer / Traction engine display / Guess the weight of the cake*



**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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For regular updates, visit us at  
[twitter.com/projects](https://twitter.com/projects)

**SJD**

LAND AND DEVELOPMENT

# Maidstone Museum awarded £75,000 to bring Japanese heritage to life

**M**aidstone Museum has been awarded £75,000 from the Museum Renewal Fund, a UK Government funded initiative administered by Arts Council England to help civic museums build sustainable income streams and strengthen their resilience.

A key focus of the funding will be The Tōkaidō Way, a new touring and temporary exhibition exploring the historic Japanese route that once connected Edo (modern-day Tokyo) to Kyoto. Drawing on the museum's renowned Japanese collection, the exhibition will offer a visually rich and immersive journey through art, culture, and travel in Edo-period Japan.

In addition to this exciting exhibition, the funding will support the development of a new online system that will bring Maidstone Museum's collection to a global audience. This digital platform will make artefacts accessible to researchers, educators, and the public worldwide, enhancing the museum's reach and relevance in the digital age.

The funding will also contribute to early research into a potential future exhibition about William Alexander, the Maidstone-born artist known for his depictions of 18th-century China. While still in the exploratory phase, this project aims to better understand Alexander's legacy, his important artworks in the collection and how it might be presented in a future exhibition.



Money will also be put towards more improvements in the museum's "Withdrawing Room", a stunning, wood-panelled space that has been transformed over the past year. Previously dull and underused, it has been given a new lease of life through the installation of events lighting, the stripping of old cabinets, and the addition of new chairs.

Further plans include modernising the museum's facilities to elevate the room hire services, opening the door to more vibrant community events and expanded opportunities for evening functions. It is hoped this action will grow the evening hire offer and host a wider range of events in this revitalised space.

The Museum Renewal Fund is part of a wider £20 million government investment in civic museums across England.





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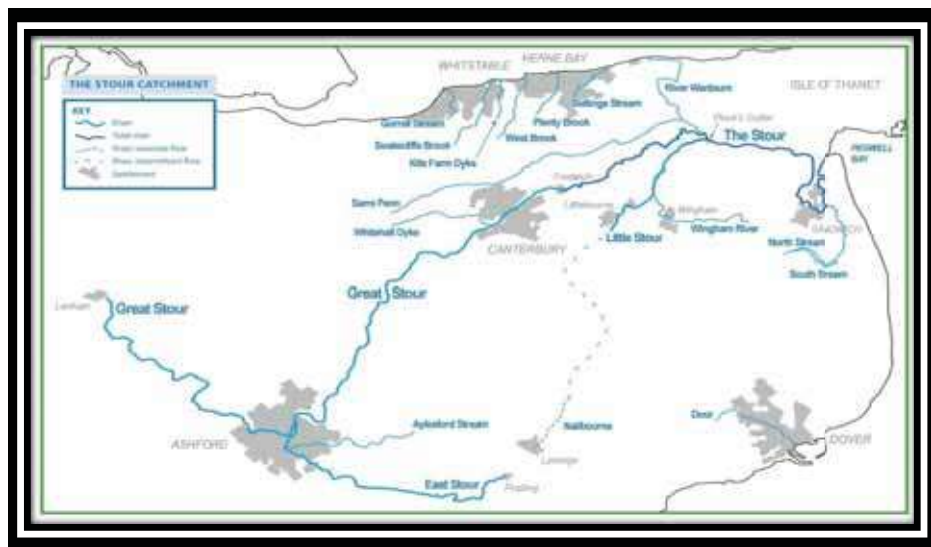
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# Introducing the Kentish Stour



**T**he Kentish Stour is the major river catchment of East Kent. Its largest river is the Great Stour, the second longest river in Kent (58 miles), which has its source right here at **Glebe Pond** in Lenham, which is owned and managed by *Lenham Meadows Trust*. The river flows out to sea at Pegwell Bay. The catchment encompasses many other watercourses from the smallest streams to major tributaries like the East Stour.

The **Kentish Stour** is an important river system, of great value to human and natural communities alike. It supplies water for agriculture and industry, provides drainage, recreation and wildlife habitat. Some of its rivers are chalk streams of global significance. Some flow through areas of international importance for conservation. Most pass through settlements; loved and celebrated in some places, flowing underground and forgotten in others. They are part of the

history and folklore of this part of Kent and have powered industries in the past.

**The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership** is at the forefront of efforts to improve rivers in the catchment, working together with a range of other bodies, with landowners and the community.

## Upper and Middle Great Stour

The Great Stour starts its journey as a number of small springs near the village of Lenham. From here it travels in a roughly south-easterly direction. Despite flowing over the rocks of the Greensand Belt, it has many of the characteristics and species of a chalk stream.

The river is rural and the channel is quite natural in many parts and good for wildlife, although surrounding agriculture does impact on water quality. It flows through attractive settlements like Little Chart, and through scenic Godinton

Park. It then enters its first major town – Ashford – running through the Ashford Green Corridor. It changes direction, now heading north-east, before being joined by a major tributary, the East Stour.

The Great Stour leaves Ashford then flows into a breach in the North Downs called the Wye Gap. From this point, it becomes a true chalk stream, flowing through the Downs in a wide valley. Beautiful riverside spots include Olantigh Park, Godmersham, and Chilham Mill. Running past Chartham and several flooded gravel workings, the Great Stour flows into the historic cathedral city of Canterbury, passing Hambrook Marshes and the Westgate Parks on the way.

### Lower Stour

Upon leaving Canterbury the river flows on to Fordwich, Britain's smallest town, where it becomes tidal. It then enters the Lower Stour, a marshland landscape where intensive agriculture contrasts with important wildlife areas. At Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, superb wetland habitats support internationally important communities of birds, plants and invertebrates. The Lower Stour as a whole

is a stronghold for the declining water vole and has seen the return of otters and beavers.

At Pluck's Gutter, the Great Stour is joined by the Little Stour, and becomes the Stour. From here it flows across a landscape that was once the sea – the Wantsum Channel separated Kent from the Isle of Thanet during the Roman and Early Medieval period. Beyond Sandwich, the Stour is near the end of its journey, and what a finale! Here the river and its associated habitats are protected as part of much larger conservation areas. The bird life is second to none and diverse habitats support a rich variety of plants and insects. At Pegwell Bay, the Stour finally completes its journey to the sea.

For more information about the **Kentish Stour** and its catchment visit the *Environment Agency's Catchment Data Explorer* and see [www.kentishstour.org.uk](http://www.kentishstour.org.uk). Also see [www.lenhammeadowstrust.org](http://www.lenhammeadowstrust.org) to read all about *Glebe Pond* in Lenham, the source of the Stour, and how you can help towards the maintenance of the pond and all the other Lenham Meadows Trust lands by becoming a friend of the Trust.







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The Friends of  
St Mary's Church, Lenham

## OUR YEAR BY ANDREW BARR, CHAIRMAN

**A**lthough 2025 has not seen us fund any significant renovations to the church building, we have consolidated funds ahead of major repair works planned to the tower roof. The lead has been cracking for some years and although patched before, it's now time for a full renewal. The works are likely to cost around £30,000. We've been awarded grants by The Friends of Kent Churches, the Benefact Trust and also the local Hatch Charity to assist with funding the repair – we're very grateful for their support. We will be using our own charity funds for the majority of the costs and hope to proceed before April 2026. The date is key because we will still benefit from VAT exemption under the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. There's been no announcement as to whether the grant scheme will be extended past that date, which would affect our future costs.

The **Supper Quiz** we held in April was great fun and a resounding success, **raising £1,800**. Many thanks to our hardworking committee for organising the evening, especially Danny Coorsh, Liz Cocker and Gill Simes. September saw us back in the Tithe Barn for the **Annual Village Barn Dance** with dancers young and old enjoying the music of Whirling Skirmish; the Barn Dance is always such a fun evening and we're pleased to say that our profit was **£1,300** on the night.

We have, as always, been assisted throughout the year by the generosity of the wonderful Lenham community, businesses and individuals. We're very grateful for the donations, the support and attendance at events, all of which have helped us raise funds to carry out renovations to the church

building. I'd like to particularly thank *The Lenham Focus* for their generous donation towards the cost of the band at the Barn Dance and *Kent Loves...* for selling quiz and Barn Dance tickets for us.

The Friends of St Mary's has now been in existence for 13 years and we have achieved so much as we work to preserve the ancient church building. The Friends continues to grow and to keep up with the times. We now have 145 members, 321 Facebook followers, an active mailing list and a popular website. The funds we raise are used solely to pay for the repair and renovation of the building and never for the day to day running costs of the church.

We look forward to a positive year ahead - thanks to support from our members and the Lenham community, the replacement of the lead on the tower roof will see us complete another vital repair to the wonderful and important building that is St. Mary's, Lenham. Hopefully, we'll also progress other projects next year such as the refurbishment of the clock-face. We are also supporting the project to replace the floor at the back of the Nave in conjunction with The Lenham Community Hub Project.

St Mary's has stood for centuries as a beacon of goodwill right in the heart of our village. We'll keep working so that it will keep standing for many years to come. Please email us if you would like to sign up to receive regular updates about our work 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. **We wish you a Merry and Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year!**



[www.friendsofstmaryslenham.org](http://www.friendsofstmaryslenham.org)



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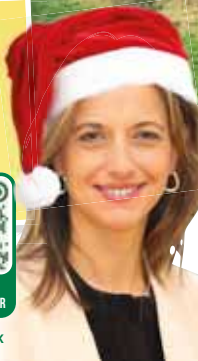
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January is a start of a new year of quilts and a fun new programme begins.

I hope you'll come and join us then 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 are on the first and third Tuesdays of every month except December, we'd love to see you. We meet in the Osborne room in the Lenham Community Centre 1:30 to 4:30pm. Sometimes we move location, please contact me, Pamela Gillard at 07914 809946 or email [moonbeamspinner@gmail.com](mailto:moonbeamspinner@gmail.com) if you plan to drop in, for more information on the group or a copy of our 2026 programme.**

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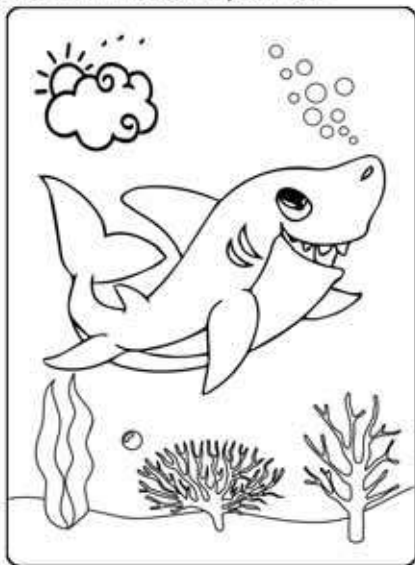
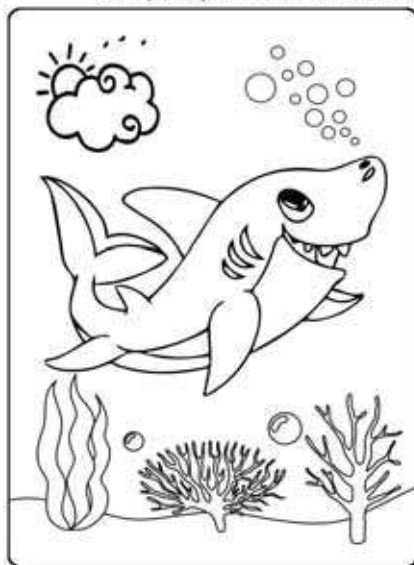
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Perhaps you remember that we discovered a long closed, second public house in Liverton? On this 'stroll' through Lefferton (Liverton) papers we also encountered John Baker. In 1469 he lived

with his wife Isabella and his 5 children in a hall house. It was the time before the reformation and he was a good catholic man leaving some money for the poor of Lenham. He wanted to be buried in Lenham churchyard and candles to be lit at the 'shrine' of St. Nicholas, St. Catherine, Mary and the altar of the Holy Cross at St. Mary's in Lenham.

In his will<sup>1</sup> he made sure that his wife, Isabella, could stay in their marital home, in one upstairs room to one side of the hall and that she had use of the hall and front door for her coming and goings, as well as the use of the kitchen. His oldest son inherited the estate in Liverton. However, there were two fields set aside to produce income for the daughters. Another son inherited land in Frinsted and the youngest inherited land in the heath.

John Baker was aware how important it is to bring produce to the market quickly because he left also money for the upkeep



Timber Structure

of the road between Lenham and Liverton.

The will of 1469 prompted our search for Hall Houses on Liverton Hill. We don't know whether there were more, but there are two still standing. One is Churchill Cottage, which

is situated at one end of the hamlet.

The other building is Mansion Farmhouse, which was the centre of farming on Liverton Hill, at least in recent history. The farm was later part of the Chilston Estate<sup>2</sup>.

Sale details<sup>3</sup> from 1912 show the extent of the farm comprising a barn, an oast house and several other outbuildings. In 1987 the barn, the oast and a building plot, on which had been three derelict labourers' cottages, were given planning permission for conversion to domestic use.



Jettied corner with missing dragon beam

## References:

1. see: Kent Archives, Canterbury Probate Records (1396-1858) PRC/17/1/329b
2. see: U673/E1: Schedule of lands on the Chilston estate (1893)
3. see: U55/SP/844 · 11 Jul 1912 · Kent History and Library Centre
4. If you know more than we do, please get in touch [heritagelenham@gmail.com](mailto:heritagelenham@gmail.com)

Of course, we cannot be certain that John Baker lived in Mansion Farmhouse, but it was the most likely and therefore prompted a visit by the Historic Buildings Group of the Kent Archaeological Society, which resulted in a detailed report about the building and its interesting features.

Unusually for a non-religious building of this period, the frame of the entrance



door is decorated with a foliate head, also known as a 'Green Man'.

Near Liverton is the conservation area of Elmstone Hole, which boasts a spectacular setting for another hall house: Elmstone Hole Farm. There are the remains of a building which could easily be an old chapel. Some of the

members of the Elmstone family were rectors in Boughton Malherbe and one of them was churchwarden in Lenham in 1622. Did the door frame with the Green Man come from this possible chapel? A mystery still to explore<sup>4</sup>.

**We wish you a Happy Christmas and a more peaceful 2026.**



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# Contact Details For Local Groups

Badminton	Alan Williamson	01622-858763
Badminton Club Feathers	Robert Day	07984-948524
Borough Councillor	Chris Houliham	chrishouliham@maidstone.gov.uk
Bowling Club	Lyn Fuller	01622-851538
Bridge Club	Keith Rylands	01622-891964
Brownies (2 <sup>nd</sup> Lenham)	Andrea French	01622-851646
Cat Protection	Mid-Kent Branch	0345-3712758
Church Office	Sarah Hills	01622-850604
Dog Warden (Louise Duke)	Community Protec'n	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 <sup>st</sup> 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	Sarah Emberson	sarah.emberson@kent.gov.uk
Kent Highway Services	Roads, paths etc.	03000-418181
Kent Wildlife Trust		01622-662012
Lenham Ballet School	Erica McCabe	07866-316056
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	07572-911396
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 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
Sittingbourne Valley FC	Paul Hewish	07795-324062
Vicar	Rev Dr. John Huggins	01622-850280
Wellbeing Community Group	Ellie Stevens	07952-594655 / (Vladimir 07877-143088)
Women's Institute	Chris Godden	01622-858658

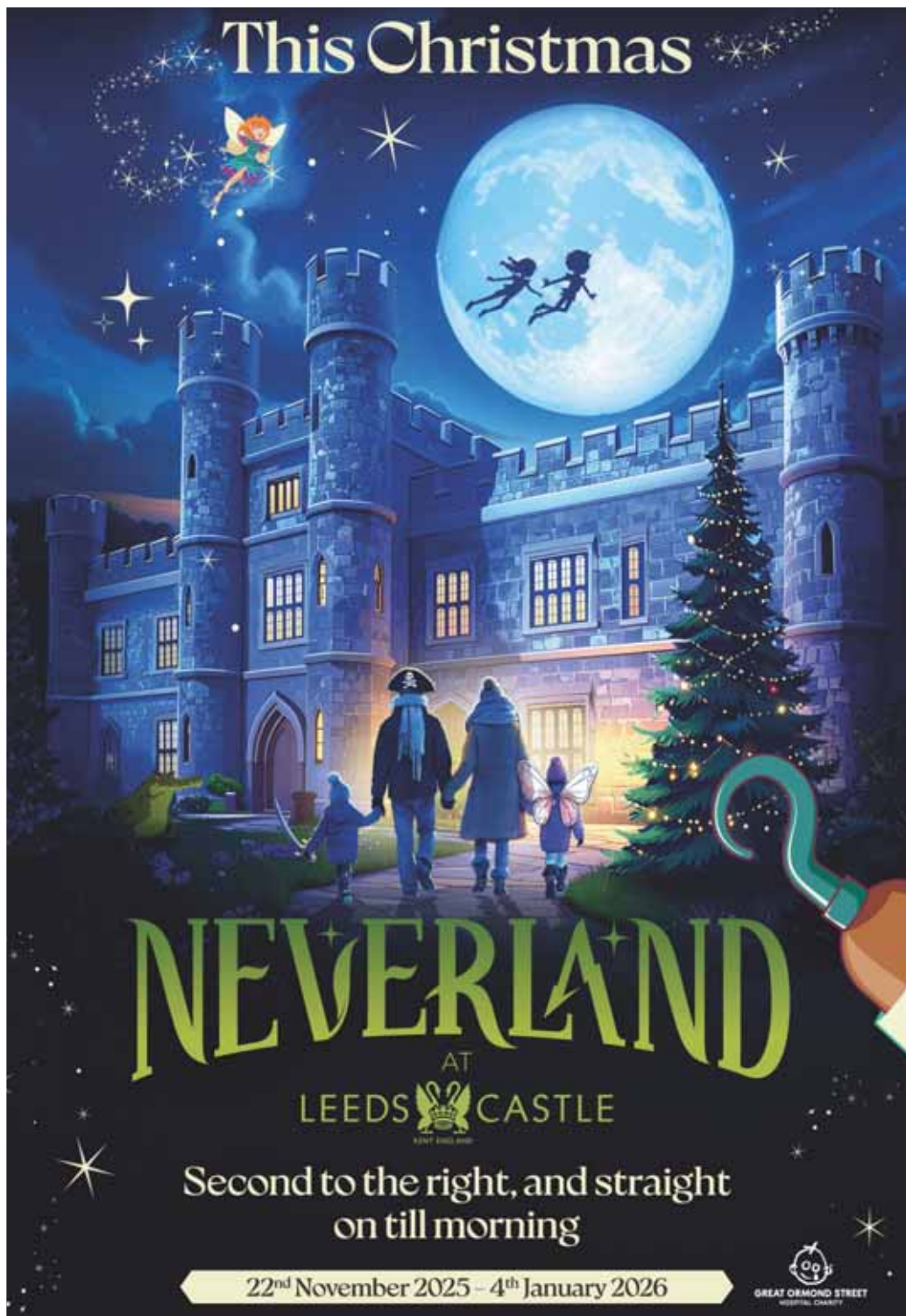


# Lenham Community Centre - Regular Clubs/Classes/Societies - December 2025

ACTIVITY	WHEN HELD	Time	CONTACT NO
Abundant Energy Tai Chi	Weekly Monday	0930-1030	07985 001782
<b>Abundant Energy Qigong</b>	<b>Weekly Monday</b>	<b>1045-1145</b>	<b>07985 001782</b>
Country Ways Quilting	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	1330-1630	01233 879507
<b>Country Ways Rugmaking and quilting</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; last Wednesday</b>	<b>0900-1300</b>	<b>07784 892160</b>
Feathers Badminton	Weekly Monday	2000-2200	07984 948524
<b>Gardening Society</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday</b>	<b>1845-2200</b>	<b>01622 430649</b>
Hatha Yoga	Weekly Monday	1815-1945	07850 355918
<b>Kent School of Bridge</b>	<b>Weekly Thursday</b>	<b>1330-1730</b>	<b>01622 891964</b>
LenARA Bowling	Weekly Tuesday	1330-1700	01622 858439
<b>LenARA Line Dancing</b>	<b>Weekly Wednesday</b>	<b>1845-2115</b>	<b>01622 859725</b>
LenARA Members	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	1230-1700	01622 851763
<b>LenARA Petanque</b>	<b>Thursday if weather permits</b>	<b>0900-1300</b>	<b>01622 858439</b>
LenARA Zumba Gold	Weekly Wednesday	0900-1030	01622 850468
<b>Lenham Art Group</b>	<b>Weekly Thursday</b>	<b>1000-1300</b>	<b>01622 858238</b>
Lenham Badminton	Weekly Tuesday	2000-2200	01622 858561
<b>Lenham Ballet School</b>	<b>Monday / Tuesday</b>	<b>1700-2030</b>	<b>07866 316056</b>
Lenham Ballet School	Thursday	1630-2100	07866 316056
<b>Lenham Ballet School</b>	<b>Weekly Saturday</b>	<b>0900-1530</b>	<b>07866 316056</b>
Lenham Heritage	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday	1900-2130	01622 850228
<b>Lenham Toddlers pre-school</b>	<b>Weekly Tuesday</b>	<b>0930-1130</b>	<b>01622 858919</b>
Lenham Meadows Trust	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	1900-2100	07831 308267
<b>Lenham Toddlers Pre-school</b>	<b>Weekly Tuesday</b>	<b>0930-1130</b>	<b>01622 858919</b>
Lenham WI	2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday	1845-2200	01622 858658
<b>Parish Council</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday</b>	<b>1930-2230</b>	<b>01622 829034</b>
Parish Council F & G P	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	1930-2200	01622 829034
<b>Parish Council Planning</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Monday</b>	<b>1930-2200</b>	<b>01622 829034</b>
Pathways Church	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday	1030-1200	07708 754672
<b>Telisa Tai Chi</b>	<b>Weekly Wednesday</b>	<b>1730-1830</b>	<b>07734 108683</b>
Zumba with Rosie	Weekly Tuesday	1830-1930	07809 490982

PLEASE CONTACT ORGANISERS DIRECT FOR UP-TO-DATE TIMES/DATES AND INFORMATION

This Christmas



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on till morning

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2025 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026



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Lenham Community Centre

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07985 001782

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# Lenham Gardening Society

From Margaret Baines

**There is no meeting of the society this month, but we'll meet again on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm.**

*Clive Nuttman* will give us a talk on the Orchards of Kent. The competition in January will be for one succulent and/or one slice of fruitcake.

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 held before the evenings close.



**I wish you all a very merry Christmas and happy, prosperous New Year.**

**For further information:**

**Email: [gardenlenham@gmail.com](mailto:gardenlenham@gmail.com)**

**Tel: 07917401228**

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**The Council meet on the first Wednesday of  
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**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.**

**Contact details: Lisa Westcott**

**(Clerk) 01622 829034**

**[clerk@lenhamparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@lenhamparishcouncil.org.uk)**

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING A WILL

Chloe Moon of Hallett and Co Solicitors explains



## What is a Will?

A Will is a legal document that appoints one or more Executor to distribute your Estate based on your wishes.

## Why should I write a Will?

There are a number of benefits to writing a Will, not only to you but also to those who will be dealing with your Estate when you pass away.



## Control of Assets

Writing a Will allows for you to have control over how your assets, bank accounts, shares and property, are distributed when you pass away. For instance, if you would like to include a provision for a family member to continue living in your house when you pass a 'Right of Residency' clause can be included – giving not only you, but your family peace of mind.

For a lot of us Charity plays a large role in our lives and a Will allows you to leave specified gifts to any chosen Charity as a thank you for the hard work they carry out within our lives.



## Avoiding the laws of Intestacy

Dying without a Will means that a person has died 'intestate.' When this occurs, the distribution of your assets is controlled by the Law and not any friends or family that would have a better understanding of how you would wish to distribute your assets.

Intestacy laws set out who deals with the distribution of the Estate and who the Estate is 'given to.' This can result in many different issues, especially if the person who has passed away had no immediate family or did not get on with their family. By not having a Will in place it is possible that your assets will end up with relatives that you would not wish to give anything too.

## Ease the burden on your family

As mentioned above a Will appoints one or more Executor who deals with the Estate. This allows you to appoint people who you know will be capable of doing so and also appoint people who you trust and know will execute your wishes. It is also possible to appoint Solicitors as Executors



within your Will. This would take the pressure off of family members, at an already difficult time, and provide reassurance that everything will be done correctly.

### Can Wills be changed?

A Will can be updated as often as you would like. This could involve adding in gifts for children or grandchildren **or** changing Executors if needed. A Will is a very flexible document and can be customised to ensure your wishes are carried out and those who you would like to care for are.

### Conclusion

To conclude it is clear there are a number of benefits to creating a Will to make it as easy as possible for family and friends when somebody passes away. If you would like any information or would like to contact us regarding the preparation of a Will please email us at [info@hallettandco.co.uk](mailto:info@hallettandco.co.uk).



## Recipe of the Month

### Christmas Star Biscuits

**This is a great recipe for a children's baking day. The biscuits make great tree decorations.**

#### Ingredients:

100g butter, softened  
100g castor sugar  
1tsp vanilla extract  
1 large egg  
200g plain flour (extra for dusting)  
½ tsp baking powder  
Cake gold glitter spray  
Chocolate for melting  
Sea salt, pinch

#### Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 160c, gas mark 3.  
Use a large baking tray, lined with parchment.  
Using an electric whisk, cream the butter and sugar together in a large bowl until pale. Add the vanilla extract and the egg, whisking until well mixed. Stir in the flour and baking powder with a generous pinch of sea salt. Wrap and chill for about 30 minutes.  
Roll out the dough to the same size as the parchment to about 0.5cm thick, dust with more



flour if needed. Cut out the stars – as many as possible – use up the trimmings, using another baking sheet, if necessary.

Bake for 12-14 minutes until starting to turn golden at the edges. Remove and leave to cool completely on a wire rack. Using gold glitter decorate the stars or melt chocolate and pipe over the biscuits.

**Note:** If using as tree decorations pierce a 3mm hole near the top of each star before baking and use thread to hang them. **These cannot be eaten once they've been on the tree.**



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## A message from our new Maidstone BC Councillors: Cllr Chris Houlihan, Cllr Steve Povey, and Cllr Mariela Nedelcheva

**F**ollowing our recent electoral success which we are truly grateful for, we're here to represent all of the community and look forward to working with and for you.

Since being elected on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, we've been working very hard representing local people on local issues. We have already responded to numerous requests for assistance on various matters ranging from planning to local community services that residents feel they need to highlight.

In addition, we had the pleasure of attending the recent Parish Council meetings at Lenham & Harrietsham with others planned also. This gives us a valuable opportunity to interact and discuss in person what really matters to you. We look forward to supporting the Parish Councils going forward.

Our opposition to The Heathlands Garden Settlement has been well documented as we feel that this is not viable, sustainable or in the best interests of the community. Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is inviting residents, businesses and stakeholders to take part in the consultation for the Heathlands Garden Settlement Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The consultation will run from Monday 3 November to 23:59 on Monday 15 December 2025, and we urge all residents to have input. Full details can be found on the MBC website.

As your local councillors we have also been working with both MBC and Kent Police and attend cluster meetings which have covered anti-social behaviour.

We would encourage you to consider registering to **My Community Voice**.

Examples of initiatives to tackle this type of behaviour across our communities and highlighting the role that you as residents can play in effective responses include:

- The tools and approaches used
- Why reporting matters
- Practical examples of what information helps most
- How residents can stay connected with Kent Police via My Community Voice.



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# Book Review from the Lenham Library

I have chosen a festive title for the December issue. **'The Christmas Appeal', by Janice Hallett.**

This book is very short and I found it very amusing. It is written in Janice Hallett's signature style of mixed media; emails, text messages, transcripts etc.

I thought I might find this off-putting when I read her previous novels but she manages it so well that you become absorbed very quickly. Her characters are so well rounded and in this case genuinely funny. This is actually a follow on from *The Appeal* so I was familiar with the characters, but it is not necessary to have read *The Appeal* first.

The book is about the Fairway Players and their upcoming festive holiday production of *Jack and the Beanstalk* which is to raise money for a new church roof.

However, despite the season, goodwill is distinctly lacking among the amateur

theatre enthusiasts with petty rivalries, a possibly asbestos-filled beanstalk and some perennially absent players behind the scenes. And there is also the little matter of the dead body on the stage. Who could possibly have had the victim on their naughty list? The reader joins with lawyers Femi and Charlotte as they investigate Christmas letters, examine emails and pore over police transcripts to identify both the victim and the killer before the curtain closes on their holiday production.

Janice Hallett has perfected the feelings of stress and the organisation required to plan a Christmas production. The action is frantic as in the best of farces. Femi and Charlotte stop to regroup every now and then which gives you the chance to get a summary of the section and think about all the action. There are rifts between characters, people who are convinced they are better than everyone else and lots of juicy gossip.

This book is perfect for the Christmas season and it made me laugh out loud several times.

We have a copy in the library and a couple of her other titles too if you feel inclined to explore her works further.

Remember we have lots of Christmas picture books for your little ones in the library now.



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# An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

**E**very Christmas I tell myself I must be better organised next year and not leave everything to the last minute. And then when the next Christmas comes, I remember that resolution but inevitably too late. I know I'm not the only one.

**Small Business Saturday** is a good chance to try to make this year different. It's the first Saturday in December, and the aim is to rally the community around the small businesses that help make our local economy tick. In practice, the biggest difference we can all make for our local shops is to buy things in them.

This year it is more important than ever to back our small businesses as they are going through tough times. Over the last 18 months many have seen their business rates double and been hard hit by the rise in employer national insurance (the 'jobs tax'). Farm and village shops are usually great at stocking local produce, and the Family Farms tax is a massive worry for local food producers.

As I talk to businesses across the constituency it is clear these taxes are starting to take their toll. As your MP, I am backing the businesses which keep our high streets alive and provide jobs for local people.

Together with my colleagues in Parliament, we are fighting hard to reverse the Family Farms Tax and The

Family Business tax, and we want to see the Government get rid of business rates altogether for small shops and pubs.

I would like to end on a happy note and thank everyone who gives their time, energy and money to put up Christmas decorations in our towns and villages and to decorate village halls and churches. I know this involves a lot of effort. For my part, it puts a smile on my face when I see the Christmas lights in villages around the area on a dark winter night.

**e:** [helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk)

**t:** 0207 219 6472



*Helen supporting Crouch Family Butchers in Bearsted for Small Business Saturday, 2024.*

# Update from the Len Valley Practice

From Elaine Moles, Practice Manager

**W**hen you read this, it will have been around ten weeks since we introduced our new 'Accurx Total Triage' system on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

We wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their patience and support while we've adapted to this change.

The new triage system was introduced to help us manage patient requests more efficiently and ensure that every patient is directed to the most appropriate clinician or service. Instead of booking directly through reception, patients now complete a short online form, or our reception team can do this with you over the phone or in person if you prefer.

This new approach allows us to prioritise urgent issues more quickly, direct patients to the right person for their needs, free up more appointments for those who need them most, and ultimately reduce waiting times while improving continuity of care.

We know that any change in how you access care takes time to get used to and your feedback is really important to

Please let us have your  
feedback on the new system.

us. We'd love to hear how you've found the new system so far, what's working well and where we can make improvements.

If you receive an automated text after a recent contact with the practice, please do take a moment to complete the Friends and Family Test. You can also fill this out via our website by visiting **www.lenvalleypractice.co.uk** and clicking on *Feedback* under the "Practice Info" section.

Your views help us understand the impact of the new system and shape how we continue to care for our community. Thank you once again for your patience, understanding and ongoing support.

**NB.** *From the Chair of the Lenham PPG. An article appeared in the August edition of the Lenham Focus from the surgery at Lenham. It was to the chair of the PPG and was not meant for publishing. I apologise for any upset that it has caused Elaine, (Practice manager) and the surgery.*



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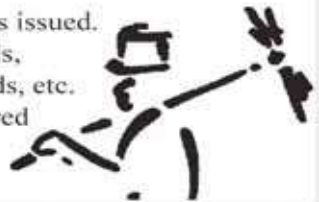


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# Simple Wellbeing: Emotions and Freedom

By Vladimir Barkanov

In today's world, we often feel uneasy about showing our emotions. While I agree that we shouldn't rush to express negative feelings, I find it tragic that we also suppress the positive ones. Life has taught me that emotions are not something to be trifled with. Failing to express joy is dangerous. When we learn not to smile too broadly, not to laugh too loudly, and not to cry when something truly moves us, we begin to build the walls of our own imprisonment.

Moreover, unexpressed and unprocessed positive emotions tend to fester, becoming fertile ground for negative ones. And then, as I've mentioned before, if I don't confront and process those negative emotions, they erupt of their own accord and can easily take control of me.

I firmly believe that one reason we see so much negativity and violence in the world today is that we are nurturing the wrong flowers within ourselves.

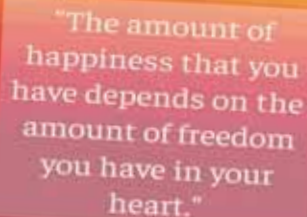
Recently, I had an experience that was both wonderful and devastating. Some of you may have read my review of

the Jasmin Vardimon Dance Theatre Company. I was fortunate enough to see their performance of "Alice". It was so powerful that afterwards, my wife and I were unable to speak—for fear that doing so would reduce us to tears. Later, in the café, I saw Jasmin herself. I still could not speak, but I thought I might catch her eye and bow in gratitude... I couldn't even manage that. The gesture alone would have reduced me to a sobbing wreck.

And although I was in a space where many would have understood my reaction and wouldn't have judged me, I still couldn't allow myself to let go of the fear of showing emotion. I couldn't free myself from that prison.

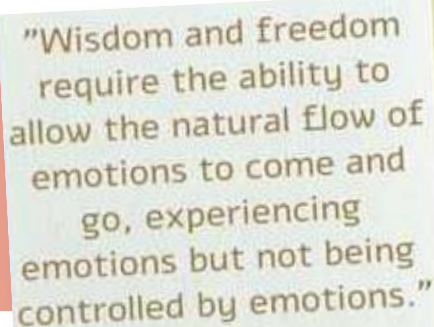
Looking back, I asked myself: Why was I so overwhelmed? The answer is painfully clear. I've kept my emotions locked away for so long that when something finally breached the gates, there was a flood waiting. Can I truly say that I am free, afraid to show – even, and especially – my strongest positive emotions? I urge you to ask yourself the same question.

Finally, I'd like to offer a small piece of advice, which I'm beginning to practise myself, alongside the words of the great minds quoted throughout this article: ***"With emotions, learn from the negative and be driven forth by the positive – this will set you free."***



"The amount of happiness that you have depends on the amount of freedom you have in your heart."

Thich Nhat Hanh



"Wisdom and freedom require the ability to allow the natural flow of emotions to come and go, experiencing emotions but not being controlled by emotions."



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

## Season's Greetings

As the festive season draws near, it is a time to reflect on the year gone by, to cherish the memories we have made and to look forward to new beginnings with hope and optimism.

It has been another busy year for the parish council. We have completed major renovation works (in the toilets), both play-parks have been renewed (using funds generated by the building of new homes), we continue to push forward with plans to create a new two-form entry nursery (our application for funds held by MBC under the CIL scheme has been submitted) and we have started a reconfiguration of the CCTV coverage around the village.

Volunteers have given many, many hours to pick up litter; plant spring, summer and winter flowers to keep our village looking welcoming; a special mention to the intrepid people who arranged the great switch-on of the Christmas lights; all the other volunteers who organise so many clubs and activities in the parish, including those involved in the creation and distribution of the **Lenham Focus**. I'd like to thank each one of you for the time and effort you put in, it is very much appreciated.

I would also like to give a shout-out to all the colleagues at the parish council. We all give our time to maintain the fabric and essence of village life, not always succeeding but always giving 100%

in trying. Sadly, this year we have lost stalwarts (thanks Nick – you are missed every day) and welcomed new members (we hope Chris and Hannah are enjoying the steep “learning curve”!)

I would remind everyone all our meetings are open to the public – why not make a New Year resolution to come and find out for yourself what your parish council does, rather than read someone else's opinion on social media? Thanks, too, to our parish clerks who do such a sterling job of keeping us wayward councillors on the straight and narrow!

It is inevitable that things will change as time passes, while we would love time to stand still or change to come more slowly, we cannot be immune from it. I often hear people yearn for days gone by; the reality, though, is that we do not, and cannot, live in some kind of bubble where the rest of the world moves on. We will continue to try and preserve what is best and necessary, while mitigating against the damage that change might bring – again, we're not always successful but we will give 100% trying.

This year, at the county and local elections, we lost our long-standing county and local representatives and welcomed new people in their places, and the fight against the potentially catastrophic new town, Heathlands, continues. We will work with our new representatives at borough and county level to ensure the views of the parish are noted and appropriate action taken.

Let us all embrace the spirit of giving, kindness, and goodwill, spreading cheer not only to those close to us but also to those who need it most and include those who do not have their loved ones with them at a time when family becomes the focus.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year – let's hope 2026 is kind to us all!



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# New & Trending Scams to Watch Out For

Scam Type	What It Is / How It Works	Why It's Dangerous / What Makes It Novel
<b>Pig-butchering / romance-investment hybrid</b>	The scammer builds a long-term “relationship,” gains trust, and then persuades the victim to invest (often in crypto or a fake fund). Eventually the scammer vanishes with the money.	Because of emotional connection, victims may invest large sums. The scam may also have multiple phases, e.g. pretending to “help recover” lost funds later.
<b>Fake regulator impersonation</b>	Scammers pretend to be the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) or other regulatory bodies, claiming you owe money, are subject to legal actions, or to help “recover lost funds.”	Because many people trust official-sounding institutions, scammers exploit that. In 2025, nearly 5,000 fake FCA scams were reported in the UK in just the first half of the year.
<b>Remote purchase / OTP passcode fraud</b>	Scammers trick people into giving one-time pass-codes (OTPs) or login codes, which then allow them to use your account or make purchases.	This is rising sharply. UK Finance reports this kind of fraud reached it's highest-ever levels, often via social engineering.
<b>Fake parcel / delivery notification texts (“smishing”)</b>	You receive a text saying there's a “problem with your parcel” or a “cost to deliver,” with a link to click or pay.	This is one of the fastest-growing scams. Many people fall for it because deliveries and parcels are common, so it seems plausible.
<b>AI voice / deepfake impersonation / cloned voices</b>	Scammers use AI to replicate someone's voice (or appearance) — e.g. your child, grandchild, or a trusted authority — and call/video-call to ask for money or sensitive info.	Because the voice sounds “real,” many victims believe the call is genuine and comply. This is especially dangerous for older adults.
<b>Cloned / impersonated websites &amp; services</b>	Fraudsters copy a legitimate website (bank, investment platform, etc.) with small tweaks (URL changes, misspellings) to trick users into inputting credentials or making payments.	These cloned sites look very convincing. Many people miss small differences in URLs or SSL certificates.
<b>Scam “recovery services”</b>	After someone has been scammed, fraudsters pose as “recover your money” agents or regulators who will help—but ask for advance fees.	Victims already in distress may accept these offers hoping to recover money, and then lose more.
<b>Fake travel / booking sites / deals</b>	Fraudsters set up convincing fake websites for hotels, tours, rentals, flights, etc. You pay for a “booking” which either doesn't exist or is substandard.	With AI and better graphics, these sites are becoming more persuasive. Many people assume they're genuine.
<b>Social engineering / helpdesk attacks in organisations</b>	Hackers impersonate staff, managers, or support personnel to trick you into giving access, clicking malicious links, or divulging credentials.	Rather than brute force, they exploit trust and internal processes. Even big organisations are vulnerable.



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# Nature Watch

With Darren Hammond

## The season of the fungi

All through the autumn months you may have noticed in the gardens, under trees or in the woods a large number of different mushrooms and toadstools making an appearance. What is the difference then? Mushrooms can be described as a fungal growth that takes the shape of a domed cap with gills underneath and is supported by a stem. On the other hand, a toadstool is the fruiting body of a fungus that bears spores and usually takes the shape of a round cap on a stem, often one that is perceived to be poisonous or inedible.



### Where to find them?

A mushroom typically grows in lawns or open paddocks (like this parasol mushroom in the picture) rather than on shrubs and under trees like a toadstool. You'll find most types of toadstools growing above scraps of wood or lumber and dead tree roots.

### So many different fungi

There are roughly 15,000 different types of mushrooms and toadstools in the UK. Fungi are a huge and fascinating kingdom and they live on land, in the water, in the air and even in and on plants and animals. They vary widely in size and form, from the microscopically small to



the largest organisms on Earth (at several square miles large).

### Appearance

The outside of a mushroom cap is typically smooth and white or brown. Toadstools have a textured cap that's usually red and is filled with raised scales that are white or yellow. Mushrooms have gills in the underside of the cap, whereas toadstools have gills that can be found on the stem coupled with a bulbous base. Mushrooms and toadstools have even made it into myth and legend like this Fly agaric, pictured, which looks like the house of a fairy or elf.





## Myths and legends

In British folklore, mushrooms and toadstools appear in some of the earliest stories and superstitions. Records from medieval texts describe fairy rings as places where the Good Folk danced and writers have

linked the red-capped fly agaric with enchantment and danger.

One of the most famous images tied to fungi is the fairy ring. People believed these perfect circles of mushrooms marked places where fairies had danced under the moonlight. To step inside was thought to be dangerous, for it might whisk you away into the 'Otherworld'. While we now know fairy rings are formed by the growth pattern of certain fungi, the sense of magic lingers. Next time you come across one, it is hard not to feel a tingle of ancient enchantment. However I can tell you with certainty that stepping inside a fairy ring like the one pictured, does NOT transport you to the fairy realm.

## What do they do and what are the gills on the underneath for?

So what do fungi do? One of the most vital roles of fungi in nature is decomposition. Along with bacteria, fungi are the great recyclers. Without them, the world would be buried under dead wood and fallen leaves. They break all



the dead bits down and then release the nutrients back into the ground. And fungi do not reproduce like plants and flowers; they don't have seeds, but release spores that are then spread around.

The gills on a mushroom are the thin, papery structures located on the underside of the cap. Their main function is to dramatically increase the surface area available for the production and dispersal of spores.

## Not only on the ground or fallen trees

Sometimes you will see a tough, woody, shelf-like type of fungus that is attached to the side of a tree, usually very low down. They are different from normal fungi as they have pores on their underside instead of gills. While they can look amazing they do have a dark side though. They can play a role in the decay and rot of the heartwood of trees.



The one shown in the picture (left) is known as Turkey Tail, because of its shape and colouring that resembles a turkey's tail.





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# Heathlands 'Public Consultation' on the draft Supplementary Planning Documents



**M**aidstone Borough Council is inviting residents, businesses, and stakeholders to take part in shaping the future of two major developments that aim to deliver a significant proportion of affordable homes across the district.

The Council says: **'Public consultations began on Monday 3 November 2025 for six weeks and will close at 23:59 on Monday 15 December 2025.** During this period, the draft documents and supporting materials will be available on the council's website and at libraries and council offices throughout the borough. The consultation is to gather feedback on the draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for Heathlands Garden Settlement and Lidsing Garden Community.'

'These documents set out the vision and framework for creating sustainable and inclusive communities that meet local housing and infrastructure needs while

protecting the borough's character and environment. The allocation of these sites for development has already been agreed through the Local Plan Review (LPR). The designation cannot be changed and the purpose of this consultation is to gather people's views on the content of the SPDs, which, together with the LPR, will form the planning framework for future planning applications.'

'The Heathlands Garden Settlement is proposed for development between Lenham and Charing and could deliver up to 5,000 homes, with 40% designated as affordable housing. The plans also include a new railway station, healthcare and education facilities, and a country park.'

'Residents are encouraged to read the proposals and share their views via the consultation platform at **maidstone.oc2.uk**, by email to **ldf@maidstone.gov.uk**, or by **post** to Strategic Planning, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, ME15 6JQ.'



# Christian Message

Reverend Millie Hart Priest with PTO

**A**s we come to the close of this year, we naturally reflect on all that has happened for us individually during the last 12 months. It will almost certainly be a mixture of feelings for most of us as we recall times of disappointments and struggles, as well as blessings and celebrations.

My prayer for all who read this message is that you will end your reflections knowing that you can end 2025 well. I pray that you will have known God with you during all your emotions of this year and He will be with you, moving in your life as you start to plan for a New Year. God will always want to heal whatever situation you meet in 2026 and beyond. God is still blessing and God is still reconciling.

As you start planning for the next year perhaps it will be helpful to remember how it has been for others too. Perhaps you know the account of Hannah?

Hannah's husband loved her so much but for years she was taunted by others because she had not had the blessing of children. Hannah prayed to God and cried and cried, inconsolably. She vowed that if she was blessed with a son, she would give him unreservedly to God's service in gratitude for all God had blessed her with. Hannah did conceive and then

named her son Samuel. Samuel became a great prophet of the Old Testament.

We all have times when we might feel lonely. We might feel left out. We might feel unacceptable, or inadequate or frightened. People do cry themselves to sleep, just like Hannah. People do wake up feeling sad about what the day might bring, or about the days ahead.

There are people who have lost contact with friends. There are those whose loved ones have died but maybe they are trying to be cheerful even though they have a big ache of sadness. Lots of people are hurting and wish that things in their lives were different.

Maybe you have screamed out to God 'have pity on us'. Do you believe that God hears us as we scream out to him? Well, the Good News is he certainly does!

I began my message of prayer by suggesting that we reflect on ending the year well and planning the New Year knowing God's presence is with us always. My prayers are for you to celebrate seeing this year out and welcoming in the New Year with joy!

***Thank you, God, for making Your presence known and always being there for us, as you were for Hannah.***

# 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*

## Wednesday 3 December

**9.30 am Lenham:** Holy Communion

## Sunday 7 December

**9.30am Lenham:** Breakfast Church

**11.00am Lenham:** Holy Communion

## Saturday 13 December

**3.00pm Lenham:** Christmas Nativity Fun  
with Messy Church

## Sunday 14 December

**9.30am Lenham:** Breakfast Church

**11.00am Lenham:** Holy Communion

## Sunday 21 December

**8.00am Lenham:** Holy Communion (BCP)

**9.30am Lenham:** Christmas Breakfast  
Church

**5.30pm Lenham:** Carols by Candlelight

## Christmas Eve

**11.15pm Lenham:** Midnight Holy  
Communion

*Check local notice boards for more details*



## Join us this Christmas

St Mary's, Lenham

### Christmas Nativity Fun

with Messy Church

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 3pm

### Christmas Breakfast Church

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 9.30am

### Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 5.30pm

### Midnight Holy Communion

Christmas Eve, 11.15pm

### Christmas Day Holy Communion\*

\* Boughton Malherbe & Ulcombe at 10am

### A Celebration of Christmas Carols\*

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December, 11am

\* Ulcombe Church

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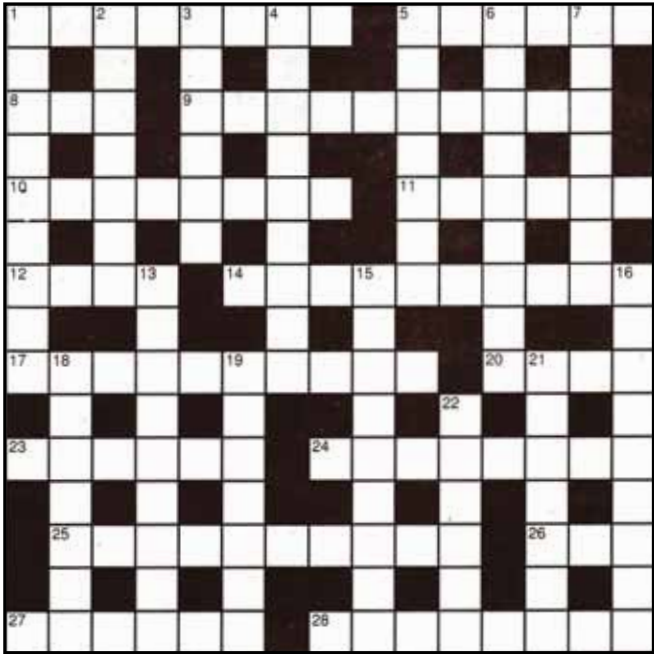
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# Focus PRIZE Crossword December 2025

The winner of the October crossword is Marya Hooper of Lenham. Well done!



### Across clues

- 1. Etonian sport involving bricks. (4,4)
- 5. Superficially impressive. (6)
- 8. Happened before. (3)
- 9. Wrestling move associated with Jim Londos. (6,4)
- 10. Small piece of meat with a bone. (5,3)
- 11. The A of AWOL. (6)
- 12. Each of these is one of your age. (4)
- 14. A type of store. (10)
- 17. This happens to brides coverings after their ceremonies. (10)
- 20. A cooked mixture of meat and vegetables. (4)
- 23. See 1 down
- 24. Happening each year. (8)
- 25. A fair-headed offspring (5,5)
- 26. Unused. (3)
- 27. In addition. (2,4)
- 28. Caribbean songs. (8)

### Down clues

- 1. 1 down, 23 across, 6, down. (2,4,3,1,5,9). A seasonal message from Focus.
- 2. Milan opera house. (2,5)
- 3. Internal organ of a chicken. (6)
- 4. A division of whales. (9)
- 5. Outdoor place for children to have fun. (7)
- 6. December Festival. (9)
- 7. Beirut is its Capital. (7)
- 13. Look into again. (9)
- 15. Peron's country. (9)
- 16. Night-time flying predators. (5,4)
- 18. Sign to prevent people begging for food. (2,5)
- 19. French version of a German type of song. (2,5)
- 21. Personal skills. (7)
- 22. Supposed day of rest. (6)

### Answers for November 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 20 December** 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 .....





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