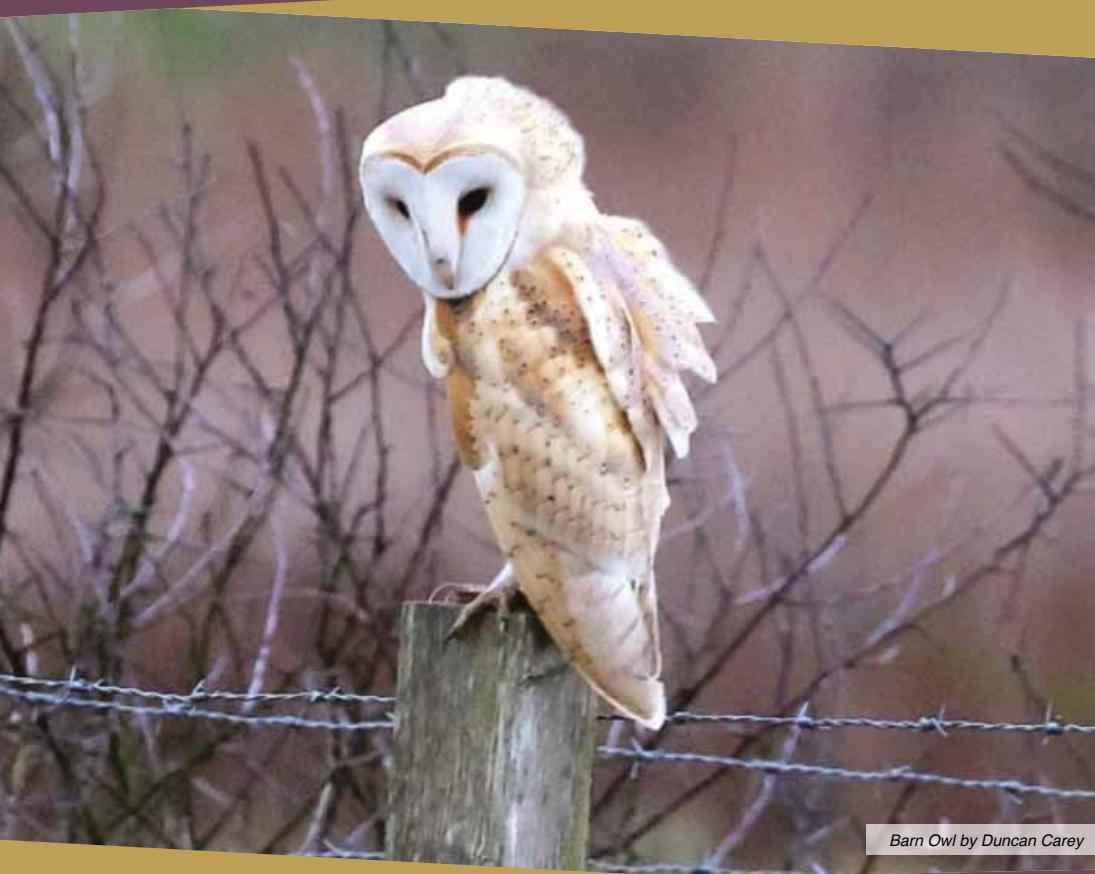


The Lenham Focus

JANUARY 2026 issue



Barn Owl by Duncan Carey

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour p14-15

Ham Lane Allotments p16

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Walking for health p57

Lenham Planters p57

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



Following the hugely successful 'Christmas Lights' switch-on event, it's now the start of a New Year – and we wish all our readers good health and best wishes for the coming year.

We will continue to strive to keep you informed of the important issues affecting our village and, hopefully, bring you information about events being arranged in our

Editorial

area. But we **DO** rely on you for your input – and we're more than happy to include details in our Page 3 'What's On' section. So 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.

It's 'panto' season – and we have our very own HAMS presentation of **Rapunzel** in the community centre on **23rd – 24th of January**. See inside for details and how to get your tickets.

For a touch of nostalgia it would be hard to beat the wonderful *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. This is the latest

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

Lenham Film Club
 showing to be held on Friday 9th January.
 Not to be missed!

David Jackson
 Editor

Volume 33 Edition 1 (January 2026)

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WHAT'S ON

Welcome



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.

- **Wednesday 31st December/New Year's Eve:** 'ABBA-chique' Tribute band, from 6:30pm: **Venue:** The Wishful Thinker. **Cost:** £85pp includes meal, show and DJ. [Book at elitepubs.com](http://elitepubs.com)
- **Each day to Sunday 4th January:** 'Neverland'. **Venue:** Leeds Castle. Entry cost applies.
- **January – all month:** Too busy over Christmas? **Venue:** Book January parties at Tudor Park Country Club. **Cost:** £55pp. Contact: events@dhtudorparkcc.co.uk
- **Sunday 4th 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.
- **Sunday 4th 12:00 - 3pm:** Sunday carvery. **Venue:** Mercure Great Danes Hotel. **Cost:** from £19.99pp. Ring **01622-528565** or check website www.mercuremaidstone.co.uk
- **Friday 9th 7pm for 7:30pm:** Lenham Film Club, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. **Venue:** Community centre. **Cost:** Adults £5, under 16's £2.
- **Wednesday 14th 2pm for 2:30pm:** 'The Painted Hall at Greenwich' talk: **Venue:** Egerton Millennium Hall. **Cost:** Free for members; £8 non-members.
- **Thursday 15th 7:30pm:** *W.I. Tai Chi talk and demo*. **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Cost:** Free
- **Thursday 15th:** *Hi Kent hearing support*. 1:30pm – 3pm. **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Cost:** free.
- **Thursday 22nd 7 for 7:30pm:** Lenham Heritage Society, *Upstairs, Downstairs, talk on fashions and suburban delights*. **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Cost:** £5 (member/children free).
- **Friday 23rd 7:30pm & Sat 24th 2pm and 7:30pm:** HAMS Pantomime – *Rapunzel*. **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Cost:** £6 adults, £4 age 2-16 (u/2's free on adult's lap). Tickets from **07731-455677** or hams.tickets@gmail.com
- **Saturday 31st 12 noon:** *Charing Races*. **Venue:** Charing Hill (A20). **Cost:** £15 pp, under 16's free. Cash on the day or tickets from hubblesfarm@hotmail.com
- **Saturday 31st:** *Dirty Dancing/Grease* Tribute act. **Venue:** The Wishful Thinker. **Cost:** See website elitepubs.com for prices and booking information.

Lenham lights Christmas event 2025

The rain stopped, the clouds disappeared and the moon shone on the night of the big Lenham switch-on event.

The newly appointed '*Legend of Lenham*', **David Humphrey**, shown right, said he was honoured to press the button to light up the village square, to the delight of the huge crowd of spectators.

Thank you to all the volunteers and organisers who helped make the event so successful.



CELEBRATE FINE DINING AND AFTERNOON TEA

Chilston Park Hotel, a 17th century manor in Kent, offers a refined and memorable dining experience, combining historic elegance with seasonal, locally sourced cuisine

At the heart of its culinary offering is Culpeper's Restaurant, awarded two AA Rosettes, where modern British dishes are crafted using ingredients from local farms and even the hotel's own kitchen garden. The restaurant blends fine dining with a relaxed atmosphere, enhanced by the period architecture - high ceilings, sash windows and original features.

The menu changes with the seasons and showcases regional produce such as turbot from the south coast or free-range chicken from Caldecott Farm. Guests can also dine outdoors on Culpeper's Terrace, which offers a more casual menu in a picturesque setting overlooking the lake and gardens. The hotel caters well to different preferences, with private dining options and flexible menus available.

Afternoon tea at Chilston Park is equally special, served in the elegant Marble Lounge with views over the estate. Available daily from 12.30-3.30pm, the tea includes traditional finger sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and jam and a tempting selection of cakes and pastries. Guests can elevate the experience with a glass of Champagne or opt for a savoury afternoon tea featuring cheese scones and sausage rolls.



What makes Chilston Park stand out is the quality of its food, the setting's timeless charm and its attention to detail. Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, nut-free and halal options are available upon request, making it inclusive and accommodating for various dietary needs. There's even a dedicated children's afternoon tea menu, making it family-friendly.

Whether for a celebratory meal, a relaxing afternoon tea or a weekend escape, Chilston Park offers a well rounded culinary experience rooted in tradition, elegance and local flavour. To make the most of your visit, it's best to book in advance, especially on weekends. Guests are encouraged to explore the grounds before or after dining for a complete countryside experience

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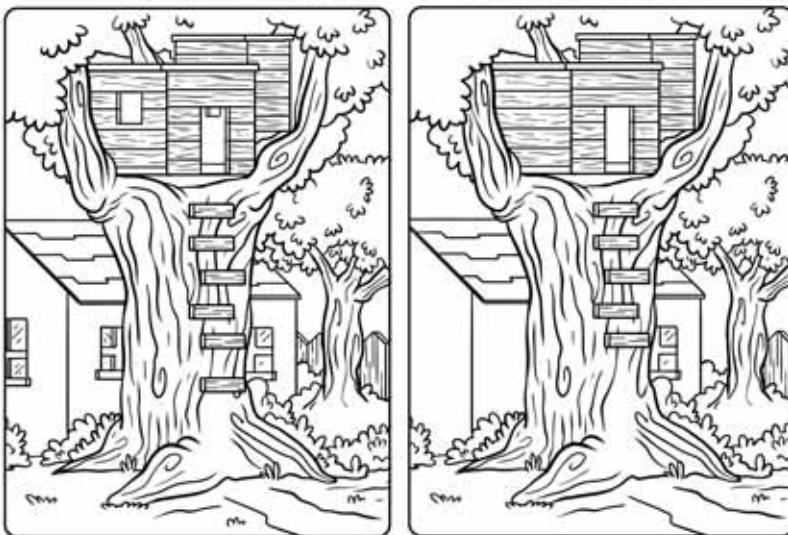
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SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 8 differences between these two pictures?



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Earley Springs School - An exciting start for our new school

Harriet Carter, Headteacher, says: 'We are delighted to share an update from our new school, which proudly opened its doors this September'.

It has been wonderful to welcome children across both our Explorers and Discoverers pathways and to see them settling in so well. The children are already making great use of our fantastic facilities, making progress in their learning, and, most importantly, enjoying every day at school.

We are also pleased to have recently welcomed three new members of staff - two teachers and a teaching assistant, who have quickly become valued members of our growing team.

A special thank you goes to everyone at **The Lenham Focus** for their generous donation of our new 'buddy benches' (one shown here). These have been a wonderful addition to our outdoor area and are being very well used by the children during playtimes.

We have been truly overwhelmed by the kindness and support shown by the local community, from warm wishes to thoughtful donations. We are incredibly grateful for everything that has been done to help us get started.



Please keep an eye on our social media pages for updates and details of upcoming community events.

Admissions remain open across all our pathways for the current academic year.

To find out more or to arrange a visit to see our school, please get in touch via email to officeadmin@earleyspringsschool.com or call us on 01622 805 222.

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Lenham Meadows Trust

Countryside and community

There's a lot of work needed at our lovely Glebe Pond – can YOU help?



We have a long list of essential jobs to do at Glebe Pond over the coming months. For example, at the front of the pond, we will be:

- Repairing hedging in the gap on Tanyard Lane (blue oval) to prevent its use as a shortcut and to allow any new hedges to grow.
- Removing plastic cones from hedges.
- Trimming back nettles and other plants (around the new hedges and in front of the pond).
- General clearing up of rubbish and debris.

- Removing the large dead wood from the pond's water edge (if dry enough).
- Building bug hotels using material from the site (tree cutting and garden slabs).

And there's a lot of cutting-back of hedging, privet, laurel etc at the back of the pond, including trimming the small tree (marked green on map). The wider area in yellow is a good pollinator area and this would help extend/maintain it.

The next volunteer day is SUNDAY 4th JANUARY 09:30 – 11:00. Just turn up at Glebe Pond, Old Ashford Road to help with the tasks – we'll be there to guide you.

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

Working Together to tackle anti-social behaviour



Your role matters. Every report of anti-social behaviour helps us build a clearer picture and take effective action. Whether it's nuisance bikes, catapults, or other concerns, small details can make a big difference.

What tools do we use?

We use a range of powers to respond proportionately and effectively:

- **Warnings and notices** – Set clear expectations and consequences for behaviour.
- **Conditions and restrictions** – For example, limiting where certain activities can take place or involving parents when needed.
- **Interventions and diversions** – For example, targeted work to encourage young people to understand the consequences of their actions, whilst undertaking a specific activity to build understanding and positive relationships.
- **Escalation Options** – If problems persist, we can take further steps to protect communities by using seizure powers, fixed penalty notices and even court interventions. We can even use tenancy powers where appropriate.

This approach focuses on working with families and individuals to prevent repeat behaviour and is done collaboratively with police, local authority and local housing providers to name just a few.

How you can help:

- Report incidents promptly via www.kent.police.uk/ or <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>.
- Share this message with friends, family, and local groups.
- Encourage others to report what they see – every piece of information counts.

Why reporting is vital:

Maidstone Borough Council, neighbourhood policing teams and other partners rely on information from residents. Even if it seems minor, reporting through official channels helps us identify patterns and act sooner.

What helps most?

- **Descriptions** of bikes, cars, dogs etc. – unlike clothing, these often stay the same and help us link incidents.
- **Doorbell footage or CCTV** – even short clips can be useful.
- **Names, nicknames, or known hangout spots** – helps us engage early. It is very likely those responsible are members of your community and are known to some of you.
- **Times and locations** – build a clearer picture of when and where issues are happening.



Stay Connected with Kent Police

My Community Voice is a two-way engagement tool for residents, businesses and community groups in Kent and Medway.

- Participate in local surveys that directly influence your local policing priorities
- Receive news, alerts, appeals, engagement events and policing updates by email, text or voicemail.
- Share or reply to messages to help improve communication and problem-solving.

Sign up at:

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Together, we can keep Maidstone safe and strong. Thank you for playing your part.



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Ham Lane Allotments

A review by Doug Matthews

On the allotment plot this year, the weather was quite challenging. Despite everything that was thrown at us in 2024 in the way of rain, in 2025 the lack of rain gave us an altogether different challenge, although tomatoes were plentiful.

Digging the earth is in our blood it seems. Whether we are house builders, farmers or gardeners, it all begins with the ground. Many of us have inherited a love of gardening. Most of us are descended from agricultural labourers. My mother was from Ireland and anything she planted grew. She had “green fingers”, of course. My father dabbled in gardening and had a passing interest in growing Dahlias. All his life he worked at night outdoors as a water inspector listening for water leaks. I suppose he had enough fresh air doing his job and didn't feel the need to get outside with a fork and spade at his side. My dad was always concerned about the weather. I remember him listening to his favourite radio programme, “*Round the Horn*”, on a Sunday afternoon. He laughed so

much after the comedy duo, **Flanders and Swan** had sung ‘*A Song of the Weather*’.

*January brings the snow
Makes your feet and fingers glow*
*February's ice and sleet
Freeze the toes right off your feet*
*Welcome March with wintry wind
Would thou wert not so unkind*
*April brings the sweet Spring showers
On and on for hours and hours*
*Farmers fear unkindly May
Frost by night and hail by day*
*June just rains and never stops
Thirty days and spoils the crops*
*In July the sun is hot
Is it shining? No, it's not*
*August cold and dank and wet
Brings more rain than any yet*
*Bleak September's mist and mud
Is enough to chill the blood*
*Then October adds a gale
Wind and slush and rain and hail*
*Dark November brings the fog
Should not do it to a dog*
*Freezing wet December then...
Bloody January again.*

The allotment waiting list is always open to residents in and around Lenham. This year, three on our waiting list became new allotment tenants. Although at present it takes an average of 18 months to come to the top of our list, the national average is 3 years. In London it is 10 years. So if you are



inclined to allotment gardening and have time to spare then apply now. It will come round sooner than you think.

To contact me or go on the waiting list, email me at: dmlenham@gmail.com

Does anyone know how to remove a jet plane which has appeared on top of our allotments (courtesy of Google Maps)!!??



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Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

Friday JANUARY 9TH

**Performance begins 19.30,
doors open 19.00**

**Running time: 1 hr 50 mins,
Director: George Roy Hill**

A new year – and a treasured old film. And what a film! No matter if you've already watched **Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** (PG, 1969), come along on Friday, January 9th to see our audience vote for this season. It's a film that gets even better every time you see it – if that's possible. Butch Cassidy, played by Paul Newman, and Robert Redford as the Sundance Kid combine their comic talents in the most unforgettable western that Hollywood ever produced. When a train robbery goes wrong, they are on the run with a vengeful posse on their heels. The posse

is not going to give up its pursuit and it's up to Butch to come up with a plan to get them out of this mess. The chase is on, over rivers and rocks and through towns, but even with the added love interest provided by Katharine Ross, they can't shake off their pursuers – or can they? Do come and see what happens. Why? Well, as the film tagline goes, *'just for the fun of it'*.

Our February film is blockbuster **The Roses** (15, 2025) which is also a comedy, starring Olivia Colman and Benedict Cumberbatch. Their marriage goes astray big time and the humour is dark. A splendid film to watch on February 13th...

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

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



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Tickets: Adults - £6

Children 2-16 - £4

Under 2y.o is free if sitting on an adult's lap.

Tickets will be available from 00:01 on 01.12.2025 by contacting the Box Office on hams.tickets@gmail.com or by calling/texting 07731455677

Tickets can also be purchased on Sunday evenings between 6 & 7 pm from the Lenham Community Centre.

Lines and emails are not active until the release date. Any requests made before this date will not be received.



The latest news from Chris Godden



In November we welcomed Kimberley Cunningham from the **Friends of William Harvey Hospital** who gave us a talk on the work that they do. It was eye opening. They started in 1977 and raised around £3,000 per week, now they raise **£30,000 per week**. They spend up to £350,000 each year on equipment that the NHS simply can't afford. They also buy things that the NHS can't even consider and that assist in comforting patients at the Hospital and improving lives. The fully-stocked shop in the foyer of the Hospital turns over £1m a year!

The shop is run by a small group of staff, ably assisted by wonderful volunteers and led by the volunteer Board of Trustees. Each department in the hospital has a shopping list of equipment that they need. This equipment ranges from new kettles to mobile scanners and reclining chairs for chemotherapy treatment. In the last quarter £61,500 was raised but the requirements could add up to £240,000, so it is ongoing work. They provide everything from toys, books and knitted handbags to hats and shawls for dementia patients and

premature babies. Everybody who is in hospital on Christmas Day gets a present.

They donate £100 per month to the food bank in the Cancer Unit. They have installed screens in the A&E Department that have replaced the curtained off sections and these screens can change from clear to opaque so that privacy is maintained when required.

If you are interested in supporting the Friends you can go to **Facebook** and search for Friends of William Harvey Hospital. Even the smallest of donations is welcome.

We have been making gift bags to hold a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste for the homeless in Canterbury. We donated over 30 of them to the Porchlight Charity who do so much work to help the homeless get back on track. This is a project linked to our national campaign called Dental Health Matters. They can also be donated to food banks and women's refuges.

Coming up this year we have a Tai Chi talk and demonstration on 15th January; Beauty, Duty and Trench coats on 12th February; Makeup for the Mature Woman on 12th March and Lucy Allen, the Stunt Woman on 9th April. So a varied programme for 2026.

If you want to join us, we meet at Lenham Community Centre on the second Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. Please come along and see what we get up to.

To find out more please contact rrgodden@btinternet.com



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A View From Across The Pond

By Diane Bonfonte, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

The first tasks of 2026 could be to display a new calendar and create a 'to do list' in the tradition of New Year's resolutions. Below, is a list of fun facts of Canadian 'firsts'.

Sir Sanford Fleming, during a lecture in Toronto (1879) first suggested "*the world should be divided into 24 equal time zones*". This workable system was first thought as "contrary to the will of God". In 1883, 'Standard Time' was adopted by 25 countries, and on January 1, 1885 - GMT was established.

... Gideon Sundback patented the 'zipper' in 1917. In 1923 this was manufactured for a new product by global rubber company, B.F. Goodrich. It was headquartered with vast factories (now closed) in Waterloo - their first 'rubber galoshes' with this form of closure sold solely for kids.



... In 1860, the Queen's Plate (now King's Plate) began. It's North America's oldest continuously run turf stakes race event. By 15 years, it predates the Kentucky Derby.

All members of Britain's Royal Family attended frequently and respectively, presented the trophy to each winner.

... The invention of green ink by T.S. Hunt (chemistry professor at Montreal's McGill University) was first used for printing US currency 'greenbacks' - immune to forgery. A 'fellow' of the Royal Society of London, in 1882 he helped found the Royal Society of Canada.

... Ontario farmer, John McIntosh, discovered a wild apple tree on his land.

He set up a business and sold branches of this tree that could be grafted to grow new trees since apple seeds



can't re-produce the same variety. The original tree stopped bearing fruit in 1906. Today, every McIntosh apple tree around the world is a descendant of the one big 'mac'.

... Canadians invented five-pin bowling and basketball but these were not patented, unlike those issued for Pabulum, Insulin and Canada Dry Ginger Ale.

In 1874, Alexander Graham Bell's 'conception' of the telephone in Brantford, Ontario, was initially to improve the telegraph system with "continuous connectivity". He was an expert specialising in vocal physiology and acoustics just like his grandfather in Scotland, whose invention of device aids in this field were made very famous by the Henry Higgins character in 'My Fair Lady'.

Fast forward... Research in Motion (RIM founded in Waterloo), first developed the Inter Active Pager 900, 1996. Subsequently, RIM developed, patented and released many versions of their 'smart phone'. Blackberry was chosen as the name because the



keyboard resembled a blackberry fruit's drupelets. 'Thumbing' became an addictive reality for millions across the globe earning 'Crackberry' as its nickname. Over 45 buildings had a huge presence in Waterloo, locally employing thousands of the 'millennial' generation. Now, only memories.

... A Toronto medical student, Henry Woodward along with a partner Matthew Evans in 1874, patented the first incandescent lamp with an electric light bulb. A year later, lacking funds to develop their invention, sold their US patent 'rights' to Thomas Edison who, in 1879, developed a more 'practical lamp' / light bulb.

...AND AS IT IS SAID, "THE REST IS HISTORY"!



January 27, 1880: US patent granted to Thomas Edison - image of his carbon filament lamp.

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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.

Contact details: Lisa Westcott

(Clerk) 01622 829034

clerk@lenhamparishcouncil.org.uk

www.lenhamparish.org.uk

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'Fitter Stronger Dance Fitness' and 'Fitter Stronger 60+Fitness'

By Paula Hickford

Moving home and starting work in a new area is always a little daunting. After moving to Lenham I launched a new fitness class, at Harrietsham Village Hall for age 60+. As a personal trainer, I had worked with individuals and run classes in Kent for 10 years. I was so happy to welcome ten clients to my first class and I now have 20 lovely ladies who attend (men are welcome too).

My classes are different every week, but the themes of stamina, flexibility, strength, co-ordination and balance are constant. There is often a dance too, and always lots of chatter and laughter! We enjoyed themed classes at Halloween and Christmas when everyone came along in fancy dress. And we like a social occasion, enjoying lunches nearby.

In Harrietsham, my lovely new class have known each other for just a few months. But very quickly a kind, supportive, united community has formed. They help each other within and outside the class and have created a wonderful team spirit.

Equally, they are welcoming to new people who join, and quickly become part of that team. As we get older, it can become harder to make friends.



In my classes, you'll gain functional fitness to take into everyday tasks. You'll have gained a fitter, stronger body, increased confidence in your agility and a new circle of friends, from all walks of life. Everyone is welcome, whatever your exercise ability, and you'll work at your own pace to reflect your individual energy levels.

Exercise is powerful for physical and mental health. It's a great distraction when life is stressful. Movement releases endorphins, lowering the stress hormone cortisol, leading to improved sleep. When we are rested, we pay more attention to how we eat and drink, regulating our metabolism. Reducing cortisol spikes enables us to make clearer decisions.

Inspired by my lovely class, I am starting another. My **new** dance fitness class is for all age groups and launches in January. If you like to bop to the radio in the kitchen, or were glued to Strictly Come Dancing, bring your best dance moves and come and join us!

Held at Harrietsham Village Hall, **Fitter Stronger Dance Fitness** is at **10am** and **Fitter Stronger 60+ Fitness** is at **11am both on Thursdays**.

Email info@fitterstronger.org for more information.



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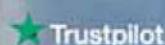
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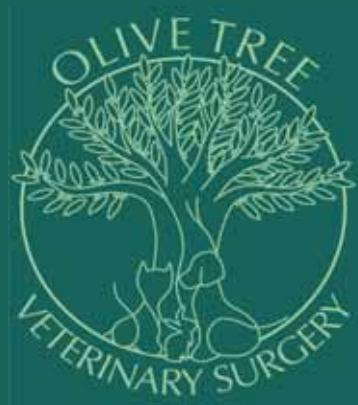
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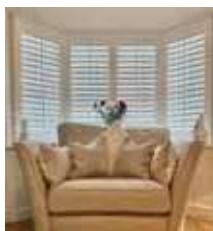
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The Great Eater of Kent

by Henny Shotter

Did you know that gluttony, overeating, is one of the seven deadly sins? You didn't? That said, after a traditional Christmas dinner, several drinks and chocolates, most of us feel that overeating can be deadly indeed!

Still, yours and my overeating is nothing in comparison to the 'achievements' of Nicholas Wood from Harrietsham who was a competitive eater in the early 1600s. A contemporary story claims¹ that he ate a whole sheep... uncooked!... and another time he gulped down 30 dozen pigeons which is hardly believable!

As a local celebrity, he was invited into the houses of the local gentry. When he was a guest at Lord Wotton's Manor of Boughton Malherbe, he ate 84 rabbits. He was also invited by Sir Warham Ledger, who resided in Ulcombe Manor next to the church where he ate 'two loynes of mutton and one loyne of veal'. The landlady of the White Lion in Harrietsham (would be nice to know where this was!) confirmed that, in one sitting, he washed down a bowl of pottage and nine loaves of bread with



three jugs of beer.

Nicholas Wood's fame was such that one John Taylor had in mind to take him to London to the famous bear garden near the Thames and make money by taking bets. Nicholas declined on the ground of his age and the loss of his teeth!

It was rare that Wood disappointed those who bet on him. In Lenham, one Robert Dale bragged that he could satisfy Nicholas' appetite for the mean sum of 2 shillings. He bought 6 pots of 'potent, high and mighty ale' and twelve loaves of white bread which he soaked in the ale. The result of this meal is described as it 'conquered the conqueror, robbed him of his reason, bereft him of his wit and blindfolded him with sleep.' It seems that Nicholas Wood didn't see old age, dying toothless and impoverished in his forties.

Today, we are wiser. After overeating during the festive period, we annually embrace a new eating regime. Going on a diet is rather 'old hat'; these days we embark on a new and healthier lifestyle which, nevertheless, only in very few cases lasts a lifetime. However, we can keep trying!

Reference:

1. The great eater of Kent, or part of the admirable teeth and stomachs exploits of Nicholas Wood,... 1630 by John Taylor see: https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1475-1640_the-great-eater-of-kent-_taylor-john_1630/page/n23/mode/2up



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JANUARY 22nd 2026

Lenham Community Centre

12 Groom Way, Lenham ME17 2QT

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Lenham Village Hub update



For several years now there has been a proposal to update the tired amenities inside St Mary's Church.

The primary reason for the project is so that the church building can be better used by the community for socialising, celebrating and learning.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals, local fundraising activities, appeals by the team to charitable funders and the local fund raising organisations 'Friends of St Mary's' and the 'Hatch Trust', we are absolutely delighted to be able to let you know that the first phase of the work is to start in February 2026.

This will include a semi-professional kitchen and a new emergency exit. The

plan is to have this work completed by early spring 2026.

We have also started to fundraise for Phase 2 of the project which will include the installation of a level surface at the west end of the Nave and the installation of under-floor heating powered by an air source heat pump.

Subject to funding being available, we plan to complete this work by spring 2027. The plans for the full project are on display in the church.

If you are interested in knowing more please email lenhamvillagehub@gmail.com.

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 (2nd 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 (1st 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 (Tue-Thur 10am-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	Vacancy	churchoffice@lvb.org.uk
Wellbeing Community Group	Ellie Stevens	07952-594655 / (Vladimir 07877-143088)
Women's Institute	Chris Godden	01622-858658

Lenham Community Centre - Regular Clubs/Classes/Societies - January 2026

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

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



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Lenham Gardening Society

From Margaret Baines

We welcome you all to the **first meeting of 2026 on 15th of January** that will feature Clive Nuttman talking about the 'Orchards of Kent'. The evening will start at **7.30pm**.

The competition will be for 1 succulent and/or 1 slice of Fruit Cake.

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 evening closes.

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



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An update from Sarah Emberson

Kent County Councillor for Maidstone Rural East

As 2025 has come to an end, I thought now would be a good time to reflect on what Reform UK has been doing for the people of Kent in our first six months in office. We were elected with a pledge to scrutinise the finances of KCC and make savings, address potholes and be a strong advocate for the County. Our work has been to achieve those pledges and put Kent people and businesses first. I am pleased to report there have been a number of successes from investing in our roads, driving efficiencies and championing Kent's interests. I will focus on the highlights for now but will continue to update on our other successes as we go through 2026.

Highlights:

- We inherited a challenging financial position, KCC had debts of £732 million, was paying debt interest charges of £84k each day and had a target of £121 million in savings and increased income to achieve in 2025/26. In our first six months the debt has been reduced by £67 million and £100 million of savings made with an additional £40m of future savings found.
- We commenced the implementation of £67 million investment into road repairs, which includes the biggest pothole repair programmes in the UK. So far, 22,000 potholes have been filled, 250,000 square metres of road patching (approx. 35 Wembley Stadiums in area) and resurfaced 210,000 square metres of road.
- We scrapped the 'climate emergency declaration of 2019', thereby freeing KCC from expensive and unnecessary work;



enabling more small Kent businesses to tender for work; encouraging a mixed economy of energy use and bringing back common sense to the climate debate in Kent.

- We are leading the campaign to get the Eurostar to stop at Ashford/Ebbsfleet again.
- We're lobbying central government to allow Kent some proceeds from the Dartford Crossing and the Freight Lorry Levy.
- We commenced work to produce an Energy Strategy that will encourage the construction of small nuclear reactors and prevent huge solar farms from being sited on our best agricultural land and despoiling our beautiful countryside.
- We developed a unique response to the government's Local Government Reorganisation programme that would look after Kent's best interests, enable local community engagement and be less expensive for Kent taxpayers.
- We produced 'Reforming Kent'; a new plan for the County, which was launched in November 2025, and which gives the direction of travel for the County Council to achieve a better quality of life for Kent residents and businesses.

I hope you'll agree; huge strides have been made and there will be more to come in the New Year! **I hope you and your family had a very Merry Christmas and wish you all a Happy New Year!**

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Recipe of the Month

Hannah's Scrumptious Orange Cake

Ingredients:

200g satsumas or clementines
4 large free-range eggs
1 large lemon, zest only
160g golden caster sugar
100ml olive oil
175g ground almonds
2tsp baking powder

For the syrup:

15g caster sugar
1 large lemon, juice only



Method:

1. Place the satsumas in a saucepan, cover with water, bring to the boil and simmer gently for 20-30 minutes until tender. Remove and set aside until cool enough to handle. Cut in half and remove any pips.
2. Pre-heat the oven to 180c/160c fan/gas 4. Grease a 20cm spring form cake tin and line the bottom with greaseproof paper.
3. Put the satsumas, including the skin, into a food processor and blend to a paste.
4. Whisk together the eggs, lemon zest and caster sugar in a bowl. Add the olive oil and beat until well combined. Stir in the satsuma paste then fold in the ground almonds and baking powder.
5. Spoon the mixture into the tin and bake for 50 minutes or until well risen and golden brown. The cake should have shrunken slightly from the sides and be springy to the touch. Leave it to cool in the tin on a wire rack.
6. Meanwhile make the syrup. Warm the sugar and lemon juice in a small pan over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Make lots of holes all over the cake with a piece of spaghetti or a cocktail stick then drizzle over the syrup. Let the cake cool completely in the tin, turn it out onto a serving plate. Serve with whipped cream.

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Desserts

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- Raspberry mousse, raspberry ripple ice cream, coulis

Please tick your menu choices. If you'd like to sit with anyone in particular, please let us know on this form and we will try our best to sit you together.

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A Magical Christmas at Lenham Primary School

says Andrea McCluskey, Headteacher



We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Christmas! Here at Lenham Primary School, the festive season was truly special.

Our celebrations began with the children singing at the Lenham Lights Switch-On, a highlight of the year where their beautiful voices filled the village with festive cheer. Year 4 also had the fantastic opportunity to perform at the Social Club, spreading joy to the local community.

Back at school, excitement reached new heights with the enchanting performance of *The Twinkly Nativity by Years 1 and 2*. From Shining Stars to Joseph, Mary, Angels and even a Donkey, the children's brilliant acting and singing made us all incredibly proud.

In the final week of term, pupils explored Christmas traditions around the world and visited the local church to sing carols. On December 17th, Santa himself paid a visit – accompanied by his helpful elf – delivering gifts kindly organised by our amazing PTA.

We rounded off the term with a beautiful Carol Service, thoughtfully arranged by Mrs Killick, leaving everyone in the true spirit of Christmas.

Looking ahead to Term 3, our assemblies will focus on Families and Identity. Year 6 will enjoy Forest School, following Year 4's fantastic experience last term. Our School Council will meet with Governors to share ideas, and our School Journalists are now reporting on events via our website - be sure to check it out!



Our PTA is working tirelessly to raise funds for exciting improvements to our school!

We're aiming to enhance our outdoor space with a new sandpit (£1,650) and provide 30 Chromebooks (£6,000) to support digital learning. If you know any businesses that might like to get involved, we've relaunched our Amazon Wish List:

<https://amzn.eu/0E1b9O2>

We've also submitted a bid to join the Tesco Blue Token Scheme at Tesco Grove Green and are waiting to hear back. In addition, we're completing paperwork for other local funding opportunities.

Did you know we're part of the School Lottery? It's a fun way to support the school and have the chance to win prizes! Every contribution makes a difference.



You can find the link for the Lottery here:

www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/lenham-primary-school



Chair – Cllr John Britt

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

Welcome to 2026. Let's hope that this year is kind to us all!

Budget setting

The Parish Council is busy setting its budget for the 2026/27 financial year. The Parish Council has two budgets; one which is entirely focused on capital spending (for larger projects) – this one does not affect the Parish Precept, and another which covers the running costs of the council and the areas it is responsible for – this one does affect the Parish Precept.

All our revenue costs are increasing; no-one is immune from that. However, we will continue to ensure that we get best value for money for the regular services we oversee and that, where possible, the work is awarded to local companies. These costs are mostly related to maintenance of green space and dealing with the trees for which the parish is responsible, ensuring the play areas are safe for little ones to use, that the village remains tidy and there are planted flower beds, the picnic area is kept clean and tidy and the Lenham Cross is maintained. We are also responsible for looking after the Lenham Cemetery and this year, as part of our capital budget, we plan to tackle the footpath around the boundary to make sure that this is safe for people to walk over as well as the funeral vehicles used to transport relatives to the graves.

Another capital project we will carry over from the current year's budget is the upgrade of the CCTV coverage. This is already underway as we have been working with the police to identify new locations for camera coverage, and this will be rolled out during 2026.

Our final capital project will be to start the development of the new nursery. This however depends on a successful match-funding bid for strategic funding (from Community Infrastructure Levy on new builds, held by Maidstone Borough Council). Hopefully we will hear more about that early in the New Year.

Heathlands

The public consultation for the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) closed mid-December. The Parish Council submitted a comprehensive technical response to the proposal, and we now wait to see what changes, if any, the borough council, and its delivery partner Homes England, make as a result. We do not expect that information will be available immediately, the consultation for the proposal at Lidsing also happened at the same time so we expect that to be reviewed first. We will, of course, keep everyone updated on any outcomes. Our response to the Heathlands public consultation is available on the parish website.

Parish Council meetings

I would like to remind everyone that all our meetings are held in public. They all take

place in the Lenham Community Centre, and they all start at 7:30pm. Each month we hold a full council meeting (always the first Wednesday of the month), then there is a dedicated planning meeting, usually on a Wednesday around the middle of the month, and finally a finance meeting on the last Monday of the month (although this gets moved around when a Bank Holiday is due).

Agendas are published on our website; all planning applications in the parish can be seen there as well. If you want to raise something ahead of a meeting please drop into the Parish Office, at 1A High Street, and speak to the Parish Clerks – they will be happy to speak to you, and the Parish Office is open 10:00 – 13:00 Tuesday to Thursday.

It's **your** parish council, please come and find out what is going on!

Countryways Quilters and Stitchers

From Pamela Gillard

Welcome to 2026 everyone. We have an exciting year ahead of us. Some of our newer members have not yet made a quilt. We've been making all sorts of things in patchwork but not tackled a whole quilt for a few years.

So this year the process begins. We'll discuss design and colour choices. We'll debate whole cloth, appliqué or patchwork. And later learn how to construct the layers and choose the wadding based on whether we are hand quilting or machine quilting. Then choosing a quilting design and how we will bind to finish off our quilt. Yes a lot to take in but thankfully not all at once.

Our first meeting on **January 6th** will be more of a social catch-up day finishing old projects and showing off newly



completed ones. On **January 20th** we will begin our quilt journey by learning the easiest patchwork blocks. The first two in a series of six that will make up eventually into a sampler quilt.

I hope you'll come and join us and try your hand at something new or just enjoy the company, have a chat and a cup of tea. It's 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 if you plan to drop in, for more information on the group or a copy of our 2026 programme.



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Reflections of the Railway: dated Tuesday April 2 1954

by Brian Llong

The man who stood before me was short in stature, his faded pin striped suit with frayed cuffs hung on a small frame. His hands were deeply stained with nicotine, a 'Players Weight' now burning in his fingers. Under his cap, his eyes, however, demanded no argument with his instructions. His introduction, 'My name is Reg and I'm your foreman. Follow me'. As he turned, I realised he was crippled. His right leg had been amputated, and his false leg creaked as he walked.

In front of us stood the largest building I have ever seen. Pointing to a large notice on the wall, Reg said, 'Read this, and wait until I come back'. This was the introduction to the only safety instructions you received, but it gave out practical common sense, in easy reading terms.

Reg had now returned unnoticed. He asked me a couple of questions and once more we continued to the place where I would start work. We entered the engine shed, where I met the people who would become friends for the rest of my life.

Only now could I turn to look at the rows of giants as they stood awaiting the services they were undergoing. The huge driving wheels and the massive boilers made men who moved around them look no bigger than ants. The smell, which every footplate man can never forget, mingled hot oil, smoke and steam that somehow seemed to be injected into the blood for life.

Reg now pointed to a bundle of cotton waste standing near a bucket of paraffin. 'Your job is wheels and gears. First dip that waste into the paraffin, wash the wheel off until all traces of grease and oil have gone, then dry off with more waste.' The engine was a L1 with inside Stevenson's link. As

I daubed away with my paraffin-soaked cotton waste, whilst sitting astride the huge piston rod crouched under the boiler casing, I could not know that this waste, with all its variations, would become a part of my life.

'Tea break', someone called, and our chatter joined the huge cacophony of sound that echoed around us. Another fortnight would pass before I could proudly present my first pay packet of £2-17s to my mum.

'When you finish the wheels, use the steps to get up on the framing. Take the bucket up there and get in under the boiler. Clean all the gears you see. Now, before you start, did you look for the 'Not to be moved' board before you went anywhere near this engine? No? Now listen, that red board is your life! Without it this engine could be moved at any time and you would be crushed. The only person who can remove that board is the bloke who put it there.'

'Do as you're told when you're here my son. Mick, keep an eye on him' he called out to the lad who was cleaning high on the boiler. 'Reg and I can't wet-nurse 'em all' he shouted. Reg grinned and walked away, lighting another fag.

Feeling all fingers and thumbs, I swamped the huge gears, as well as myself, with paraffin and carried on until everyone stopped for tea at ten. I then got to know them all. The day ended; the next one was easier.

This was my introduction to the motive power running shed at Ashford. After catching the train home from Ashford to Hollingborne. I presented myself to my mum, black as a rook and dripping with paraffin. How could I know this was the beginning of 50 years' service?

An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

I hope you all had a good Christmas break and have a very Happy New Year.

As I reflect back on 2025 the thing that hits me most is the amount of development planned for my constituency. If it all goes ahead it will mean an extra 20,000 plus houses which is double the size of Faversham Town. The big developments in the pipeline include:

- Lenham Heath – 5,000 houses
- Lidsing Garden Village – 2,000 houses
- Winterbourne Fields – 1,815 houses
- Duchy development, Faversham – 2,500 houses
- Highsted Park – 8,400 houses

And these developments do not include the two huge solar farms: Graveney and Pitstock near Rodmersham, nor the many smaller developments of 50 plus houses popping up all over the place.

Together, they will not only change this part of Kent forever, but the extra cars will bring our roads to a standstill. That's why I am pressing for the lion's share of new housing to go in towns and cities where there is the infrastructure, public transport and jobs to support it.

I have made my views clear to Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and the Government that high quality agricultural land should be used for farming and that this amount of development is too much for this part of Kent.

Over the summer I signed a letter to the Prime Minister calling for a clear ban on large solar developments on our most productive farmland and for the



Government to prioritise solar panels on buildings and brownfield sites instead.

This year I plan to do even more. I will start 2026 with a 'New year no more new houses' petition to present to the Government making clear the strength of feeling against these developments. If you are interested in supporting my campaign sign up to my newsletter www.helenwhately.org.uk/sign-my-newsletter-here or Google 'Helen Whately MP newsletters' to find out more.

And together we can make sure the Government can no longer ignore us.

As ever, if there is anything I can do to help you please contact me.

Best wishes,

Helen

e: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk

t: 0207 219 6472

Len Valley Health Walks

Your journey to fitness starts here! You've over indulged at Christmas and New Year, so it's time to start a new fitness regime.

Why not give it a kick start it, by joining our health walks? We walk on Thursday and Saturday mornings. Wednesday afternoon walks are for those with less mobility or are recovering from operations.

Walking is good for both your physical and mental health. Walking is an easy, gentle way to start getting active and staying active - and it's never too late to begin! And it's free!

We also have full day walks, including a picnic, usually on a Sunday, twice a year. For the last nine years we have had



an annual walking holiday. For our tenth holiday, this year we are going to Malham, in the South Yorkshire Dales.

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*Volunteers are back at work
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The group of volunteer *Lenham Planters* have been hard at work again re-stocking the various troughs around the village. We thank them for their time and effort in making the village a welcoming site for us and for our visitors.

Here we have

Pat Hollis from the Lenham Gardening Society seen on a cold and wet November day planting pansies in the trough outside the Dog & Bear. **Well done and thank you Pat.**



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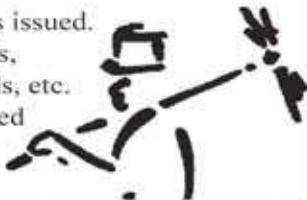


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5th & 6th June

Consignment deadline
1st May

2nd & 3rd October

Consignment deadline
28th August

10th & 11th April

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A day in the Osteopath Clinic

With Chris Tempest "The Lenham Osteopath"

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www.thelenhamosteopath.co.uk

With Christmas and New Year upon us, I do hope you had a great time and wish you a great new year from my family to yours!

This month I thought I'd change it slightly. There's a lot of confusion as to what an osteopath is and how they can help. So, the purpose of this article is to help you understand what an osteopath is and clarify the confusion. So let's begin...

What do you treat?

I predominantly focus on muscle/joint problems and general acute/chronic back pain, but I also treat: Headaches (migraine prevention), frozen shoulder, sciatica, arthritic aches & pains, stress, fibromyalgia, cramp, digestion problems, inability to relax, muscle spasms, minor sports injuries and tensions – to name a few.

Is it good to see an Osteopath regularly?

Yes: >75% of patients go to an osteopath for "maintenance" treatment, this type of treatment is performed every 3/4 – 6/12 weeks etc and this can be easily described as an "MOT" for the body as performed on a car. If we look at this analogy, running a car is ok providing the regular maintenance is upheld and it's exactly the same as our bodies. If we abuse our bodies (i.e. from intense exercise,

stressful jobs, hectic lifestyles) it needs that osteopathic treatment more often.

What is the typical age of a patient?

I treat patients of all ages, my youngest patient is 3 weeks old; my eldest is 97! Everyone of any age can benefit from treatment, each from varied backgrounds. One patient may be a 24st bodybuilder, the next a 3 week old baby and the next a 90 year old grandparent.

How does an Osteopath differ from a Chiropractor or Physiotherapist?

Classically an osteopath will look at a patient more holistically. We look at the whole body versus a local region. For a shoulder injury; the local aspects of the shoulder joint will most definitely be injured or inflamed leading to issues across upper part of the back, potentially to the opposing shoulder/neck/mid-low thoracic spine, creating compensatory patterns as it travels. Thus leading to more problems i.e. headaches/muscle spasms/a predisposition to injure the opposing shoulder. If we don't look at the whole body you miss these associated factors. A Physiotherapist and Chiropractor will work slightly different by treating more local and using different techniques.

Do Osteopaths just "Pop/Crunch" bones?!

Many people believe we do

a lot of "bone crunching!" We can do that... but we also have a lot more to offer.

We can perform very gentle treatment too; this helps us accommodate patients of all shapes and sizes. Osteopaths can be split into 3 categories:

Structural: This will focus on a lot of stretching, soft tissue, spinal decompression techniques, massage, joint realignment, bone manipulation and mobilisation. Generally a firmer treatment!

Visceral: More of a gentle approach, helping to ease tension and restore balance within the body's organs, helping in certain conditions such as IBS.

Cranial: This style I find works amazingly for newborns, very elderly and the very fragile, a gentle treatment helping to realign the bones of the cranium (these house the nerves that supply the majority of our senses and digestive system, if these are out of alignment or under stress/strain it'll have a direct effect on the system it supplies), whilst removing any physiological strains and compensatory patterns that shouldn't be there.

I am trained in all 3 aspects and my associates are also, although we each have our set styles we prefer to treat within, this adds diversity to the practice a real benefit for our patients.

For more help or to book a consultation

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Simple Wellbeing: The power of motion

By Vladimir Barkanov

Up until now, I've mostly been exploring how we can improve our wellbeing through mindful practice, reflection, or other forms of internal work. This time, I want to talk about a very external approach – movement.

It's well established that physical movement can support our mental wellbeing. It doesn't have to be an intense workout. A dance (say, a Barn Dance), a walk, or regular light exercise can boost the production of endorphins, the feel-good hormones in our brain. When we get up and move, making it part of our daily routine, it brings physical & mental benefits.

Physical benefits: • Increased strength
• Higher energy levels • Prevention of back problems
• Strengthened immune system
• Weight management • Improved skin health • Pain relief.

Mental benefits: • Better mood
• Cognitive boost • Improved sleep
• Greater self-confidence and self-esteem
• Enhanced resilience.

So, what if you've been 'not exactly motionless' but out of deliberate exercise for a while? Where do you begin? The thought of joining a gym can be daunting,

"To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear,"

Buddha

and it takes time and money. Long walks might not sound appealing either, especially when you come home tired after work. So, what is the alternative?

Find the absolute minimum amount of exercise you can commit to. It might feel embarrassingly small – but that doesn't matter. Any movement is better than none. Even the tiniest bit of physical activity will make a difference. Trying to go "all or nothing" rarely works, and more often than not, it ends up being nothing. If you've been inactive for a while and suddenly overdo it, it's easy to injure yourself – which means recovery time and possibly another long delay before you try again. It can knock your motivation flat. Start small, and build up gradually.

In my own experience, I started from the very bottom. I used to be active and fit, until a combination of depression and thyroid issues led to a rapid weight gain and a complete loss of energy. For the next 10–15 years, my only exercise was walking at work. It was better than nothing, but... I developed back problems, my knees started playing up, and I realised that movement at work didn't give me any feel-good hormones.

So, five years ago, I decided to start moving again. I began with just 10 wall push-ups a day. Soon that became 30. Now, I average 200 push-ups against the kitchen counter before breakfast, and I try to get to the gym three times a week.

The main thing, though, is simply to move. The amount isn't the goal. Feeling better – that's the goal.

"Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states."

Carol Welch

January Anniversaries

10 January

10 years since the death of **David Bowie**, British pop/rock singer, songwriter and actor.

David Robert Jones, known as David Bowie, was an English singer, songwriter and actor and is regarded as among the most influential musicians of the 20th century. He was born on 8 January 1947 in Brixton and died aged 69 in New York.



2 January

50 years since the death of **Agatha Christie**.

Agatha Christie's most famous book is often considered to be '*Murder on the Orient Express*'. Others regard her most famous work as being '*And Then There Were None*', one of the best-selling novels of all time.

The English writer is known for her 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, particularly those revolving around fictional detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple.

January 21, 1976

50 years ago, the **Concorde supersonic jet** first began passenger service with flights from London to Bahrain and Paris to Rio de Janeiro.

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Help to form Maidstone Town Council

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is inviting views to help shape a Town Council for Maidstone, which would be one of the largest in the country.

Following public consultation earlier this summer, 57% of respondents supported the proposal to explore options for the currently unparished urban area of Maidstone to become a Town Council with a local voice and identity. With the potential impacts of upcoming Local Government Reorganisation, respondents shared their desire to introduce this local level of representation, in line with the rest of the borough.

A Town Council would be responsible for owning assets, running local services, providing funding for local communities and projects, and would continue the historic office of the Mayor of Maidstone, which has existed since 1549. These services would be funded through a small precept. The consultation feedback has informed proposals for Stage 2 of this Community Governance Review and MBC would like to hear views on the Maidstone Town Council proposal, including:

- whether a single Town Council is appropriate to represent the urban areas of Maidstone at a parish level;
- the warding pattern for the Town Council;
- the name of the new parish and its wards;
- the number of councillors to represent the area; and
- the interim arrangements to form the Town Council.

MBC is asking for comments on **Let's Talk Maidstone** before the closing date on **Sunday 1 February 2026**.



The council is encouraging all residents to respond in order to achieve the best, most accurate reflection of the views of Maidstone people. A leaflet, with survey details, will be sent to every household in the unparished area to encourage residents not to miss out on this opportunity to contribute their views and shape this important decision.

The results of the consultation will be analysed by the council's Democracy and General Purposes Committee in early 2026, before the final decision is presented to the Full Council in April. If approved, a Community Governance Order will be issued and plans for full adoption, including elections to the Town Council, will commence.

Other options were considered as part of Stage 1, including having smaller parishes to represent different communities within the urban area and relying on Chartered Trustees to be responsible for the office of the Mayor of Maidstone.

Through the feedback, it was indicated that respondents wanted to preserve the identity of the County Town, including a more permanent future for the Mayoralty.

World Braille Day

World Braille Day, celebrated on January 4th each year, honours the legacy and contributions of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille.

This day, coinciding with the birthday of Louis Braille (who was born on January 4 1809) also raises awareness about the importance of Braille as a tactile reading and writing system for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

World Braille Day serves as a reminder of the significance of accessibility and inclusion in education and information dissemination.

Louis Braille's groundbreaking work has significantly improved the lives of countless individuals with visual impairments, enabling them to access literature, education, and information independently.

What is World Braille Day 2026?

World Braille Day 2026 is the latest commemoration of this meaningful day. It aims to promote Braille literacy and emphasise the right of individuals with visual impairments to access information, education, and culture on an equal basis with others. The day highlights the continued relevance of Braille in the digital age.

How to Celebrate World Braille Day 2026?

Celebrating World Braille Day can involve various activities and initiatives to support Braille literacy and inclusion. Here are some ways to participate:

- Learn Braille: Start learning the Braille alphabet or basic Braille literacy to gain an understanding of this important system.



- Support Braille Organisations: Contribute to organisations that promote Braille literacy and provide resources to individuals with visual impairments.
- Spread Awareness: Share information about World Braille Day and its significance on social media or through community events.
- Read Braille Books: If you know Braille, read a Braille book or share a Braille story with others.
- Advocate for Accessibility: Advocate for increased accessibility in your community, including Braille signage, accessible websites, and Braille materials.
- Donate Braille Materials: Consider donating Braille books or materials to schools, libraries, or organisations that serve individuals with visual impairments.
- Search 'World Braille Day' to download an information pack or check the RNIB website for more details.

Nature Watch

With Darren Hammond

What is the Big Garden Birdwatch?

Well it's nearly that time of year again when the British public can help by counting all the birds that visit the gardens, balconies, window boxes and even nearby parks. The big garden birdwatch has its beginnings in 1979 and was meant for junior members of the RSPB. It was, at the beginning, meant to be a one-off event, but it became pretty popular fuelled by Blue Peter.



This led to a tremendous amount of forms being returned and so the RSPB decided to run the survey or "citizen science project" annually. In 2001 it was opened to adults, which meant it grew even more. Since then the event has grown to over half a million people taking part creating a large set of information that covers more than 45 years.

What happens to the information?

The information has been collected for more than 45 years and the information the birdwatchers give in has charted the changes, sometimes dramatic, that have occurred in the populations of the different species of bird that visit us.



The survey charts how the different bird populations have changed over the years, for example how the song thrush and the greenfinch have been overtaken by the woodpigeon (pictured above) and the long-tailed tit.

The Big Bird-count has shown us winners and losers

The list of birds that have been seen has shown that some species have taken a hit and in fact become losers in that their numbers have dropped.



The other side of the coin are the winners! One such “winner” is the collared dove which has shown a huge increase in numbers (over 300%) since the survey has begun.

They arrived in the 1950's and since 1979 have only increased in numbers. Noisy flyers (their wings make a histling sound) and with fine features and pretty markings they are a lovely garden visitor.

There are losers though

The survey has shown that the greenfinch has had a mixed bag in terms of numbers appearing in the bird-count. This little bird is found in woods and hedges and is a regular garden visitor. However in the 70's and 80's their numbers declined quite a bit, but in the 90s they saw a resurgence. However recently they started to increase in number till a particularly nasty virus caused a decline in their numbers. Thankfully that has reversed a little and their numbers are improving. This is what the bird-count is so good for.

The big bird survey shows other important things

One of the great things the big garden bird watch has done is it has raised awareness of the decline and the causes of decline of some of the bird species. For example it highlighted the decline of birds like the song thrush, which as dropped by over 80% since 1979. This information is then used to help these declining species and hopefully grow their numbers.



You can be a scientist!

So all the information you gather and then feed to the RSPB not only helps conservationists identify which species of bird might be struggling but also helps with showing why they might be declining. This would then help target the efforts to help protect the birds and even their habitats.

So why is it in January?

So why is the big bird-count held in January? For a number of reasons including it being the optimal time for bird spotting, great for data collection and conservation and it's a good time to raise awareness and engage the public. Bird spotting is a bit easier in January because food is scarce and bird behaviour is more predictable so makes it simpler to observe them. And it's a good time to gather base line information before the breeding season in spring.

Finally January is generally a quiet time for most people so it encourages people to engage more with nature and gather information for valuable scientific research.



So if you can, please get involved with this year's count which is over the weekend of 23rd to the 25th of January.

Christian Message

From Ben Doggett, Pathways Church

“Do as I have done for you”: Serving others as Jesus did.

On the night before his death, we witness the unforgettable moment when Jesus kneels to wash the feet of his disciples. Afterwards, in John 13:12-15 we read:

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.

¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s **feet.** ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

In Jesus’ day, a time of open-toed sandals combined with questionable animal deposits in the streets, washing someone’s feet was a grim, undignified task. It belonged to the lowliest servants and certainly not the kind of job anyone was rushing to volunteer for. In doing this for his disciples, Jesus sets a radical and challenging example for us to follow.

When we think about serving others, often our minds jump to helping those we consider less fortunate than ourselves. That is undoubtedly important and a

vital way in which to give of ourselves. But what is so striking about this moment is that Jesus isn’t serving strangers, he is sacrificially serving some of his closest friends.

Someone has to do the washing up. Someone has to buy the groceries. When it comes to acts of service for those closest to us, they can become so repeated that we barely notice them or we can even do them from a sense of duty. Jesus’ example invites us to something deeper; to intentionally seek out humble ways in which we can give of ourselves to bless those we share our lives with.

As we begin a new year and perhaps think about resolutions for the year ahead, what about choosing to follow the example of the Servant King by lovingly and sacrificially serving others, both those we have not met and also those closest to us? The key to this is remembering what we are told in 1 John 4:19: we love because he first loved us. The same is true of serving. Jesus has loved and served us, even to the extent of laying down his life to secure our freedom. As 2026 begins, may our love and service flow as a grateful response to that remarkable gift that we have received.

Len Valley Benefice

Everybody is welcome

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

Sunday 4 January

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church
11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Wednesday 7 January

9.30am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 11 January

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church
11.00am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 18 January

8.00am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)
9.30am Lenham: Breakfast Church
11.00am Lenham: Morning Worship

Sunday 25th January

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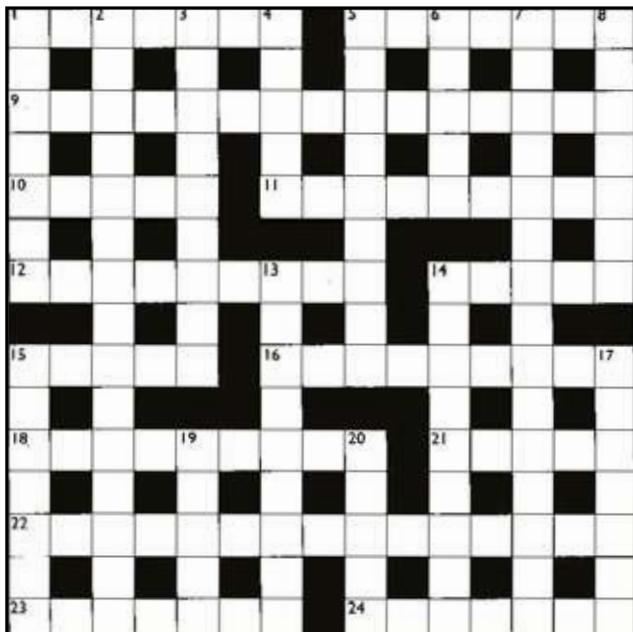
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Focus PRIZE Crossword January 2026

The winner of the November crossword is Peter Winslow of Ulcombe. Well done!



Down clues

1. Criticises floor coverings. (7)
2. This demonstration of loyalty may show written respect. (5,10)
3. Cuddly youngsters in the 50's? Maybe or maybe not! (5,4)
4. Live together short term. Very likely! (5)
5. It could be a right pain in the head, or left, come to think of it. (9)
6. Sort of wooden block or club? Either. (5)
7. Horse that works less than half a week. (5,3,7)

8. Times do change for French dress and hat maker (7)
13. Where a silk worm is found for a short time. (2,1,6)
14. It's up and down and sometimes completed. (9)
15. It's a road that you never need to leave. (7)
17. Club No.2 on course. (7)
19. Give permission shortly. (5)
20. What may be made part of a play. (5)

Across clues

1. This puzzle's this mostly. (7)
5. What a potential 'couple' may like to become! (3,4)
9. Some guitars are and some humans as well, in shape. (5 10)
10. Try to write this. (5)
11. Sounds guiltless but in need of fewer accusations. (9)
12. Following someone when their back is unlit? (9)
14. End a line without right. (5)
15. Has to change promises. (5)
16. How you might be feeling when the tide is out? (2,1,3,3)
18. Soldier American Bill's animals (9)
21. That woman with a degree; There was a Queen here once. (5)
22. Where you can call while keeping others waiting outside. (9,6)
23. The right thing to do with red in your cellar. (3,4)
24. Back the last runner in the East End. (7)

Answers for December 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 21 January** 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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