

The Lenham Focus



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



Free tickets for
 the Faversham
 Literary Festival.
 An exclusive
 opportunity from your
FOCUS magazine.

Enter now into the
FREE DRAW for 2
 tickets to see Sir

**Michael Morpurgo at the Faversham
 Literary Festival on Thursday 26th
 February; 5-6pm at St Mary of Charity,
 Faversham.**

**TO ENTER INTO THE DRAW, SIMPLY
 EMAIL YOUR NAME AND CONTACT
 NUMBER TO THE EDITOR AT
editorialsf@outlook.com or send a
 text with your name to 07714 311008.**

**The winner will be selected at random
 and will be notified direct. More details
 inside.**

Editorial

We bring you news of a great search-and-rescue service for lost dogs (and other animals) – and it's entirely FREE. The UK-wide service called Drone SAR for Lost Dogs relies on volunteer drone operators who use their skills in tracking down, rescuing and returning the lost animals to their homes. The service has been recognised with several prestigious awards, including winning the Animal Star Award of 2025.

Also, inside this month's edition you can read about Panattoni, the largest logistics developer in Europe, who have acquired the old 'Marley' site in Lenham and hope to turn this into a huge plant of up to 1 million square feet of modern warehousing for industrial businesses. Talks with local agencies and stakeholders have already begun and we can expect to see major changes in the coming year.

David Jackson | Editor

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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.

- **Saturday 31st January 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 January 8:30pm:** Dirty Dancing/Grease tribute show and DJ. **Venue:** The Wishful Thinker. **Cost:** £25 includes show and 3-course set menu. Book at Elitepubs.com
- **Friday 6th February 8pm:** Karaoke. **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. Free entry, all welcome.
- **Sunday 8th to Thursday 19th February (excluding 13th & 14th): Valentines promotion.** Book outside hot-tub room and get £60 off dinner for two + free cocktails. **Venue:** Who'd A Thought It.
- **Wednesday 11th February at 2pm for 2:30pm:** Art Society Egerton: 'Ancient Egypt at the British Museum'. **Venue:** Millennium Hall, Egerton. **Cost:** Members free, Visitors £8.
- **Friday 13th February at 7pm for 7:30pm:** Lenham Film Club: 'The Roses'. **Venue:** Community Centre. **Cost:** Adults £5, Under 16's £2.

- **Saturday 14th February:** Bingo. **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. Members only.
- **Saturday 14th February:** Valentines 3-course menu. **Venue:** Who'd A thought it. **Cost:** £125 per couple.
- **Tuesday 17th February:** Quiz night. **Venue:** The Red Lion Pub. **Cost:** £1.50 per person.
- **Thursday 19th February at 1:30pm-3:00pm:** Hi Kent Hearing aids service. **Venue:** Community Centre. **Cost:** Free
- **Friday 20th February – Sunday 1st March:** Faversham Literary Festival. Talks, workshops, family and children's events. See inside for details and at: www.favershamliteraryfestival.org
- **Thursday 26th February at 7pm for 7:30pm:** Lenham Heritage – Happy Birthday Jane Austen. **Venue:** Community Centre. **Cost:** £5 non-members. Members and children FREE.
- **Friday 27th February at 6pm for 6:30pm:** Lenham Film Club: 'Somewhere in England'. **Venue:** Community Centre. **Cost:** Free entry – donation to filmmaker appreciated.



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Free tickets for the Faversham Literary Festival

An exclusive opportunity from your **FOCUS** magazine

Enter now into the FREE DRAW for 2 tickets to see Sir Michael Morpurgo at the Faversham Festival on Thursday 26th February; 5-6pm at St Mary of Charity, Faversham.

How to enter the draw

Simply email your [name](#) and [contact number](#) to the editor at editorialsf@outlook.com or send a text to **07714 311008**.

ENTRIES MUST BE MADE BY 16TH FEBRUARY.

The winner will be selected at random and will be notified direct.



World famous Sir Michael Morpurgo is appearing at the **Faversham Festival** this month. He is an English book author, poet, playwright, and librettist best known for children's novels

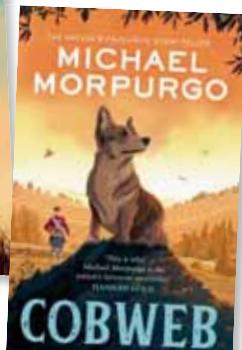
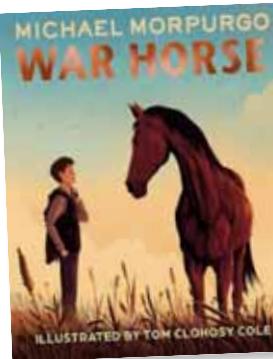
such as **War Horse** (1982). His work is noted for its "magical storytelling". He has thirty books on the HarperCollins list and has sold more than 35 million books worldwide. Sir Michael was the third Children's Laureate, from 2003 to 2005, and is President of BookTrust, a children's reading charity. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, he was made a Knight Bachelor in the 2018 New

Year Honours for services to literature and charity.

War Horse has been adapted as a radio broadcast and as a stage play by Nick Stafford, premiering at the National Theatre, London, on 17 October 2007. The horses were played by life-sized horse puppets. It won two Olivier Awards in 2007 and closed in the West End after eight years, having been seen by 2.7 million people in London and 7 million worldwide at the time. It was the most successful production of the National Theatre ever.

In 1976, he and his wife Clare established the charity Farms for City Children with the primary aim of providing children from inner city areas with experience of the countryside.

The programme involves the children spending a week at a countryside farm, during which they take part in purposeful farmyard work. About 85,000 children have taken part in the scheme since it was set up.



FAVERSHAM LITERARY FESTIVAL

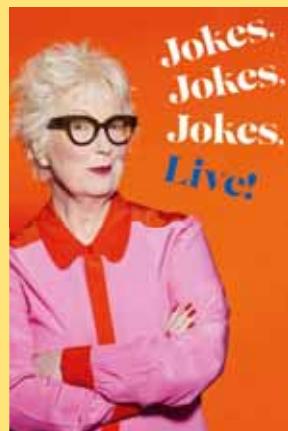
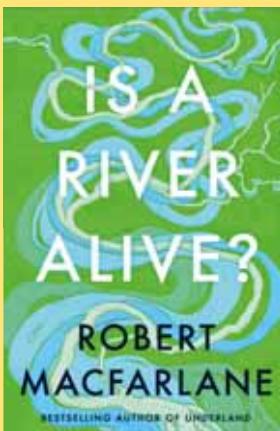
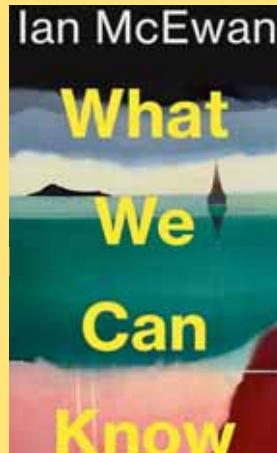
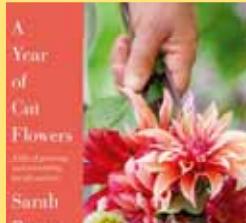
20 FEB – 1 MARCH 2026



Line-up includes:

Ian McEwan
Sarah Raven
Robert Macfarlane
Mark Kermode
Michael Morpurgo
Hollie McNish
Sir Antony Beevor
Alison Weir
Ian Leslie
Jenny Eclair

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



Tickets available via the website:
www.favershamliteraryfestival.org



Canterbury
Christ Church
University



Drone SAR for lost Dogs, UK

Graham's article follows:



Drone SAR for Lost Dogs UK, was created on 22nd July 2017 by founder Graham Burton.

The group is a FaceBook group with over 120,000 members and consisting of over 8,000 volunteer drone pilots and ground searchers covering the whole of the UK and Ireland. We are a COMPLETELY FREE SERVICE.

The volunteer army is growing each day. Although we are a free service, we do receive donations from happy owners who we have helped. 100% of all funds raised go directly to purchasing equipment to help reunite missing dogs - thermal drones, thermal scopes, trapping equipment and ring doorbell cameras kits. We know first-hand that Drone SAR equipment can be vital in helping reunite dogs with their families. Drones are used as eyes in the sky which can spot a missing dog from a great distance, covering a larger area in a lot less time than could be by people on the ground. They can also see dogs in areas which would be impossible for anybody on the ground to reach, like a ledge on a cliff face.

Since the very beginning, we have always had a large flow of requests for help coming onto the group and we currently receive around 30 requests a day. We are now the largest search and rescue organisation of its type in the UK and, along with other amazing groups we work with, have helped to reunite over 7,000 missing dogs, horses, ponies, cows, sheep, goats, tortoises and other exotic animals.

We have also recently created another group based on the Isle of Wight; Drone SAR For Lost Dogs IOW, which also has a large volunteers force. Again everything is done on a voluntary basis and free of charge.

We have won a number of awards, the first being the Prime Minister's (Boris Johnson's) Point of Light Award in 2021. We then received the International Fund For Animal Welfare Animal Action Award in 2022 and were Highly Commended in the Animal Star Awards 2022, winning this award in 2025.

To get help if your dog (or other animal) is lost, join our Facebook group '**Drone SAR For Lost Dogs UK**' or visit www.dronesar.org.uk.



The Roses

Friday FEBRUARY 13th

**Performance begins 19.30,
doors open 19.00**

**Running time: 1 hr 45 mins
Director: Jay Roach**

We have a bumper month for you with two films to see. The first is on Friday 13th. An unlucky day? Not if you've come to see **The Roses** (15, 2025) for

at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

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

an evening of brilliant dark comedy with two magnificent actors. Benedict Cumberbatch plays Theo who is married to Ivy, played by Olivia Colman. It seems a perfect marriage, with two successful professionals, great children, good social life. What more could they want? Nothing – or so it appears. When Theo's business life ends with a bang however, the situation abruptly changes and the tinderbox of their marriage explodes. And what happens then.... well, come along and find out. Trouble is definitely brewing for the Roses!

Somewhere in England

Friday FEBRUARY 27th

**Performance begins 18.30,
doors open 18.00**

**Running time: 1 hr 18 mins
Director: Sheila Daniels**

We have a special screening later in February – we're proud to show **Somewhere in England**, an original British musical promoting the work of *Gordon Caleb*, a mostly unknown and unrecognised late British composer.

The film is a salute to both the great Hollywood musicals and classic British cinema of the 1940s and 50s. We step back in time to the summer of 1943, with the arrival of a US army unit and its impact on the lives of a small community in rural England. Entirely shot in Betchersden, the film presents 19 stand-alone songs as a visual album, in a black

and white format, with contemporary styling. The eclectic cast is made up of professional performers from London and talent from the local area, some of whom will be present at the screening along with the producer/director, Sheila Daniels. The performance is at the earlier time of 18.30, do come along and see this original British film.

Free entry, donation to filmmaker funding much appreciated.

For our March film, on Friday 13th, we again make a visit to Downton Abbey for the evening. In **Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale** (PG, 2025) there are changes afoot as the Crawleys face uncertain times in the 1930s.

The Lenham Film Club team recently were very pleased to be able to present a cheque for **£500** to Lenham Nursery School. The funds were raised at a charity performance we held last year in honour of our late Treasurer Ian George.

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





LENHAM FILM CLUB

Somewhere in England

Friday 27th February

SPECIAL SCREENING

An original musical set during WWII,
filmed in Betchersden and featuring the
music of composer Gorden Caleb



Free entry, donation to filmmaker funding appreciated

Doors open 18:00, performance begins 18:30



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Lenham Fire Station

Watch Manager Bruce Matthews retired from Kent Fire and Rescue service on the 31st December 2025 after over 50 years' service at Lenham.

Bruce is a local boy who joined Kent Fire Brigade on the 11th February 1974 as a Junior Fireman. Junior Firemen were boys over the age of 16 who were able to attend drill nights to learn the skills needed to become a fireman. This included knots and lines, running out hoses, ladder work, pump operating, first aid and familiarisation with equipment carried out on the fire appliance.

Reaching the age of 18 Bruce was able to 'go on the run'. This was when the siren sounded and the old GPO bell would go off in the house.

Throughout his time he continued to improve his skills and gained more qualifications e.g. breathing apparatus wearer, LGV licence and junior officer qualifications. The incidents Bruce would have attended were varied, including chimneys fires, house fires, car fires, industrial fires and road traffic accidents. He also attended several farm incidents including corn field fires.

He was promoted to Leading Fireman and subsequently to Watch Manager at Lenham. Kent Fire Brigade changed to Kent Fire and Rescue Service in October 2003 and took on a wider range of incidents.

Bruce also took part in supporting the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund with numerous fundraising events. As you might expect, there was an element of high spirits and practical joking.

Over this length of service, Bruce has responded to a range of incidents of which there are too many to list. Having worked with Bruce over the years we have attended some incidents that were difficult, some very moving and most very rewarding.

We would like to congratulate Bruce for his outstanding commitment to the Service and the community. This gratitude should also extend to his family who have missed out on many things over the years. Thank you Bruce!

From friends and colleagues of Lenham Fire Station.



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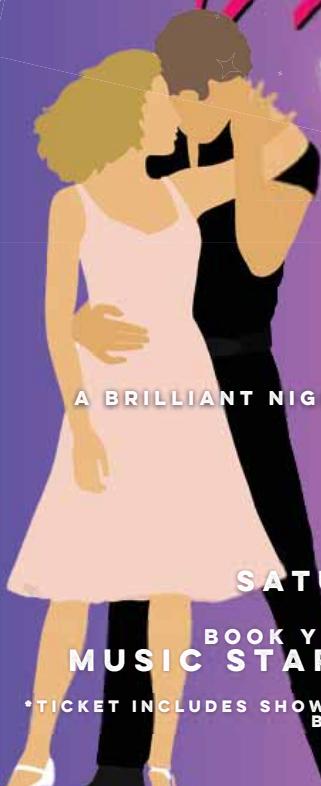


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Panattoni UK comes to Lenham



PANATTONI

Panattoni, Europe's largest logistics developer, has acquired the Marley site off the A20 at Lenham.

Panattoni have some 69 offices around the globe and have developed over 650 million square feet of new-build space. With an impressive client list exceeding 2,500 international and regional companies, Panattoni claim to have an unrivalled access to capital markets and a best-in-class track record of delivering development at speed whilst exceeding their client expectations.

Most of the businesses based at the old Marley site closed from June to September 2025 with only a handful of residue companies still operating there. From January 2026, when Panattoni took vacant possession, survey work has begun to consider redevelopment of the site before planning applications are submitted.

Future plans include the firm intention to hold stakeholder-engagement meetings and public consultation in modelling a masterplan of large, modern warehousing of the best quality suitable for light and general industrial businesses, with up to possibly 1 million square feet of available warehouse space.

There will be a wide range of employment opportunities as the scheme comes to fruition covering light industrial jobs, clerical work and IT specialisms.

Development Director David McGougan is determined to ensure open consultation and will ensure that Lenham residents are kept fully up-to-date as the planning process proceeds.

Your *FOCUS* magazine will bring you regular updates as plans from this exciting new employer develop.

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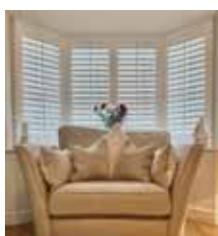
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**5th & 6th
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Consignment deadline
1st May

**2nd & 3rd
October**

Consignment deadline
28th August

**10th & 11th
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Consignment deadline
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**31st July &
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He continues: 'Enjoy the best of both worlds at Morella Woods. A thoughtfully planned development combining the peace and beauty of rural surroundings, with the comfort and style of modern homes. Imagine open-plan spaces filled with natural light, energy efficient features that help reduce bills, and elegant finishes that make every day feel special. Perfectly positioned for those who value convenience. With local shops, schools and transport links just minutes away, you can enjoy countryside living without sacrificing accessibility.'

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At Countryside we pride ourselves on creating places where people love to live, with sustainable communities built to last. We're committed to providing quality homes and creating the best experience for our customers through excellent service.

Your new home awaits! Book your visit today and start your home buying journey. Call us on **01622 534 491**. Find us off Old Ham Lane, ME17 2LR. See also our advert in this issue of *FOCUS*.'



*T&Cs apply – please speak to a Sales Consultant for further details.

An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

We are fortunate in Maidstone to have access to some of the best healthcare in the country. The Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (which includes Maidstone Hospital) was ranked in the top 10 UK hospitals and has one of the best Cancer and Stroke units in the country.

Back in September I attended the official opening of a new unit at the Community Diagnostic Centre in Maidstone (see photo). The Hounsfield Unit houses state-of-the-art CT and MRI scanning equipment and phlebotomy services. It's the second building to be opened at the West Kent Community Diagnostic Centre, opposite Maidstone Hospital.

Community Diagnostic Centres (CDC) were set up under the last Government to provide medical tests, checks and scans to help bring down NHS waiting lists after the pandemic. The standalone location away from the hospital means they focus on people having planned care (rather than turning up in an emergency). That helps reduce waiting times and gives people a quicker diagnosis. It also has the advantage of easier parking and no need to find your way around a large hospital site which can often be confusing to navigate.

The last Government invested £2.3bn in 160 CDCs which was the largest central cash investment in scanning capacity in the history of the NHS. Since it opened just 2 years ago, the Franklin Unit in



Maidstone has performed over 200,000 tests. I am delighted that the current Government has recognised the success of CDCs and is continuing to invest in them.

People in Maidstone still don't have access to a walk-in health facility like the Faversham Urgent Treatment Centre or a minor injuries unit. This means if people are unable to see their doctor they are forced to go to A&E. I will continue to press for a walk in service.

If you would like updates on this campaign, please sign up to my newsletter: www.helenwhately.org.uk/sign-my-newsletter-here or search on Google (or similar) "Helen Whately newsletter".

Best wishes,

Helen

e: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk
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As ever, if there is anything I can do to help you please contact me.



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The Complicated Story of the Great River Stour

By Lesley Feakes

It is obvious that Lenham is the starting point of the Great Stour, so much so that it ought to by right be called *Stourham*. But *leanne* means lea and the *leas* almost surround the settlement. Furthermore, the river used to be called the *Aesce* in Saxon times (pronounced *Aesh*) hence Ashford and *Aesham* may have thought to be confusing. There are five main sources; the village pond, a hidden source just 200 metres east of that, East Lenham Farm, the depression north of Mount Castle and the complex surrounding Chilston. Most people only consider the Glebe pond so I will start from there.

The pond (Source 1) is fed by a massive catchment of water held in sticky white marl, with the consistency of white putty, that is under the Community Centre field. It must be the water source for all the wells under the square and of the pond. I saw it when they were digging Groom Way. A few years later, after several dry years, the marl was drier and building Groom Way houses was made easier. So, the amount of water varies - and it is difficult to say where the pond spread in years gone by - old maps indicate it was right up to the church.

When the Community Centre was built, Lenham Archaeological Society was formed too and, on investigating the field, they found a tanged arrowhead, a Thurrock type Iron Age coin,



© photo by Mike Cockett

The Pond source before the houses were built

Roman pottery, a Saxon strap end and an early medieval seal. This seal seemed important and I lodged it in Maidstone Museum for safe keeping with the distant hope that one day we might have it on display in our very own museum! Old Gerald Neaves was the finder.

Fast forward nearly 20 years and Thames Valley Archaeology excavating the Liberty View site confirmed all our findings and more. They uncovered a Beaker BA burial (but with no tanged arrowhead), the barrow was flattened and around the perimeter were Iron Age and Roman funerary urns. They also



found evidence of Mesolithic settlement (the first in the UK?) and a 37m Saxon Longhouse, one of the biggest in the UK and with an important cobbled forecourt. How long was this in use? Was the seal owned by the Lady living there? (See illustration on page 28). Her headdress denotes a woman of rank; Amoris could have been her name. This was obviously the centre of Saxon Lenham.

But there were a lot more features discovered in the excavation that apparently were not showing on the magnetometry. Perhaps it was the overburden of the flattened barrow, perhaps of the alluvial soil, but there is a lot more there. So Abbey Homes claim that they are "*not going to do anymore archaeology*" needs challenging, there could be a staggering amount and it needs other people to say so besides me!

Looking at the Magnetometry of the field I can see faint striations, indications of water flow (source 2). The last house to be built was plagued by underground water so much so that a second Lenham pond had to be dug across the road. Older Lenhamites can remember a dip, traces of a watercourse on that edge of the field. I can see faint outlines also of a square structure. Magnetometry does not show walls only ditches – so is it a Roman shrine? It was so strange that no structures were found around our pond as major springs were celebrated places, so is this the more important spring in Bronze Age times? Was it filled in for some reason? I would guess 'yes it was', as the Mag. shows overburden of soil from squashed barrows. I would guess that in 16th – 17th century the barrows were squashed to try and curb the volume of water rushing out from the Stour to protect the watercress

beds (the name means strong or fierce flowing). There is another clue showing on Google Earth if you look on the years 2011 and 1940 (click on the clock), flow marks can be seen in Fanum field south of Sutton field (the boat shaped field with the Stour bisecting it.) The Stour was an "instant" river, wide at its very beginning (there is a name for it that I cannot remember.) Fanum field, meaning temple field, shows the effects of the washouts. It is littered with large chestnut-coloured flints typical of water discolouration and topsoil is missing.

Lenham's importance is seriously underestimated, for the volume of water in the Stour, and its previous importance in shipping has been forgotten. Connected to the water is watercress and investigation of Stumbles field gives the conclusion that that was an integral part in Lenham's productivity even from Roman times. Throughout the surrounding farmland chalk drains have been encountered and their exact age has never been dated.

The next important Stour source (No. 3) is the lake at East Lenham Farm, maintained very well by the Barr family. It flows to the position of the Bone Mill and also through Mill Wood then under the railway to the sewage works. Leaving the sewage works it is joined by another stream equal in size (or near enough) coming from a triple spring from the north. It is this Stour source that intrigues me because it is so forgotten yet so important (No. 4.) Why is it not even marked as a spring on the map? MBC seem to think they can destroy the area by building a railway station – we shall see! They may have made grave error in their presumption!

As for Number 5 of the Stour springs, that of Chilston, I will explain in a further article.

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Countryways Quilters and Stitchers

From Pamela Gillard

In February we will be continuing to put together the quilt blocks started in January. We will discuss how we can build them into a quilt or how we could use them to make something smaller.

I hope you will 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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Please see the notice boards and website for the dates of these.

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

Parishioners may attend all meetings.

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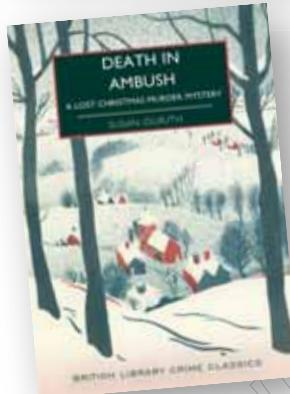
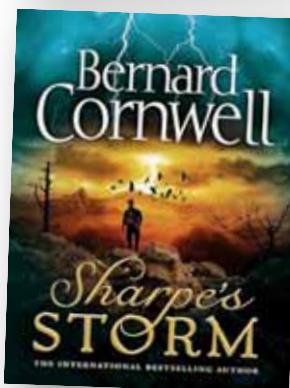
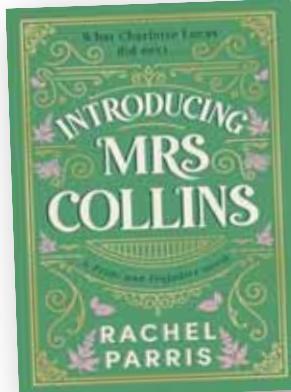
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Book Reviews from the Lenham Library

I thought I would cover a few books I have enjoyed in December, starting with **Introducing Mrs Collins** by **Rachel Parris**. The author is a well known comedian and this is her first novel. She is a member of the theatre group Austentatious which performs Austen improvisations.

This novel takes the character of Charlotte Lucas from *Pride and Prejudice* who agrees to marry Mr Collins after Elizabeth turns him down. She knows she is trading romance for security and goes into the marriage determined to make the most of her lot whatever her friend Elizabeth thinks of her. The author manages to make Mr Collins into a real person for whom we feel sympathy; no mean feat. There is a lot of Austen style humour. Romance does arrive for Charlotte and causes her much mental anguish. I won't spoil the ending for you.

Sharpe's Storm: Richard Sharpe and the invasion of southern France, 1813 by **Bernard Cornwell** is the latest in the series of the Sharpe novels. Set during the winter of 1813 as Wellington's army pushes into southern France, the novel fits neatly between Sharpe's Regiment



and Sharpe's Siege, and once again shows the author's command of Napoleonic warfare.

He describes the battle scenes ruthlessly and unflinchingly and also the real tactical dilemmas of the campaign, from constricted river crossings to the collapse of pontoon bridges.

I also enjoyed **Death in Ambush** by **Susan Gilruth** which is one of the British Library Crime Classics series and is well worth a look. Published originally in 1952, it is set in a small village where the Sandys family is preparing for Christmas with their guest Lee Crawford.

A pompous retired judge dies suddenly of suspected heart failure but the post mortem reveals poisoning. Suspicion spreads and the list of suspects include the gardener, the son, a mysterious widow and even the elegant wife of the judge. Lee joins with her old friend from Scotland Yard to solve the mystery. Wonderful old fashioned fun.

Be my Valentine!

The Joy of Mature Love by Henny Shotter

In days past, the year was 'timed' by religious high days. The period of Christmas lasted in the Middle Ages until February 2nd (Candlemass) and was followed by the period 'Before Easter'. Rent and taxes had to be paid on the quarter days: Lady Day (Feast of the Annunciation) March 25, Midsummer Day (feast of St. John the Baptist) June 24, Michaelmas Day (Feast of St. Michael and All Angels) September 29, Christmas Day (Feast of Nativity) December 25. The fact that the tax year ends in April is historically based on these traditions.

Every day in the year was dedicated to a saint or martyr. People lived by this religious annual cycle and donations to the church came in accordingly. It is not that dissimilar to what happens today. The price reduction in Christmas merchandise just before Christmas heralds the end of 'Christmas', when shops gear up for the New Year blitz. Most unfortunately, the 6th January, the Day of the Three Kings (Epiphany, a public holiday in many areas in Europe), is not observed in Britain. What a lost marketing opportunity! No candles in the shape of three kings in the shops, no 'myrrh' incense in British homes. Henry VIII and his Reformation, which did away



with all this 'popish' stuff, have a lot to answer for!

However, we do have Valentine's Day (image in public domain), which offers a good opportunity to spend our hard-earned money on roses in February.

If you thought that only young love can speak about love, you are wrong! A poem by Philip Sydney of Penshurst Place, one of Queen Elizabeth I's favourite poets,

certainly reflects mature love. It illustrates the term "my other half"; perfectly.

Please feel free to replace the 'he' with 'she'. This love poem is gender-neutral but certainly describes the 'oneness' many couples experience especially in older age. Enjoy!

*My true-love hath my heart and I have his,
By just exchange one for the other given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss;
There never was a bargain better driven.
His heart in me keeps me and him in one;*

*My heart in him his thoughts
and senses guides:*

*He loves my heart, for once it was his own;
I cherish his because in me it bides.....*

My true love hath my heart and I have his.

Happy Birthday JANE AUSTEN

An illustrated talk by **Kerstin Müller** for Lenham Heritage



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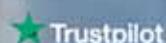
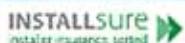
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lenham Gardening Society

From Margaret Baines

The meeting this month is a member's only Winter Social being held on Thursday 19th February in the Community Centre. Tickets available from Pat Hollis, if not already obtained.

All are welcome to the meetings except February, July and November which are for **members only**. Members pay £1 entrance with non-members paying £1.50. Annual subscription is £8 per person.

For our usual meetings, tea, coffee and biscuits are available in the interval and a raffle held before the evenings close.



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Borough Councillor	Chris Houliham	chrishouliham@maidstone.gov.uk
Bowling Club	Lyn Fuller	01622-851538
Bridge Club	Keith Rylands	01622-891964
Brownies (2 nd Lenham)	Andrea French	01622-851646
Cat Protection	Mid-Kent Branch	0345-3712758
Church Office	Sarah Hills	01622-850604
Dog Warden (Louise Duke)	Community Protection	01622-602117
Drama	Gail Kelly	01622-850671
Fitter/Stronger classes	Paula Hickford	07759-446214
Friends of St Mary's Church	Andrew Barr	enquiries@friendsofstmaryslenham.org
Gardening Society	Margaret Baines	01622-431649
Guides (1 st Lenham)	Jo Homes	07887-877814
Ham Lane Allotment Association	Doug Matthews	01622-297692
HAMS Productions	David Penny	07731-455677
Harrietsham & Lenham Beavers	Duncan Keenan	07768-926654
Harrietsham & Lenham Cubs	Mrs A Seales	01622-859829
Hub Club	Nina Kent	01622-851970
KCC for Maidstone Rural East	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 (Tues-Thurs 10am-1pm) clerk@lenhamparishcouncil.org.uk
Lenham Quilters & Stitchers	Pamela Gillard	01233-879507
Lenham Social Club	Sue Neaves	01622-532409
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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
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Sing & Shake / Make & Shake	Steph Richardson	07894-160906
Sittingbourne Valley FC	Paul Hewish	07795-324062
Vicar	<i>Vacancy</i>	churchoffice@lrb.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 - February 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

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The legend of Lenham 2025...

David Humphrey!



20 ★ 25
Legend
of Lenham

**'Dave the score' is
the new Legend
of Lenham!**

Over the festive period, The Lenham Christmas Lights Association was proud to announce the Legend of Lenham 2025. The honour was created to recognise a person in the village who has gone above and beyond to help make our local community the wonderful place it is to live in.

Through posters around Lenham and on KLS everyone was given the opportunity to nominate who they thought deserved to hold the title, with the winner of the Legend of Lenham having the honour of turning on the village Christmas lights at the switch-on event last year. We were delighted by the number of nominations received and we were also humbled by how many wonderful people there are in Lenham who also deserved to hold the title. A huge thank you to everyone who nominated.

We were delighted to award the title of Legend of Lenham 2025 to David Humphrey.

He has always been heavily involved in the community, helping wherever he can. Affectionately known as *Dave the Score*, he has been the Lenham Cricket Club Qualified Scorer for over 30 years, being elected as a member of 'The General Council of the Association of Cricket Umpires' in 1992. He also winds the church clock every week, climbing the spiral staircase regardless of his aversion to heights! An amazing feat at 85-years-old.

After wrapping up his own business he returned to his first love of buses. Some may remember him as driving the school bus, always happy to be asked to taste test any cakes made that day and he was always happy to critique! He and his wife, Janet, volunteer at Demelza Hospice tending the sensory garden and sorting donations at the distribution warehouse. They have been involved with

the grandparents' support group since the passing of their own granddaughter Jessica, at Demelza in 2013. He used to run second-hand book stalls at the coffee mornings and jumble sales of local organisations to help with their fundraising efforts.

For many years he has placed the poppy crosses on the REME and other service personnel graves in Lenham cemetery for Remembrance Sunday and he is a proud member of the Royal British Legion. He is a long-serving trustee to a local charity, helping the organisations and people of Lenham.

And some may be surprised to learn that he's also an accomplished ballroom dancer; always smart and rarely seen without a tie or shiny shoes. His son, John, says "If you want to know what chivalry is, look no further. *The Man, the Legend, the Hero, our Dad.*"

David was gracious and humble when accepting the award on the night, paying tribute to his granddaughter Jessica whom he honoured in his speech as his "shining star".

And with such a worthy winner we're delighted The Legend of Lenham will continue again this year, honouring an outstanding member of the local community. Please look out for the posters around the village, on KLS and in The Lenham Focus later in the year and we really look forward to reading your nomination of who you would like to see turn on the Christmas Lights at the 2026 event.

But for now, on behalf of the whole village, a massive thank you to our Legend of Lenham 2025 David Humphrey for all you've done and continue to do.

Written by Rory Adams – The Lenham Christmas Lights Association.

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Nature Watch

By Darren Hammond

The small but mighty Kestrel

The Kestrel is a fairly common sight around the fields and roads that surround Lenham village, with their pointed wings and long tail, hovering beside a roadside verge or over a farmer's field. However numbers of Kestrels have declined since the 1970s, probably as a result of changes in farming, and so they are included on the Amber List.



A Kestrel rests in a hedge

Some good news is that they have adapted quite well to man-made environments and can survive even in the centre of cities.

Both males and females have a slate-grey head and upper tail with a single black band at the tip. Females are browner all over, with bars all along the upper tail. Both males and females have pale undersides with black speckles (not bars like on a Sparrowhawk) and dark 'tear' marks extending below each eye. Wing tips are more pointed than a Sparrowhawk's.

Kestrels are actually part of the falcon family but have a longer tail than other falcons, fanned out while hovering with a black band at the end.



A Kestrel poses prettily



A kestrel wings its way to a hunting spot

Kestrels are most easily distinguished from other members of the falcon family by their typical hunting behaviour which is to hover at a height of around 10–20 metres (35–65 ft) over open country and swoop down on ground prey, usually small mammals, lizards or large insects, while other falcons are more adapted for active hunting during flight.

While you will most often see the kestrel in the air hunting for its next meal, sometimes you may be lucky enough to spot one in a hedgerow or sitting on a fence post.



Prepare for take off

They are a cavity nester and may nest in holes in trees or walls and even buildings but will also use suitable nest boxes, a behaviour that has allowed people to study their breeding behaviour in detail.

The familiar behaviour of the kestrel gives it one of its old country names, the 'windhover'. The kestrel has the ability to keep its head still while it hovers - even in strong winds - helping it to pinpoint its prey by sight. A kestrel will fly into the wind and use its tail and wings to hold its position in the air. Keeping its eyes fixed on the ground, it will swiftly drop to pounce on any prey sighted. Not only can it "hover" above an area in search of prey, it can see in ultra-violet light which helps it track small mammals.

One of the benefits of seeing in ultraviolet light is that they can track small animals, like rodents, by the trails they leave with their urine. The kestrel feeds mainly on small mammals such as voles, mice and shrews, plus small birds, worms, grasshoppers and beetles. In fact it has such sharp eyesight it can see a beetle



A Kestrel with prey

from 50 metres away. Birds are taken more often in places where voles are scarce, such as in urban areas.

Kestrels do not build nests. Instead they lay their eggs in natural cavities, such as holes, in trees or cliff faces. They also use nests abandoned by other species.

In urban areas, kestrels will lay their eggs on rooftops and holes in walls. Normally four to five eggs are laid in April or May. The chicks hatch after around a month, spending a further five weeks in the nest before fledging.

During courtship, the male performs aerial displays, circling several times before diving in a feigned attack towards the female on the ground. The female

responds by bowing, raising her tail and calling loudly. Pairs return to the same nesting site year after year and may nest in small colonies of up to ten pairs.



Little Kestrels

So keep your eyes out and see if you can spot the second most common (even with its drop in numbers) bird of prey in the UK (The Buzzard is the most common bird of prey). Small, but magnificent and mighty.



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Recipe of the Month

Baked Trout with Cream

Ingredients:

2 tbspns finely chopped shallots
4 fresh trout
Freshly ground black pepper
Butter
2 tbspns breadcrumbs
Salt
2 tbspns finely chopped parsley
Juice 1 lemon
1/4 pint dry white wine
1/4 pint double cream

Method:

Clean the trout, if not already done. Butter a shallow fireproof baking dish generously. Sprinkle with the shallots and arrange the fish on top, side by side. In a separate pan add the wine and strained lemon juice and bring to a boil then add to the pan



with the trout. Sprinkle with parsley and season to taste.

Transfer to a preheated moderate oven for 12-15 minutes until the fish are done. Heat the cream in a bowl over hot water and pour over the trout. Sprinkle with breadcrumbs then return to the oven until the crumbs are brown.

Serve immediately. Serves 4



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BBC Bargain Hunt showcases Maidstone Museum's Albert Goodwin collection

Maidstone Museum recently welcomed BBC *Bargain Hunt* and expert Eric Knowles for a special segment exploring the life and work of celebrated Maidstone-born artist Albert Goodwin (1845–1932).

The feature, available on BBC iPlayer, provided a national platform to highlight Goodwin's extraordinary talent, deep local connections, and lasting influence as a visionary landscape painter.

Speaking to Eric Knowles, Maidstone Museum's Collection Manager

Samatha Harris said: "Goodwin's career was championed by John Ruskin and influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement, and he is one of Maidstone Museum's most treasured artistic figures. The museum holds an exceptional collection of more than 200 of his watercolours and drawings, capturing atmospheric scenes from his extensive travels and his life in Kent. Visitors can currently enjoy a selection of these works in the museum's Art Gallery."

Goodwin is just one of several distinguished artists with ties to Maidstone whose work features prominently in the museum's collection.

Another is William Alexander (1767–1816), a Maidstone-born artist renowned for his vivid and historically significant depictions of 18th-century China. Trained at the Royal Academy, Alexander served as the official draughtsman on Britain's first diplomatic mission to the Qing court from 1792 to 1794.



His illustrations, drawn from direct observation, offered British audiences an unprecedented view into Chinese life and culture during a time of growing international exchange.

Councillor Stephen Thompson, Cabinet Member for Healthier Stronger Communities, added:

"Artists such as Albert Goodwin and William Alexander show that Maidstone's cultural heritage has long been internationally connected. National media attention is helping to raise the profile of Maidstone Museum as a place of real cultural significance, and that visibility gives us confidence as we plan for our museum's future at the heart of Kent's cultural life."

The Museum Renewal Fund award will support much more than new exhibitions. It is also enabling investment in digital access, infrastructure improvements, and the enhancement

of community spaces, ensuring the museum remains a vibrant cultural hub for residents and visitors alike.

From national TV features to new exhibitions shining a light on influential local artists, Maidstone Museum continues to grow its reputation as a centre of artistic and cultural discovery. Whether inspired by Goodwin's dreamlike landscapes or Alexander's cross-cultural chronicles, visitors can uncover extraordinary stories rooted right here in Maidstone.

Museum to reopen to the public

Maidstone Museum will be open to the public from 11th February 2026 and is free to visit. There is an extensive events programme, to find out more and book your space visit Maidstone Museum's website.



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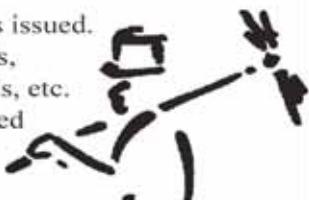
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Chair – Cllr John Britt

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

Parish Council Budget

The parish council discussed the budget for 2026/27 at the full council meeting on 7th January and agreed to submit both the budget and the precept proposals to Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) by the end of January (the required timeframe).

Details of the budget will be published once MBC has “approved” it – ideally in the March edition of the Focus (although we need to comply with MBC timeframes). Meanwhile the proposals of the capital spend, which do not require MBC oversight, are being worked up.

One of the larger projects will be the resurfacing of the car park off Maidstone Road. This, along with the other major capital projects, will go to open tender and more details will be published nearer the time.

The roll-out of the CCTV upgrade continues, with advice from Kent Police regarding ideal siting of new cameras. Once the technical issues are addressed and the new cameras installed, work will also be carried out to remove the old / redundant units.

Community Grants

There's still time to apply for a grant, if this would help your group expand the services it delivers to our communities. Details can be found on the parish website and the application form can either be downloaded, or you can pop into the parish office if you would prefer to discuss it with the Parish Clerk first.

The details about the grant application process can be found here: [Microsoft Word - Grants Policy](#) and the application form is here: [LPC Policies / Procedures - Lenham Parish Council - Lenham Parish Council, Lenham, Maidstone](#)

East Lenham Farm

At the December meeting of the MBC Planning Committee, the outline plan for 100 new homes and upgraded recreation facilities at land to the south of Old Ashford Road was finally approved.

This is **not** a new proposal but one which dates from 2019 and is contained within the allocation from the 2017 Maidstone Local Plan. It is covered in detail by the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan – details of this are on the parish website.

There are now many technical and legal issues which will have to be agreed before any work can begin and the parish council is party to these discussions as it will be the responsibility of the parish council to oversee the delivery of the new recreation facility. The planning for this cannot begin until the timescales for the main development are agreed between the landowner and the Local Planning Authority. More details will be published once the timeframes and other information have been established. However, the legal agreements and dealing with the reserved matters is likely to take some time.

This development has no relationship whatsoever with the plans by MBC and its delivery partner, Homes England, to

parachute a new town of up to 5,000 new homes, known as Heathlands, under the guise of a so-called “Garden Community”.

... and finally - we are recruiting

One addition the parish council has agreed to make is to recruit a Lengthsman to work on a weekly / regular basis on a series of practical tasks to help keep our parish to the high standard we wish to

maintain. Other parishes have introduced similar posts and we have seen the benefits delivered, so are extending that good practice to Lenham.

Initially, this post will be available for a year, possibly from April 2026 and details are on the parish website, with more information available from the Parish Clerk.

Update from the Len Valley Practice

An update from Georgia Lane, Operations Manager

As we move into the New Year, we would like to thank all our patients who sent Christmas cards, biscuits and chocolates to the team over the festive period. Your kindness was very much appreciated and gave staff a real boost during a busy time.

We would also like to remind patients how important it is that we have your up-to-date contact details and your preferred way of being contacted. Having the correct information helps us to share important messages with you quickly and safely. If any of your details have changed, please let our reception team know, update them via the NHS App or mention it at your next appointment.

Appointments and missed slots

In December 2025, there were 123 appointments that were not attended. Missed appointments mean other patients lose the chance to be seen, so we kindly ask that you let us know as early as possible if you can no longer attend.

We have also shared new GP appointment data for our local area, published by Kent and Medway ICB. This can be viewed on the News page of our website.

We are aware that some patients are currently registering at The Glebe Practice in the belief that it is a separate surgery. The Glebe is a branch of Len Valley Practice, staffed by the same team; it is not a standalone practice. Patients wishing to register should therefore register with Len Valley Practice. We are working with the ICB to remove the separate registration option, as it has caused confusion and unnecessary additional workload.

Thank you for your continued support. With best wishes for a healthy 2026, from the team at Len Valley Practice.

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New Websites for our Climate Action Networks

Maidstone CAN and Bearsted CAN now have dedicated websites!

Keep up to date with the exciting and varied projects and events of Maidstone's two climate action networks on their new dedicated website.

From Maidstone's regular Repair Cafes, to bulb planting, plastic free campaigns, litter

picking and inspiring speakers, these groups offer a full calendar and ways for everyone to get involved locally in tackling our global climate and environmental challenges.

Two examples of upcoming events are below, find out more on their website.

www.maidstonecan.eco/

Maidstone Repair Café

Lockmeadow Market Hall on the first Saturday of each month.

Maidstone's Repair Café continues to offer repair opportunities for all ages including Team Repair Workshops and their exciting 'Computer Teardown', both offering the opportunity to repair real life items and discover how they work – run by experienced volunteers.



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Are you making best use of your current-account savings?

One way to make the best use of your current account savings is to consider moving some of your money into a separate, higher-interest savings account or investment product, as current accounts typically pay little to no interest. Keeping too much cash in a low-interest account means your money is losing value due to inflation.

Here is a plan to optimise your savings:

1. Separate Your Money

- **Determine a budget:** Calculate your monthly income and outgoings (bills, essential spending, and an amount for savings). Use apps or a separate bills account to keep your commitments clear.
- **Establish an emergency fund:** Aim to save 3 to 6 months' worth of living expenses in an easily accessible account. This is your safety net for unexpected costs like car repairs or job loss.
- **Keep minimal cash in your current account:** Only keep what you need for daily spending and upcoming bills.

2. Move Savings to High-Interest Accounts

Transfer any surplus money beyond your daily needs and emergency fund into accounts that offer better returns.

• Easy-access savings accounts:

These offer flexibility to withdraw money when needed and usually pay a better interest rate than a current account. You can compare rates using tools from sites like Money Saving Expert.



- **Fixed-rate savings accounts:** If you are confident you won't need the money for a set period (e.g., one or two years), you can lock it away in a fixed-term account for a potentially higher, guaranteed interest rate.
- **Cash ISAs:** Use an Individual Savings Account (ISA) wrapper to protect your interest from tax. In the UK, you can put up to £20,000 per year into an ISA.

3. Consider Specialised Options

- **Help to Save scheme:** If you receive Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit, you could be eligible for this government scheme, which adds a 50p bonus for every £1 you save over four years. Find out more on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Lifetime ISA (LISA):** If you are saving for your first home or retirement, the government adds a 25% bonus to your contributions (up to £4,000 per year receives a £1,000 bonus). Be aware of withdrawal penalties for other uses.

- **Regular saver accounts:** Some banks offer high interest rates on accounts where you commit to saving a set amount each month. You can "drip-feed" money from an easy-access account into a regular saver to maximise interest on a lump sum.

4. Optimise Your Current Account

- **Switching incentives:** Some banks offer cash bonuses or other perks to new customers who switch their current accounts.
- **High-interest current accounts:** A few specific current accounts offer competitive interest rates on a limited balance, which might be better than some basic savings accounts.
- **Cashback:** Some accounts offer cashback on your household bills.

By proactively managing where your money sits, you can ensure your savings are actively working for you rather than losing value to inflation.



Please Note: Whilst this article is aimed at helping you consider options, before taking any action you should consider speaking to an independent advisor who will help you look at the advantages and disadvantages of various schemes. It's also important to research the type of product and features you need before making a purchase or changing supplier.



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Secretary of State asked to consider Len Valley and Greensand Ridge as National Landscapes



The Len Valley, between Lenham and Bearsted (see photo), with its mosaic of hedgerows, meadows, and streams, supports a rich diversity of flora and fauna, provides natural flood protection for the county town, and serves as a key wildlife corridor.

Both areas are currently designated as Local Landscape Value (LLV) zones, which offer limited protection in planning terms. Without national designation, they remain exposed to piecemeal development, habitat fragmentation, and the cumulative impacts of climate change.

The proposal to extend the Kent Downs National Landscape to include the Len Valley and Greensand Ridge has been endorsed by the Kent Downs Joint Advisory Committee and backed by extensive research from local campaigners. If approved, the extension would protect 51.15 square kilometres of countryside currently outside the Kent Downs designation. This would not only safeguard biodiversity but also enhance public access, cultural heritage, and climate resilience.

DEFRA's confirmed criteria for 30 by 30 areas, purpose, protection, and management, align closely with the council's proposal. The Len Valley and Greensand Ridge meet these standards and are ready for inclusion.

Cllr Harwood said: "Without national protection, the Len Valley and Greensand Ridge face serious threats. Wildlife corridors could be severed, threatening species migration and survival. Ancient woodlands and meadows may be lost to development. Water quality and flood resilience could decline, impacting communities downstream."

DEFRA is being urged to open an early bidding round for National Landscape extensions, with Maidstone councillors keen to champion the inclusion of Len Valley and Greensand Ridge as part of the proposals.

Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Management, Councillor Tony Harwood has issued the formal appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Emma Reynolds MP, focusing on the Len Valley and Greensand Ridge, two ecologically rich and visually stunning areas in Kent that currently lack national-level protection. The appeal highlights the critical role the landscapes could play in helping the UK meet its 30 by 30 commitment, a pledge to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15.

The Greensand Ridge, stretching from Boughton Malherbe in the east to Nettlestead in the west of the Borough, is a distinctive escarpment of ancient woodland, acid grassland, and rare parkland habitats. It forms part of the Kent Lower Greensand aquifer, a vital water source for the region.

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The Lenham Meadows Trust needs your help!

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

Volunteer Coordinator

To liaise closely with the team and to make contact with those on our volunteer list to ensure maximum turn out for events.

Social Media Administrator

Role would include monitoring and updating social media outlets and posting regular newsworthy items relevant to the trust.

Trust Secretary

This role would include taking minutes for both the management team and trustees meetings, confirming times, distributing agendas and copying minutes containing action and decisions to the Trust team.

Membership Secretary

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

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

For a 'without commitment' more detailed explanation of the various roles, including

the approximate time likely to be needed for each of the posts, please contact the Trust's Chairman, **Danny Matthews**, either by phone on **07831-308267** or by email at chairman@lenhammeadowstrust.org.

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



enquiries@lenhammeadowstrust.org



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Groundbreaking Violence Against Women and Girls 'Community Deliberation' project launched

Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) has launched a pioneering campaign inviting residents to take part in a Community Deliberation on **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** – thought to be the first of its kind.

This project marks a significant move forward in delivering MBC's overarching principles and strategy to create safer communities for everyone.

The launch coincides with the annual 16 Days of Action against Gender Based Violence, promoted by the charity **White Ribbon**, who engage men and boys to prevent violence against women and girls.

The deliberation will bring together a group of residents from across Maidstone to share experiences, hear from experts, and co-create practical recommendations that will shape the borough's VAWG strategy. Over four structured sessions, participants will explore issues such as harmful behaviours, online harassment, and building safer public spaces.

Councillor Maureen Cleator, has been leading a campaign to get residents to complete an MBC survey on VAWG, said: "This is a groundbreaking moment for us. By putting residents at the heart of decision-making, we're ensuring that our approach to tackling violence against women and girls is informed by real experiences and community-led solutions. Ending VAWG requires all of us to act, and this deliberation is a powerful way to do just that."

Councillor David Naghi, Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety, added: "We know trust is built through



transparency and collaboration. This initiative is about listening, learning, and acting together. It's not just a consultation, it's an opportunity for residents to shape policy and create lasting change."

MBC committed in December 2024 to taking stronger, evidence-based action on VAWG, including:

- Developing a comprehensive VAWG Strategy
- Promoting a Women's Night-Time Safety Charter
- Embedding women's safety in town planning
- Working towards White Ribbon accreditation

Communities built on respect and equality work better for everyone. This deliberation will help define practical steps to challenge harmful behaviours, create safer spaces, and support positive change for future generations.

The council is also currently inviting residents to share their views on VAWG via an online survey.

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Christian Message

From Pamela Cuerden, licensed lay reader, North Downs Deanery

'Let Your Light Shine'

As I start to write this on 16th December, my mind is full of expectation about Christmas; presents and tasty food, hopefully, but more importantly the celebration of the birth of Jesus at services across the Len Valley Benefice and at home.

By February the Christmas decorations will be back in a box, presents will have been tried out, mince pies will have been finished and Christmas may be but a fading memory. It is appropriate, however, that as I sit, waiting for a festival to honour the arrival of the '*Light of the World*', I should turn my attention to Candlemas, the Feast of the presentation of Jesus at the temple by Joseph and Mary.

In Bible times the law stated that after the birth of a male child, a mother was regarded as 'unclean' for seven days and required to stay at home for a further 33 days. On the 40th day, a sacrifice was to be offered in Jerusalem, for her purification. Luke, Chapter 2, tells us that Mary and Joseph did this and then presented Jesus to God through the priest at the temple.

Whilst there, they met Simeon and Anna. Simeon had been waiting for the Messiah, and believed Jesus to be him. Anna, an elderly, widowed woman who spent all her time in the temple praying,

came and praised Jesus as well. How must Mary and Joseph have felt about this further endorsement of their son's true identity, after the miraculous birth?

The feast of Candlemas falls on 2nd February, which is the 40th day of Christmas and Epiphany. In some countries Christmas decorations are removed after this day and Christians take their candles to their local church, where they are blessed and then used for the rest of the year as a symbol of Jesus Christ, 'the Light of the World'.

What is 'the Light of the World'?

The imagery of light represents purity, truth, and the presence of God throughout the Bible. 'The Light of the World' describes Jesus' divine nature, His role in saving us from sin by his death on the cross and His guidance for us all. Jesus identifies Himself as '*the Light of the World*' in John, chapter 8. God is the light that shines within and through His whole church and Jesus, speaking to a crowd of ordinary people, told them: "*You are the light of the world*" in Matthew, chapter 5. So the 'Light of the World' is the Messiah, the Church and everyone who believes and lets Christ into their life.

God wants to be able to use us all to help Him do His work here on earth and

so Christ says that we are to let our lights shine. When we lead a life that is pleasing to God and are filled with the Holy Spirit, He will shine through us.

I don't think it's too late to start a new year's resolution on 2nd February, but if you do, by 18th February it will be the

beginning of Lent, and a perfect time to do as Jesus asks. So, I hope you enjoy Candlemas, enjoy your pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, let Jesus into your life and let your light shine brightly throughout Lent and beyond.

Len Valley Benefice

Everybody is welcome

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

1 John 4 v7 (part)

Sunday 1 February

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

Wednesday 4 February

9.30am **Lenham:** Holy Communion

Sunday 8 February

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

Sunday 15 February

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

Wednesday 18 February

9.30am **Lenham:** Communion with
Imposition of Ashes
7.00pm **Lenham:** Communion with
Imposition of Ashes

Sunday 22nd February

11.00am **Benefice** Holy Communion at
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Please note that during February some services may need to be altered or cancelled at short notice due to circumstances beyond our control.

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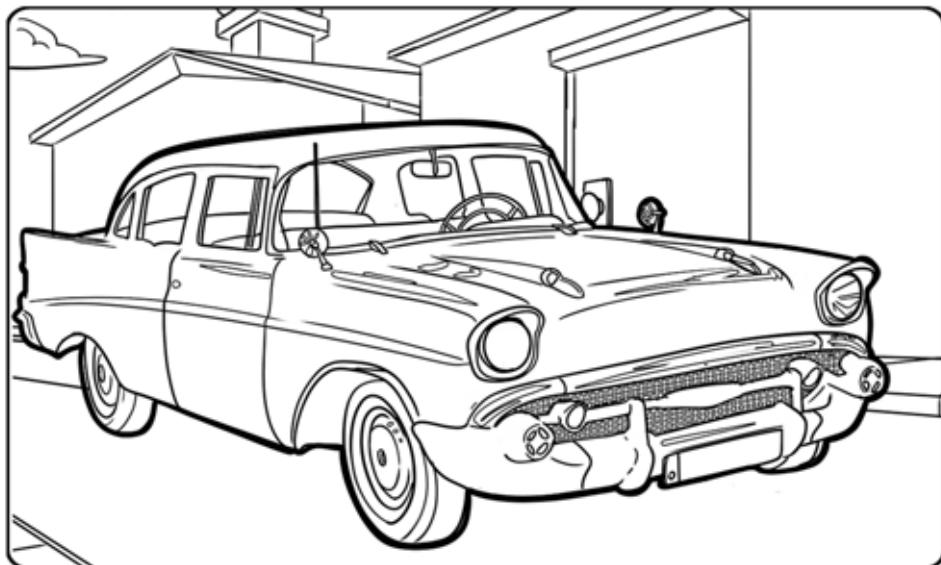
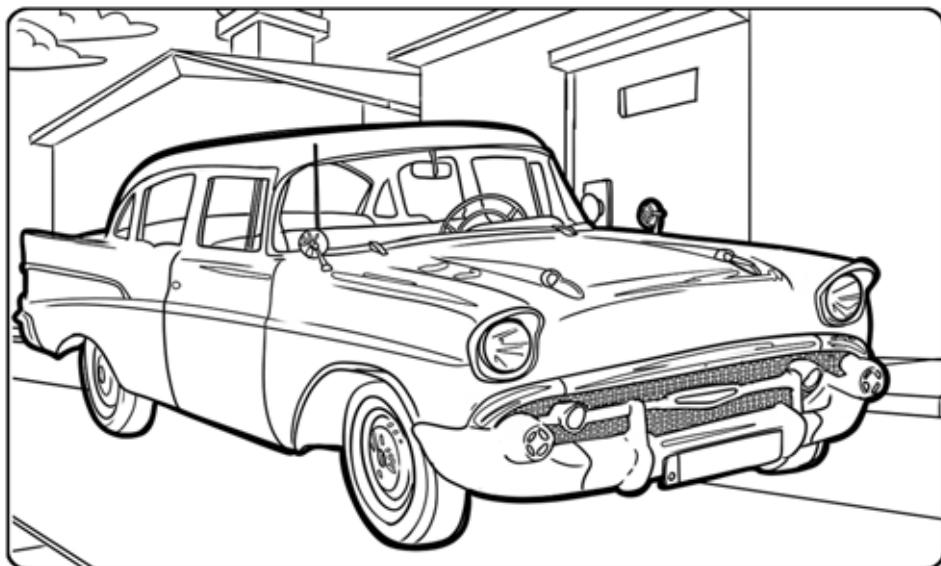


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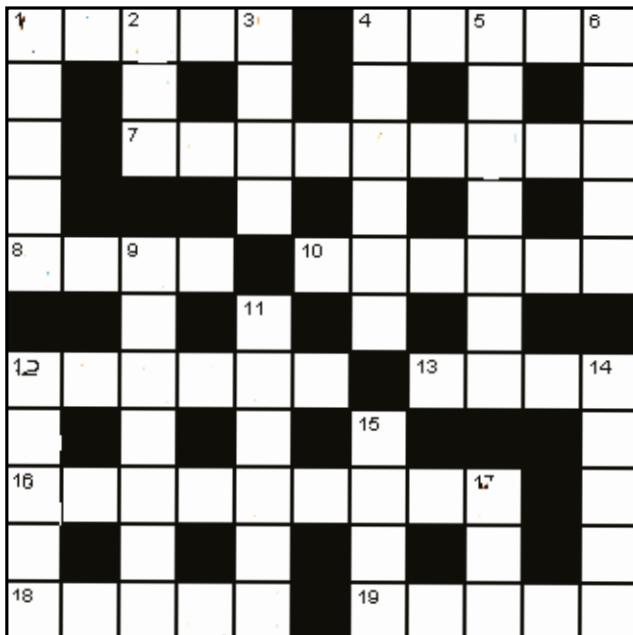
Can you spot the 8 differences between these two pictures?



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Focus PRIZE Crossword February 2026

The winner of the December crossword is Rob Mauder of Lenham. Well done!



Across clues

1. Molten glass is this to form a bottle, for example. (5)
4. One of three at one end of a cricket pitch. (5)
7. Self-employed journalist. (9)
8. Young horse. (4)
10. Egyptian God of fertility. (6)
12. Film director's command. (6)
13. Walking command given to a dog. (4)
16. A cool-toned hair colour. (3,6)
18. Pisa has one. (5)
19. Gogglebox. (5)

Down clues

1. Steep cliff. (5)
2. Infectious sheep disease. (3)
3. Scottish word for a turnip. (4)
4. Throw water at. (6)
5. Frighten. (7)
6. Looks quickly. (5)
9. Display of paintings, etc. (3,4)
11. Arrest. (6)
12. Expect. (5)
14. Type of cake from Wiltshire. (5)
15. Insect similar to a mosquito. (4)
17. A grown up elver. (3)

Answers for January 2026
Focus Crossword



A £10 voucher, donated by your crossword compiler, will go to the first correctly completed crossword picked from your entries. Please complete the box below and hand your entries into the Lenham Parish Council offices at 1a High Street Lenham or into the Lenham library by **no later than 20 February** 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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Address

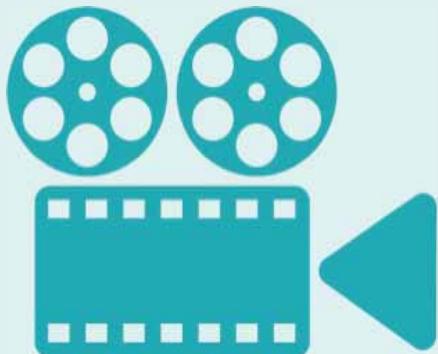
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