

The Lenham Focus



Beach Life!

50 years of Lenham Ballet *p8-9*
Countryways craft fair *p12*
Quara vocal quartet *p17*

Challock open gardens *p27*
Maidstone carriage museum *p31*
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FOCUS is also online at
www.lenhamparish.org.uk
 (Click on 'Lenham Focus')

Editorial

It's a month of fêtes, fairs and festivals. See inside for details of the **Rotary boot fair**, **Countryways craft fair**, **Challock open gardens day**, the **'Quara' vocal quartet concert at St Mary's church** as well as advance notice of the popular **Lenham Fest** and the **Friends of St Mary's jazz concert**.

If you are looking for a little more exercise, there's the **Annual Fun Bike Ride** starting from the Tithe Barn and the **North Downs Walk**, both in aid of charity.

On **4th June** you are invited to come along to the **Lenham Meadows Trust AGM** with a talk from *Ben Williams*, ranger and director of a similar organisation in Hollingbourne. It will be held in the Granary, immediately opposite the Tithe Barn. Free entry and refreshments too.

This is followed, on **Friday 26th June**, by a **Free Cheese and Wine evening** for

Lenham Meadows Trust members and their friends, also held at the Granary.

Worried about the implications of the new Renters' Act? There is an article inside explaining the important changes and the implications both for landlords and tenants. This is a radical change to the relationship between renters and landlords, explained in simple terms by Chloe Moon of Hallett & Co solicitors.

This year marks the **50th anniversary** of our **Lenham ballet school**. Inside we reflect on how it all started and the huge progress over the years to make this an important part of the Lenham community.

David Jackson
 Editor

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

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

WHAT'S ON

JUNE

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

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

- **Every Friday during spring and summer:** Westwell Winery 'Pizza Fridays' 4pm - 9pm. **Venue:** Westwell Wine Estates, Charing. **Cost:** Varies - check website.
- **Tuesday 2 June, 1:30pm - 4pm:** *Countryways Quilters and Stitchers Craft Fair.* **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Free entry.** Refreshments available.
- **Thursday 4 June 7:30pm:** *Lenham Meadows Trust AGM plus talk by Ben Williams, Ranger and Director of Hollingbourne Meadows Trust.* **Venue:** The Granary (opposite the Tithe Barn). **Free entry** and refreshments. Everyone welcome.
- **Saturday 6 June, 2:30pm - 4:30pm:** *Holy Trinity 'Tea on a Tent' - family fun day.* Home-made cakes and savouries. **Venue:** Memorial Hall, Charing Heath. **Free.**
- **Saturday 6 June, evening:** *Tom Jones tribute singer.* **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Cost:** £5 members, £10 guests.
- **Sunday 7 June, 10am - 5pm:** *Challock Open Gardens: A Blooming Day Out.* **Venue:** Challock Village. Showcasing a stunning array of roses, foxgloves, herbaceous perennials, ferns, hostas and much more. Dedicated host gardeners (9 open gardens) open their gates in the picturesque village of Challock. See poster inside. **Cost:** £7, children under 16 free.
- **Wednesday 10 June at 2.30 pm:** The Art Society, Egerton *LA SERENISSIMA - the music of Venice.* Talk by Patrick Craig. **Venue:** Millennium Hall, Egerton. **Cost:** £8 (refunded on joining).
- **Friday 12 June, 7pm:** *Quara Vocal Quartet supported by The Holigans.* **Venue:** St Mary's Church, Lenham. **Cost:** £10 including refreshments. Tickets from Kent Loves & Heart of Kent hospice.
- **Saturday 13 June, from 10am:** *Craft Fair.* **Venue:** Lenham Social Club. **Free entry.**
- **Saturday 13 June, 10am - 4pm:** *Boot Fair run by Ashford Rotary Club.* **Venue:** The Holiday Inn, Ashford North. **Cost:** Free entry. Pitches £10-£15 - ring 01233-712150 to book a pitch.
- **Sunday 14 June:** *Rotary North Downs Walk - 1,3,6 or 9 mile sponsored walks.* **Venue:** Starts and ends at Harrietsham Village Hall. Ploughman's lunch and music afterwards. **Cost:** See inside for registration details. Proceeds to Cancer Research.
- **Thursday 18 June, 1:30pm - 3:00pm:** *Hearing Aid clinic run by Hi Kent.* **Venue:** Lenham Community Centre. **Free.**
- **Friday 19 June, lunchtime:** *Ladies Ascot Day with live betting and music.* **Venue:** Who'd A Thought It, Grafty Green. **Cost:** £45pp including 2-course lunch and champagne. See inside for booking information.
- **Sunday 21 June, lunch:** *Father's Day lunch + music.* **Venue:** Who'd A Thought It', Grafty Green. **Cost:** Varies - see website.
- **Saturday 20 June, 12 noon - 10pm:** *Charing village fete: Food, drink, music, dog show, tombola, etc.* **Venue:** Clewards Meadow, Charing. **Free entry.**
- **Thursday 25 June, 7pm:** *Lenham Heritage talk - Papermaking in Kent.* Refreshments and raffle. **Venue:** Community centre. **Cost:** Free for members and children. Guests £5.
- **Friday 26 June, 7pm:** *Cheese & Wine evening for Meadows Trust members and their friends.* **Venue:** Tithe Barn Granary, High Street, Lenham. **Free**
- **Sunday 28 June:** *Lenham Cricket Club Family Fun Day.* Inflatables, rounders, etc.. **Venue:** Lenham Cricket Club ground. **Free entry.**

Book Review from the Lenham Library

The first review, with many thanks, from our new Lenham librarian, Kat Smith

Best Offer Wins by Marisha Kashino

As anyone who has ever attempted to navigate buying or selling a house might know, there is little else in the world more likely to drive you bananas.

The protagonist of Marisa Kashino's debut thriller *Best Offer Wins* is no exception; after a tip about the perfect house, Margo becomes obsessed with winning over its current owner to buy it, whatever the cost to her career, relationship and sanity.

This book genuinely gripped me more than any thriller has in years, though this may be due to my recent experience moving house that made it feel relatable. Full of twists, darkly funny and a bit unhinged – what's not to like?

A Particularly Nasty Case by Adam Kay

In honour of June being 'Pride' month, I present the unconventional mystery thriller from LGBTQ+ author Adam Kay: *A Particularly Nasty Case*.

After the success of his memoir *This is Going to Hurt: Secret Diaries of a Junior Doctor*, Kay has turned his hand

to fiction, setting his debut thriller in a British hospital where young(ish) Dr Eitan Rose begins a new relationship with hospital porter Cole.

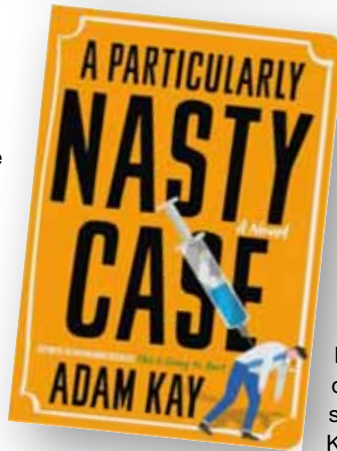
When their colleagues begin dropping dead in rather suspicious circumstances, he and Cole are led down a chaotic rabbit hole of theories...

While it was an enjoyable read with multiple laugh-out-loud moments, I did find the main character remarkably unlikeable, unpleasant, unethical, etc etc.

That is, however, part of the fun of the book.

Its main strength lies in Kay's depiction not only of the struggles of junior doctors that he so famously highlighted in his previous non-fiction works, but also the stigma suffered by those with mental health difficulties.

If you don't mind a bit of dark humour, absurdity and suspension of disbelief, then Kay's first stab (!) at fiction is definitely one to try.



Keep an eye on our posters for new groups starting soon in the library!



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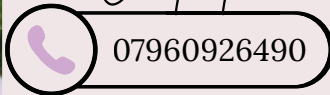
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LENHAM FILM CLUB

Save the Cinema

at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

Friday JUNE 12TH

**Performance begins 19.30,
doors open 19.00**

**Running time: 1 hr 49 mins
Directed by Sara Sugarman**

A comedy drama, a feel-good story – and it actually happened! That’s our June performance, **Save the Cinema** (12, 2022). Set in Wales in 1993, the film tells the story of how the local ‘Lyric’ cinema is doomed to closure – until local hairdresser and youth theatre leader Liz steps in and embarks on a campaign to stop the closure. She even enlists Steven Spielberg to assist with a special cinema performance. The wonderful Samantha

Morton stars as Liz and she’s supported by a great British cast which includes Jonathan Pryce. This is a real charmer, just the thing for a summer evening, so do come along and share it with us.

Our July performance is our audience choice for the season. We celebrate Steven Spielberg’s 80th birthday with **Catch Me If You Can** on Friday, 10th July – come and join us for this fun film starring Leonardo DeCaprio and Tom Hanks.

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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Lenham Meadows Trust

Countryside and community

TWO not-to-miss events.

FIRST the LENHAM MEADOWS TRUST AGM

Followed by a presentation by **Ben Williams**, Ranger and Director of Hollingbourne Meadows Trust, to talk about their work to protect the local environment, including the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**To be held in the Granary (opposite the Tithe Barn),
Lenham at 7.30pm on Thursday 4th June 2026**

Free entry, all welcome, free refreshments.

THEN on Friday 26th June, please join us for cheese & wine at 7pm in The Granary

This is the first of several planned social events where we want to chat about the trusts work and say 'thank you' for your generous support.

Please **save the date**; we look forward to seeing you there.

**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**

Celebrating over 50 years of Lenham Ballet School

This year marks a momentous milestone for Lenham Ballet School as it celebrates its 50th anniversary. Founded in September 1975 by Vivienne Lawrence, LBS has spent five decades nurturing and inspiring generations of local dancers with a passion and joy for the love of dance.

The school began with a few classes held in the United Reform Church Hall with just a handful of enthusiastic pupils. For nearly half a century, Vivienne Lawrence has been (and still is) the heart and soul of the school. Under her guidance, the barre became a place where local children didn't just learn to point their toes, but where they built confidence, lifelong friendships and skills that extend far beyond the studio. Her dedication established a reputation for excellence and discipline that remains today.

In 2023, Erica McCabe (a long serving teacher) took over as Principal. While the leadership has changed, the core values remain the same providing high quality Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) and Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) training in a supportive, community focused environment.

As the school celebrates this golden anniversary, there is even more reason to applaud. This past year saw another 100% pass rate in RAD examinations, with a significant number of pupils achieving Distinctions and High Merits. These results are a testament to both the dedication of the pupils and the expertise and commitment of the teachers.



While technical exams are the backbone of the school, it's on stage where the dancers shine. The school's bi-annual show remains the highlight of the calendar. Our most recent 'Sleeping Beauty' saw pupils swap their usual leotards for beautiful costumes and raised an incredible £754.50 for the worthy charity, Demelza.

As LBS looks ahead to the next 50 years, the future looks brighter than ever. Erica McCabe has introduced several new classes to its timetable, including Baby Ballet and Adult Ballet, which have welcomed dancers of all ages to the school as it continues to thrive. Workshops with industry professionals are also held throughout the year - most recently with a professional Matthew Bourne dancer - to inspire and challenge pupils as well as giving valuable industry insights.

Since 2012 classes are held at Lenham Community Centre, and LBS offers not only Ballet, but Tap, Modern and conditioning classes too! So, whether you're looking for a class where your child will flourish in a creative space, or for a class for yourself with beautiful music and gentle movement, do take a look at their website or social media pages below:

www.lenhamballetschool.co.uk

www.facebook.com/LenhamBalletSchool

www.instagram.com/lenhamballetschool/

Fifty years on, LBS remains not just a place to dance, but a cornerstone of the community where passion takes centre stage and every dancer has the chance to shine.



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Lenham Bowls Club

G Geoff Brown and Sue Southon say: 'Thank you to everyone who popped by our Lenham Bowls Club stall at the Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 29 April.'

It was lovely to chat with you all. As promised, the result of the 'Guess the Weight of the Bowl' competition: it weighed 3lb 1.5oz. The nearest guess was from Chris Kurrage. No prizes for the winner but we hope you all the enjoyed the chocolate bar for entering.'



If you would like to know more about the club, or try one of our new member coaching sessions please contact Geoff Brown (07506 710511) or Lynne Fuller (01622 851538).

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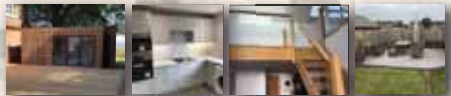
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The Friends of
St Mary's Church, Lenham

JAZZ IN ST MARY'S, SATURDAY 11TH JULY

Tickets are on sale now! Join us for a wonderful evening of jazz in St Mary's Church, Lenham on Saturday 11th July and listen to the sounds of **Doctor Jazz**, a great local 7-piece jazz ensemble. Doctor Jazz last played back in 2023; we remember they were very popular and so we're very excited to be hosting them once again. We are certainly expecting this to be a very entertaining evening.

The main style of the band is commonly described as traditional, but they play a mixture of jolly jazz styles – New Orleans, Dixieland, and Swing, together with a repertoire that includes jazz classics, older popular songs jazzed up and a few from the American song book. The band has over 40 years of experience playing around North Kent.

The concert takes place in St Mary's, very fitting as it gives us the chance to enjoy an evening in the building that The Friends work so hard to maintain. We'll be serving wine, soft drinks and canapés during the interval, at which point we'll also hold a super raffle. The doors will open at 19.00, Doctor Jazz will start playing at 19.30 and the evening will end

around 21.45. Parking will be in and around the square on the night.

Tickets are on sale from Kent Loves..., 11 High Street Lenham and are £15 per person, CASH only.

Tickets are advance purchase only and numbers are limited. All profits will go towards our work to preserve and protect our Grade 1 listed church building, ensuring that it continues to stand as a beautiful focal point in the village. We hope you'll be able to join us to enjoy what we're sure will be a great sing-along occasion – do get your tickets before they sell out!

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL VILLAGE BARN DANCE, 19TH SEPTEMBER

We'll be holding the fabulous Annual Village Barn Dance in the Tithe Barn on Saturday 19th September. **Tickets go on sale 1st August**, so mark the date in your diaries!

Please email us if you'd like to receive regular updates about our work or to become a member. More information about us and a membership application form is on our website.



www.friendsofstmaryslenham.org



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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
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Lenham Fun Bike Ride

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Challock Open Gardens



SUNDAY 7 JUNE 2026 10am - 5pm



Entrance £7, under 16s free

Fundraising in aid of

British Heart Foundation - Registered Charity 225972

The Friends of Challock Church - Charity No. 606027

A great day out for all the family



Nine private gardens open around the village to explore, from large landscapes to small courtyards, colourful herbaceous borders, fruit & vegetable plots, cacti collection and an extensive Japanese garden

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Advance tickets from 15 May, at The Barn Shop, Challock

Miniature garden competition

Free to enter, prizes for all, 7yrs & under and 8-12 yrs

Drop off gardens 10-12 noon on Sunday 7 June 2026 at the Village Hall



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The South of England's only museum dedicated entirely to transport history is marking its 80th anniversary

Established in 1946, Maidstone Carriage Museum recently reopened to visitors for the spring and summer season, offering free access at weekends to one of the most important carriage collections in the country.

Founded by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt Drake, a 12 time Mayor of Maidstone, the museum opened in 1946 after he began rescuing horsedrawn vehicles displaced by the rise of the motor car. His efforts led to the creation of Britain's first museum dedicated to carriages, opened by the then Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Now run by Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), the museum is nationally recognised for the quality and diversity of its collection and is often described as a hidden gem.

It is home to a significant collection of historic horsedrawn carriages, carts and sleighs, ranging from elegant private vehicles to working transport used for agriculture, trade and public services. On display is Queen Victoria's 5th State Landau, a selection of vehicles driven by the queen herself and Duke of Montrose's State Chariot from 1790.

While it has strong roots in Maidstone's history, the collection tells a much broader story. The vehicles illustrate how people travelled, worked and lived across the country, reflecting changing social status, craftsmanship, technology and everyday life from the 18th to early 20th centuries.

Admission to the museum is completely free, making it an accessible and affordable day out for residents, families and visitors. A visit can also be easily combined with time at nearby Maidstone Museum, which is also free to enter and showcases collections spanning fine art, archaeology, natural history and local heritage.

The Museum is part of the Wheels of Time scheme, a nationally recognised initiative that



connects historic carriage collections across the UK. Children visiting the attraction can collect a Wheels of Time badge, with more to be gathered at other venues until they have a full set.

Beyond its museums, MBC continues to support arts, culture and heritage through the museums and Creative Maidstone, the council run hub delivering free and lowcost creative events, workshops and activities for people of all ages. Working with local artists, community groups and partners, Creative Maidstone helps ensure opportunities to engage with creativity are open to everyone.

Plan a visit - Visitors are encouraged to rediscover Maidstone Carriage Museum this spring and summer and celebrate 80 years of a collection that connects local stories with national history. Opening times are available online.

Book a tour - Guided tours of the Carriage Museum available to book in May and September for £10 a person.

Support the museums - For just £20 a year, people can support heritage in Maidstone by joining The Friends of Maidstone Museum, an independent charity supporting Maidstone Museum, the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment Museum and the Carriage Museum. By joining, you help protect local heritage, support exhibitions and conservation, and enjoy talks, events and closer involvement with the museums.

Recipe of the Month

Chilled Watercress and Cucumber Soup

Ingredients:

1 cucumber	1 Pt chicken stock
½ pint milk	3-4 Tbspns cream
2 potatoes	1oz butter
1 bunch watercress	Salt & pepper
1 small onion	Parsley
½ oz butter	

Method:

Melt the 1oz of butter in a large saucepan, add chopped onion and cook until soft, without browning. Add the peeled and diced potatoes and the cucumber, peeled and cut into 1" pieces, add salt & pepper. Add the chicken stock and cook for 30-35 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Sieve or liquidise. Rinse the saucepan and return the sieved soup to it with the milk. Bring to the boil, stirring gently.



Add the cream and leave to cool.

Sweat the watercress in the ½ oz butter and when tender chop finely and stir into the cooling soup. Chill and serve with chopped parsley on top.

Serves 6

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Mote Park Art Competition

Looks For 'Park Life' Inspiration



Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) is delighted to announce the return of the popular Mote Park Art Competition for 2026, which is now open for entries.

Once again, budding artists are invited to create a piece of original artwork to enter into the competition, and the theme for this year is 'Park Life'. Artists are free to interpret this however they wish, and inspiration could come from the wildlife and diverse flora, or how the park is used by people: family picnics, days out with friends, enjoying a music festival, or something else.

Artwork for the Mote Park Art Competition can be in any medium, except photography. 3D submissions including textiles, glass, pottery and woodwork are particularly welcome, as well as paintings and drawings.

Cllr Stephen Thompson, MBC Cabinet Member for Healthier Stronger Communities, says: "This annual Art Competition is a great way for people to share a favourite time they have spent in the fabulous Mote Park, which is an amazing jewel in the County Town's crown. I look forward to seeing all of the varied entries to the competition and would encourage as many people as possible to get creative and take part, especially first-time entrants."

Prizes will be awarded in two categories, sponsored by Marathon Wealth Management:

- Over 18's winner - £250; runner up - £100
- Under 18's winner - £100; runner up - £50

The competition is open to any age and the closing date for entries is 20 September 2026. Full terms and conditions and how to enter can be found at: <https://arts.maidstone.gov.uk>

Once the competition closes, a number of the entries will be short-listed to feature in an exhibition which will be open to the public and



free to visit in the Mote Park Learning Space. From Monday 26 October to Saturday 8 November 2026, come and see the creations of talented local artists, inspired by the Green Flag Award-winning Park.

Visitors to the exhibition will also be invited to vote for their own favourite artwork, and the winner of the 'Visitors' Vote' will receive a voucher for art materials.

MBC envisions a Fairer Economy for People and Planet where a thriving cultural community supports local creatives, and bringing people and planet together through this competition achieves this priority.

Shown above is the winner of the Mote Park Art Competition 2025, Over 18s category, Hilary Walton titled 'On the water's edge'.

QR Code for the Mote Park Art Competition is here:



Come to the Races....8,000 spectators flocked to Lenham

By Henny Shotter

Between 1848 and 1860 Lenham had its very own 6-furlong racecourse on the hill above Lenham.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1871-1890 marks the location clearly on Faversham Road where the road forks to turn east towards Woodside Green and to the left to West Street.

The 'Lenham and Mid Kent Races' took place every year in June and were organised by the local gentry. The races were a highlight for the local community and will have brought business to Lenham.

The customary races at Lenham were: The Mid-Kent handicap, run over a distance of a mile by 3-year-old and older horses. Then there was the 'Lenham Plate', a 1.5-mile handicap race for horses 3 years and over. Plus the 1 mile Maiden Plate and the Chilston Park Stakes.

The Kent Herald¹ reported in June of 1849 very positively about the racecourse and its stand, which was 'very fashionable filled'. It says "the day was exceedingly beautiful, the spectators were about 5,000.' There were side shows and vending booths and, of course, betting.

The Kentish Gazette reported in 1856 an accident caused by a thoughtless spectator. A farmer from Borden crossed the course just before the winning post. Unfortunately for him, as well as a horse and its rider, he had chosen the wrong moment just as the horse and his rider, who were in the lead position, had just come round the corner! The rider was hit by other oncoming horses on the left side of his head and sustained a bleeding



'Swalcliffe'² won the 'Lenham Plate' by two lengths in 1856.

wound. The horse, fortunately, got up and ran off riderless.

Following concerns about safety, conditions and mismanagement, the Lenham and Mid-Kent races ended in 1860. In 1861 Charing held a race, and again after an absence of 50 years. Fortunately, in 2026 the Charing race is still going strongly!

References

1. All newspaper articles referred to are published by www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/
2. Thanks to Richard Maylam for providing the image.

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

Local Government Reorganisation / Devolution

If he has not already announced it, the preferred format for local government reorganisation of Kent and Medway will soon be confirmed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Reed.

This is the first major reorganisation of how local government works since the 1970s.

In Kent, with the exception of Medway which is already a Unitary Authority, we have three layers of local government: Kent County Council (which deals with major issues like roads, social care and education) and 12 borough / district councils (which among other things deal with planning, housing, and rubbish collection) and then parish / town councils which work at a much more local level. In the case of Lenham we manage play areas, toilets, cemeteries, picnic areas, allotments, sports fields and, of course, the Lenham Cross.

The current plans for reforming how local government works will mean that all the functions of the county council and the borough / district councils will be amalgamated forming Unitary Authorities (as Medway is currently). The decision to be made is the format of the new Unitary Authorities. Will these simply merge several borough councils into one larger area, or will this be an opportunity to step back and take a fresh look at how

populations and settlements have evolved since the 1970s. There are five different submissions in front of the Secretary of State; that is the decision he will be weighing up.

Curiously, the legislation is “silent” on the role of parish and town councils. In Maidstone borough there are 41 parish areas with 37 elected parish councils. This is an issue which I and my colleagues in other parishes have been raising since the details became available. Currently, there is little additional feedback but, through our county and national representatives (Kent Association of Local Councils / the National Association of Local Councils) these questions are being raised. So, we will have to see what emerges as the detail becomes clearer.

What we do know is that elections for the new Unitary Authorities, in whatever format is decided, will take place in May 2027. Once elected, the new authorities will exist in “shadow form” for 12 months, with the day-to-day organisation remaining with the county and borough / district councils during this “shadow” period. Then, in May 2028 all aspects of local government will transfer from the county and borough / district councils to the new Unitary Authorities, and the current county and borough / district councils will cease to exist. Medway, which is already a Unitary Authority will be reconfigured into a new, probably larger, authority, the format of

which is part of the overall decision for the Kent / Medway area.

Once formed, the new Unitary Authorities will be working through the usual government channels unless a decision is taken to then go for “devolution”.

If that decision is agreed, then all the Unitary Authorities covering Kent will come together to create an overarching structure known as a Mayoral Combined Authority. There are presently 11 MCAs in England and one of the ambitions of the current reform of local government is to create an environment where more such arrangements are possible.

If achieved, this process would devolve budgets from central government to the directly elected Mayorality which will then have greater autonomy and responsibility

for how funds are allocated at a local / regional level. So Local Government Reform and Devolution are not the same although they are linked.

Once we have a clearer understanding of the detail the parish council will make sure that is shared widely.

... and finally

While all this upheaval is happening in the background, we can all look forward to the Lenham Fest – Saturday 1 August at the Tithe Barn.

Even at this early-stage plans are coming together with a bar and food sorted, a tug of war competition planned (more teams welcome!), teddy bears picnic, and, of course, live music throughout the day – make a note in your diary now!

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Celebrating a Fantastic Term and Looking Ahead

We have just completed my favourite term of the year! Term 5 is always filled with a wonderful balance of hard work, excitement and memorable experiences and this year has been no exception.

We have continued our close partnership with Harrietsham Primary School, with both Year 5 and Year 3 successfully completing their Forest School sessions. It has been a joy to see the children grow in confidence, teamwork and curiosity through their outdoor learning experiences. Our youngest children are now eagerly counting down to Term 6, when they will finally “jump

on the train” and begin their own Forest School adventures.

I have also had the pleasure of visiting The Lenham School recently and seeing many of our former pupils thriving — it is always heart-warming to see how they continue to flourish on their learning journeys.

Our children have enjoyed some fantastic trips this term. Year 1 had a brilliant day exploring Kent Life, bringing their classroom learning to life, while our Rainbow children thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Wingham, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

We had some exciting events in May. Our ever popular Break the Rules Day allowed children to bend a few uniform rules in exchange for donations to support our PTA. Looking ahead to Term 6, we are excited to host our wonderful Sports Day, complete with mini games, as well as our Fun Run, both helping to raise money for the school while encouraging teamwork, resilience and fun.

Finally, we would love your help with our final mission of the year. Our children have shared their wish list for enriching playtimes, including dolls, cars, bubbles, music equipment, dressing up clothes, kitchen items for the mud kitchen, buggies, scooters and a sandpit. Their final request was for seating — picnic benches or wooden benches where they can sit, chat and relax.

If you are able to help with a donation, no matter how big or small, we would be incredibly grateful.

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Tai Chi is a wonderful way to rehabilitate after injury as the slow movements give you time to stop before aggravating a problem. It is also a great way to build strength in muscles and get moving if you are returning to exercise. Being a weight-bearing exercise, it strengthens bones and can help with conditions such as osteoporosis.



Rhonda from Abundant Energy offers friendly Tai Chi classes that are suitable for all levels of fitness. She has been practicing Tai Chi for over 30 years and teaching it for 18 years. Participants are encouraged to work within their own ability without any strain on the body as the movements are slow and within a 'comfortable' range of motion. All movements can be adapted to suit the abilities of each individual and Tai Chi is often recommended by physiotherapists, doctors and other health professionals as a safe way to rehabilitate.

A new beginners' class will be starting on Monday 1st June at Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way, Lenham, ME17 2QT, 12:00-12:45pm. We are offering a free taster session so why not come along and have a go.

To book your place contact **Rhonda** on **07985 001782** or email: **bex.taichi@yahoo.co.uk**
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Reflections from the Well-being Community

Group writing on the topic 'Nature and Me'

It was one of the sessions of the group where we decided to write about our relationship with nature. The result was so inspiring that our group decided to share it with others.

Nature and Me - Joanie Kent

When walking my dog Bruno (a lurcher) I often notice through the seasons different signs of nature. The grass after rain is refreshed and looks greener, and when it's been cut, a sweet aroma (not so good with those who suffer with hay fever!)

In the spring, the snowdrops are found in certain places, and the daffodils grow, not only in gardens but in random places along the country lanes. The village gardens are so pretty with not only daffodils but tulips and pretty flowers. The hedgerows are filling out, getting more foliage. May brings us bluebells appearing in the woodlands making a glorious blue colour spreading through the forest.

The animals are around all the time, just as nature is around us all the time. The robin particularly comes into my front garden for his wild bird food. A pleasure to see, but not quite tame enough to come to my hand. I call him, "Robin!" and as if by magic, he appears, or some days he is sitting in the birch tree waiting for me. Such a delight, it makes my day to see him. The squirrels are also sometimes seen. If Bruno sees them, he chases them, and they quickly run up the side of a tree. Pheasants are also around, not only in the gardens but in the woodlands and sometimes the woodpecker can be heard in the distance. My son even spotted three birds on our driveway this morning, but I am not sure

what they are, maybe French hens? I am not sure, they are very small.

My own garden is now full of primulas, some yellow, some red, on my front lawn, and they make such a lovely show, but my son has to wait until they are finished because he wishes to mow the lawn.

How lovely the seasons are, though spring is my favourite!

Nature and Me - Martyn Sims

The natural world is so large, but sometimes my life is so full it gets put to the back of my reality.

But if I allow, nature can come bursting through in the most unexpected ways. For instance, yesterday and today I have been clearing away some of the many, many thousands of leaves which descend on my garden each year during winter. This is a thankless task, as no sooner done than the wind replaces them. Eventually, the task becomes easier, and as winter turns to spring, the job is finally completed.

So, what good can be found in this natural world "full of leaves"? Firstly, acorns, chestnuts and other tree seeds, unseen at first, can be found sprouting and growing in this debris. Then worms and beetles can be seen sliding and scurrying about, living in the decay. All of this life is protected and safe from the storms and frosts of winter. To see birds turning these leaves and finding a bonanza of food hidden underneath is food for my soul!

And what better than after a couple of years of storage, nature gives back the best nourishment for the garden in the form of leaf mould.



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Lenham Gardening Society

From Margaret Baines



Our meeting this month is on **18th June at 7.30pm** in the Community Centre. Our speaker, **Jane Scotchmer** is giving her talk on *'How Artists and Garden Designers Lead Us Up the Garden Path'*.

The competition will be for 1 Peony and/or 3 Meringue Kisses. Tickets will be on sale for the Pimms & Strawberries evening on July 16th.

Diary Dates:

July 14th – Day trip to Folkestone. Cost £16pp

August 22nd – Lenham Garden Show

September 8th – Day trip to Leonardslee

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

Green Room concerts are back!

www.greenroomconcerts.com

August Bank Holiday weekend is all sewn up for you, courtesy of Green Room Festival, which is back in Lenham for it's fourth year! The brilliant **James Taylor Quartet** will be opening the festival at **19.30 on Friday 28 August**. Live, the band is explosive, with a breathtaking, diverse unmatched back catalogue, so prepare to be blown away!

Saturday 29 August sees the return of the ever popular **Bach to Baby** with music for the whole family at 11.00. All ages, 0-100, welcome. (www.bachtobaby.com/lenham). This will be followed later at 19.30 by the fabulous voices of the **London Community Gospel Choir**. Be prepared to be inspired, uplifted and moved, you may even want to dance!

We could not be more excited to be welcoming comedian and TV personality, **Alistair McGowan**, to Green Room to perform for our now traditional and hugely

popular brunch gig at 11.00 on **Sunday 30 August**. Expect beautiful music, poignant poems and spot-on mimicry. It's three great shows in one!

This is followed by our wonderful **Classic Car Meet**, which will fill the grounds surrounding the barn once more from 13.30, accompanied by live music and great refreshments.

And finally, at **19.00** (please note the time) on **Sunday 30 August**, we will be welcoming back for a second year, some of the best musicians from the West End's most popular shows - *Cabaret*, *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Into the Woods*, *Anything Goes*, all lead by Musical Director **Steve Ridley**, who will be coming to us fresh from this Summer's biggest hit, *High Society*. We have some surprises in store for you alongside your favourite musical hits, and guarantee a wonderful close to this year's festival.



JUNE 25TH PAPERMAKING IN KENT

A talk by *David Carder* for the Lenham Heritage Society.

Venue: **Lenham Community Centre**

Doors open at 7pm: **Talk commences at 7.30pm**

Entrance £5.00 – non-members / Free – members/children

Refreshments available. Raffle prize kindly donated by Lenham 'Vinorium'.



Countryways Quilters and Stitchers

From Pamela Gillard



In June we start with a bang with our **Quilters Craft Fair on June 2nd**. That will be fun. Our stitching group makes all kinds of things, not just quilts.

Whilst we are predominately textile artists making all manner of things, our ladies specialise in an assortment of different crafts like bead work, cross stitch, tapestry and bag making. I, myself am a fibre artist and will no doubt be found working at my spinning wheel. So there will be scrumptious hand-spun yarn for sale. Do stop in between **1:30pm and 4pm** to see some of the things we have on offer. There's tea and coffee available and entrance is free.

On **June 16th** we will resume work on our sampler quilt by making up the last three blocks. In **July** we will be joining



all our blocks with colourful panels to make up the quilt top.

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

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

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Nature Watch

By Darren Hammond

All a-buzz about a new hotel for tiny guests

An easy and fairly important thing you can do for one of our important tiny friends is to put up or install a bee hotel (or several bee hotels). These simple devices offer a place mainly for bees to use as nests and lay their eggs for the next generation to emerge.

These benefit the majority of bees, known as solitary bees, that will nest/live on their own as opposed to hive bees like the honey bee.



What to expect from a bee hotel

Bee hotels come in all shapes and sizes. Some will also include habitats that other types of insect may make use of, but most will have rows of short tubes of wood, usually bamboo, for the insects to use as nests.

These mimic the natural holes they find in wood or hard dirt to make into nests. The one above is of the multi habitat hotels. The other is simply a collection of bamboo tubes and wooden blocks with holes. This year both have been

extremely popular with several different types of bee.

The main attraction

There are many types of solitary bee but the most common that will visit your bee hotel are probably going to be the mason bee, the leaf cutter bee and perhaps a mining bee.

Here is a red mason bee examining one of the tubes for suitability. This is a common species of solitary bee and builds a nest in cavities, gaps and holes and then uses mud to seal it off.



What makes a bee hotel so important?

Because in the modern world habitat loss is a big threat.

This means that many wild bees struggle to find natural nesting because of building and development which means fewer dead trees and hollow stems, plus more intensive farming (removal of hedgerows and wild plants) and tidy gardens (clearing away natural debris where bees nest).

Bee hotels help compensate for this loss by providing alternative nesting places.

Simple to install and keep

Solitary bees are super-pollinators!

They're more efficient than honeybees at



pollinating certain plants.

That means because they don't produce honey, they focus entirely on gathering pollen. And besides that



most solitary bees can't even sting! So you don't have to worry about any surprises.

By supporting them, we boost biodiversity and food production, as well as get all the flowers in the garden pollinated. All this without having to maintain hives like with honey bees. Just put them up in a place that gets some sun and they will take care of themselves.

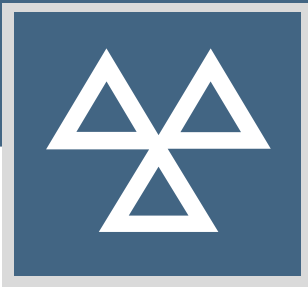
Not only bees visit the hotel

Attracting bees into the hotels will of course be the main reason for putting these up, but like a lot of wildlife initiatives, the bee hotel will attract a host of other insects and bugs.

Here we have a Zebra Jumping Spider that was exploring one of the bee hotels we have along our fence.

And another tiny guest exploring one of the bamboo tubes, an ant (along with a few friends) pauses for a moment leaving to check out other "rooms".

The amount of life in and around these simple, easy and very effective hotels is fantastic.

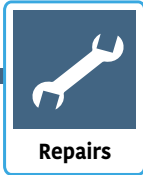


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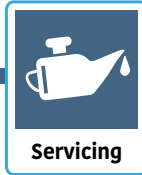
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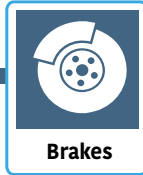
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Update from Len Valley Practice

From Georgia Lane, Operations Manager

We're pleased to welcome new clinicians to the practice over recent months, helping us continue to improve appointment availability and patient access across both sites. Many patients may already have met some of our new team members, and we hope you will join us in giving them a warm welcome.

To help us manage requests as efficiently and fairly as possible, we encourage patients to complete our online triage form independently where they are able to do so. Support from a family member, friend, or carer is also welcome if needed. For patients who may not have access to a device or require assistance using online services, our reception team can provide support, including access to a practice iPad to complete the form within the surgery.

At 8am each morning, our reception team are already managing a high volume of incoming triage requests and, as only

one receptionist is available at this time, attending reception at 8am specifically to have a form completed on your behalf may unfortunately mean a wait until additional staff members begin later in the morning.

We would also kindly ask patients to ensure their contact details are kept up to date, including mobile numbers, addresses, and email addresses, so we can contact you regarding appointments and important practice updates.

Finally, if you are unable to attend an appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so the appointment can be offered to another patient in need. During April alone, 222 GP and nurse appointments were not attended across the practice, and unfortunately this figure appears to be increasing. More practice information and data can be found on our website. Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

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





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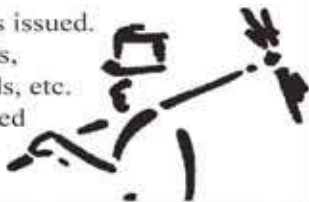
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Renters' Rights Act

From Hallett & co, solicitors



Big changes have arrived in the private rented sector in the UK as of the beginning of May 2026. In this whistle stop tour of the Renters' Rights Act, we will outline the major changes for you to understand your rights as a landlord and a tenant.

Abolition of no-fault evictions

No fault evictions, also known as Section 21 notices, are no longer an available option for landlords due to this new legislation. This will create greater protection for tenants in the private sector, as well as create a fairer and more predictable environment. This increased security for tenants is long overdue and is a key change for both parties.



Introduction of a Private Rented Sector Database

This database will help landlords to better understand their obligations in their role and provide a platform to demonstrate that these are complied with. The new structure will provide transparency and improve the efficiency of enforcement action.



Effect on Proceedings

Whilst Section 21 notices are being removed as a viable option for landlords to evict tenants, there are now more available grounds under Section 8, which are fault-based grounds for eviction. However, if a landlord has started a court application before the 1st of May 2026, then there is a three month transitional period within which an eviction arising from a Section 21 notice would still be valid.

Reforms to Rent and Affordability

In another effort to reduce the volatility of the private rented sector, changes are in force to ensure the rent paid by a tenant is reasonable for the property they are renting. This will be achieved through rental rates being capped at the market value to prevent bidding wars for properties, as well as restrictions on rent reviews. Reviews will now only be available to landlords once per year with two months' prior notice to the tenant.



Rental Discrimination

Landlords will no longer be able to exercise overt rental discrimination, such as advertising 'no DSS' which will no longer be allowed, and neither will more discrete measures implemented by landlords. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that landlords are not able to deny prospective tenants on the basis that they have children or that they are in receipt of benefits.



More information about the Act and what will be changing can be found on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the 12 differences between these two pictures?



An update from your local MP, Helen Whately

Safer Country Lanes

“I used to walk my children to our village school but had to stop this after someone nearly hit my child’s pram... and I’ve always hacked horses along lanes, but in the last 5 years I’ve had countless near misses due to drivers speeding.”

Those are the words of someone who took part in my road safety survey which was prompted by a constituent who suffered a hit and run while out riding her horse. Thankfully, in this case both horse and rider were OK. Nearly 500 people took part and over 80% told me they feel “quite unsafe” or “so unsafe that they no longer walk, cycle or horse ride on our country lanes”.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to share their experiences with me which I am using in my work to make our country lanes safer.

I will keep supporting the British Horse Society’s Dead Slow campaign and press for driving safely on rural lanes to be included in Speed Awareness Courses to target drivers who have been speeding. I also want to see better promotion of the Government’s THINK! Campaign for safer driving as more than half of the people who completed my survey had not heard of it.

It’s not just horse riders who feel unsafe on our roads, another person said: “I worry walking my dogs as I’ve had a few near misses in the past. I’ve also had four car accidents on this lane over the years due to the speed of other motorists”.



Helen at Sole Street Stables in Selling

As our lanes become more dangerous, people who live in villages and in the countryside are bearing the brunt – whether that’s literally being in accidents, or because the danger means missing out on the pleasures and health benefits of getting out and about by foot, on bicycle or horseback.

I’m no fan of traffic calming measures; what I want to see is better, more careful driving in the countryside. If you are interested in my work on this, please follow me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HelenWhatelyMP/ to see my latest updates.

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

e: helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk
t: 0207 219 6472



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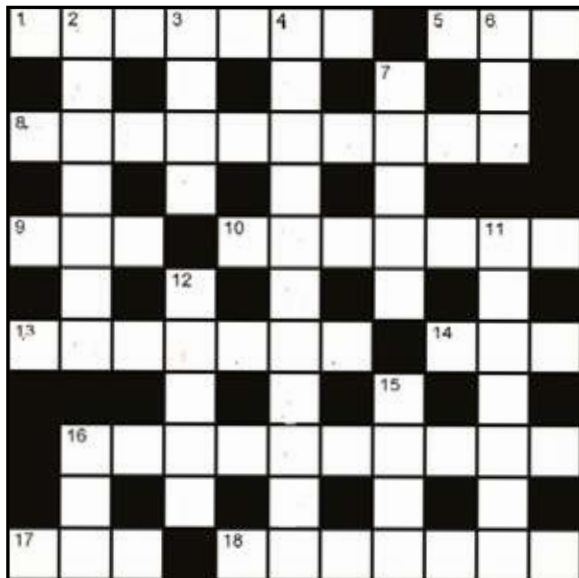
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TEL 01622 734552 MOBILE 07901 521706 – Mark

Focus PRIZE Crossword June 2026

The winner of April 2026 is Jenny Fairhall of Lenham, well done!



Across clues

1. Mr Bogey's rank. (7)
5. Copy (3)
8. The act of rubbing out. (10)
9. Nay (anagram) (3)
10. Forcefully extend. (7)
13. Author of The Screwtape Letters. (1, 1, 5)
14. Admirer who will keep you cool. (3)
16. Parts of a staircase, (10)
17. When someone is due. (1,1,1)
18. Nighttime shutters! (7)

Down clues

2. Causes annoyance. (7)
3. Form of silica that has a small water content. (4)
4. This might well shock you, so be careful. (11)
6. The aim of a snooker player. (3)
7. This poor sufferer might not be liked on return. (5)
11. Very burnt. (7)
12. What beanz meanz. (5)
15. And the rest. (2,2)
16. Have a go at winning. (3)

Answers for May 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 24 June** where they'll be placed in an envelope. The winner will be notified direct and announced in a future issue of *Focus*.

Name Phone No

Address

Christian Message

By Ben Doggett, Pathways Church

Making Space for Love

Many of us will have heard stories about moments when someone has encountered the love of God. Or perhaps this is something that we have experienced for ourselves. Sometimes those moments are dramatic, other times they are a quieter assurance of “I know that I am loved.”

Whether you're a Christian or simply curious, that longing to be known and loved is something we all share. Yet, for most of us, life has a way of crowding out the actual awareness of being loved. Work becomes demanding, family life is full on, and even good things can further fill over stretched attention.

This isn't to say that everyday life is somehow separate from God. Christians believe He is present in all of life. But learning to recognise His love in everything often begins by intentionally making space for Him. Like any relationship, love grows best through time spent together. For Christians, that might mean prayer, reading the Bible, or simply pausing to reflect. These things aren't about earning God's love, but about being open to receiving it.

In this ancient psalm, David tells God, “Your love is better than life itself.”

In Psalm 63:2-5, David says to God:

- 2 *I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory.*
- 3 *Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you!*
- 4 *I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.*
- 5 *You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.*

In this ancient psalm, David tells God, “Your love is better than life itself.” It's a staggering claim and it points to something deeply sustaining. Perhaps the invitation is simply this; to slow down, even briefly, and consider the possibility that we are loved more deeply than we have ever realised. And then to learn, little by little, to rest in that love.

In practice, this can start very simply. It might be taking a few quiet minutes in the morning with a cup of tea and telling God, “Thank you for your love. I receive it today.” Sometimes you may feel something, sometimes you may not. Christians trust that God's love is real, regardless of how it feels in the moment.

If life has brought disappointment, then a suggestion like that may be met with an understandable hesitation. We can be sceptical and wonder if it would just be a waste of time. But the invitation of Christianity is not just to believe in the love of God as an idea, but to make space and experience it for ourselves.

Len Valley Benefice **Everybody is welcome**

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

Wednesday 3 June

9.30 am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 7 June

9.30 am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00 am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 14 June

9.30 am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00 am Lenham: Holy Communion

Sunday 21 June

8.00 am Lenham: Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30 am Lenham: Breakfast Church

11.00 am Lenham: Morning Worship

Sunday 28 June

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

Check local notice boards for more details

Please note that during 2026 some services may need to be altered or cancelled at short notice due to circumstances beyond our control.



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