

Hastings Independent

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FREE

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WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE



Dave Young

**PAUL MCLAUGHLIN
AND HUGH SULLIVAN**

Hastings town centre, Alexandra Park and areas in between were again under water last weekend following another sustained period of heavy rainfall – around two inches in just a few hours. The same streets that suffered last January’s devastating floods – South Terrace and Denmark Place, in particular – were submerged on

Saturday morning. The emergency services evacuated residents and closed the nearby Priory Meadow Shopping Centre.

The clear-up, co-ordinated by an emergency planning team from Hasting Borough Council (HBC) in conjunction with staff of Southern Water and conducted in the main by impressive numbers of workers from the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS), achieved rapid results in comparison with

January’s experience, from which all parties had clearly learnt.

However, by the time you read this, the same low-lying areas in the town centre may have flooded yet again as a new storm, Ciaran, was forecast to bring further heavy rain to the south coast on Wednesday night and Thursday.

It was clear as dawn broke on Saturday morning that a new flood crisis was shaping up. Local residents called the emergency ser-

vices as water levels rose. Police and ESFR staff started arriving on the scene before 9am. A team from Southern Water arrived by 10.30am, but they had to wait a further three hours before pumping equipment leased from Selwood, a pumping solution company, could be put in place. The draining of the surface water got under way by 2.30pm.

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NEWS

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Two major themes dominate this issue, the editorial team like to pretend this was planned, in fact it's fortuitous.

The publication of a report on last January's floods was immediately followed (one for you, irony fans) with Hastings town centre becoming inundated again and resembling a fire engine convention as residents were rescued and buildings pumped out.

Our regular Clean Water Watch column examines the seemingly endless pollution of local rivers and beaches by a privatised utility.

More happily, the paper features animals galore: guinea pigs, goats, snakes, stick insects, eels, cats and prehistoric painted horses, in pet rescue centres, pet food banks and five-year-old Valentino's vivarium.

The news pages include the second in a series of conversations with prospective MPs - this time the Green candidate, and two worrying causes of concern: the future of the much loved, internationally famous Source skatepark, and huge holes in local health and benefit advice provision, just when it's most needed.

In the arts section, you'll discover ancient audio equipment, Snow Cake (!) and nearby choirs among other delights.

Plus, lots of your letters - online or on paper we want to hear readers' opinions (although don't necessarily agree with them).

Perhaps they can enlighten us as to why the deck of the pier - made from open wooden slats - was recently flooded...

Happy Reading

< Continued from page 1

Danny Hunt, a Field Performance Manager with Southern Water who was directing the emergency pumping efforts, said it was too early to speculate on what caused the flood. However, he did indicate that the outfall pipe at Denmark Place had become blocked because of a build-up of beach shingle.

This blocked pipe has also been identified as one of the causes of the flooding in January. That's according to a final report into it, prepared by Ardent Consultant Engineers on behalf of East Sussex County Council (ESCC), which was published just days before last weekend's repeat. This report, delayed because of Southern Water's failure to supply the inquiry team with full data, does not unambiguously pin the blame for the flooding on any one single cause, but makes it clear that partial restriction of the outfall at Denmark Place, resulting from a build-up of beach shingle, was a major factor.

Ownership of the culvert downstream of Alexandra Park to the outfall at Denmark Place has been in dispute for several years. Southern Water finally agreed to take responsibility for the entire length of the culverted watercourse in September 2022, after which they installed two additional pumps to increase capacity to pump water onto the beach whilst they conducted improvement works.

Prior to this, the company had installed a manhole to allow cleaning of the culvert at South Terrace as part of its bathing water quality initiative. This manhole flooded both in July 2021 and in Novem-

ber 2022, before spilling serious devastation in January this year.

As part of its investigation, Ardent sought evidence of what flood risk assessment had been carried out before the installation of the manhole. The report notes that: "Southern Water has yet to locate documentation which provides [this] assessment."

The report also refers to "significant discussions" between East Sussex CC and Southern Water since January aimed at avoiding repetition, and to a number of mitigation, repair and preventative actions which have been identified as part of these talks. These include replacing the manhole along South Terrace with a sealed and bolted manhole cover and the installation of sewer level monitors on the foul system together with 'non-return devices' on the private laterals of flooded properties. Southern Water is said to be committed "to work together on improving the understanding of flood risk in the catchment" and "to undertake any identified actions as a priority."

Some victims of last weekend's repeat devastations are less than impressed - see adjacent report.

Local Conservative MP Sally-Ann Hart said it was "desperately upsetting" to see the devastation caused by the flooding. She said she was in constant contact with the emergency services when the flood warnings were issued, and she was a visible presence in the town on Saturday afternoon, meeting people affected. On Sunday morning she spoke with Lawrence Gosden, Southern Water CEO, urging the company to join the Sussex Resilience Forum, the



Naz Montag

body which brings together all the emergency services, councils, utilities and other essential public and voluntary services to work in partnership to support the local community during incidents and emergencies.

She also said she would press for more government resources for the town to deal with the emergency, and that she would be looking to ministers to extend the Flood Re government insurance scheme which covers residential properties in flood risk areas, to local businesses.

Helena Dollimore, Labour's candidate for Hastings and Rye said it was "awful" to see the impact the flooding was having on residents and businesses and that Southern Water "needed to get their act together." She called on the water company to offer emergency compensation grants to stop businesses going under and residents facing major financial hardship.

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HASTINGS TIDES

DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 3 NOV	H1:54am	L8:40am	H2:10pm	L8:58pm	6:52	4:29	
SAT 4 NOV	H2:39am	L9:18am	H3:02pm	L9:39pm	6:54	4:27	
SUN 5 NOV	H3:32am	L10:08am	H4:00pm	L10:37pm	6:55	4:26	THIRD
MON 6 NOV	H4:42am	L11:18am	H5:41pm		6:57	4:24	
TUES 7 NOV	L0:00am	H6:09am	L12:51pm	H8:07pm	6:59	4:22	
WEDS 8 NOV	L1:34am	H7:23am	L2:10pm	H8:07pm	7:00	4:21	
THURS 9 NOV	L2:37am	H8:17am	L3:02pm	H8:50pm	7:02	4:19	
FRI 10 NOV	L3:24am	H8:59am	L3:46pm	H9:24pm	7:04	4:18	
SAT 11 NOV	L4:05am	H9:34am	L4:26pm	H9:52pm	7:06	4:16	
SUN 12 NOV	L4:46am	H10:05am	L5:06pm	H10:21pm	7:07	4:15	
MON 13 NOV	L5:25am	H10:36am	L5:44pm	H10:52pm	7:09	4:13	NEW
TUES 14 NOV	L6:01am	H11:06am	L6:19pm	H11:26pm	7:11	4:12	
WEDS 15 NOV	L5:35am	H11:40am	L6:52pm		7:12	4:11	
THURS 16 NOV	H0:03am	L7:07am	H12:18pm	L7:24pm	7:14	4:09	

* L = LOW TIDE H = HIGHTIDE For beach safety advice visit: rml.org/safety/beach-safety

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Exit The Source, Re-enter Source BMX

HUGH SULLIVAN

On 29 August two companies which owned the Source Park skatepark on Hastings seafront - The Source (Hastings) Limited and The Source (Hastings) Holdings Limited - declared insolvency, with debts amounting to over £10m. But on the same day two new companies formed by the same directors and shareholders, brothers Rich and Marc Moore, took their place.

Administrators appointed to act on behalf of the creditors of the insolvent companies had a choice – either to liquidate the existing stock of BMX bikes, parts and accessories, and hand back the leases of their premises at the Source Park and on the Castleham Estate, or to try to sell the business as a going concern. Liquidation would close the business permanently with a fire sale of assets at rock bottom prices; as an alternative, offers were sought, according to Rich, from other trade buyers and/or venture capital investors to keep it going. However, he and his brother made the best bid – approved by the administrators and a government-appointed independent assessor - to buy back the full business and stock under a ‘pre-pack’ arrangement in the names of Source BMX Limited and Wheels of Steel Holdings Limited, and negotiate assignments of re-

spective leases to them.

As a result, customers, whether buyers of bikes or users of the premises, have suffered little, if any, dislocation. Rich confirms that none of the 73 full-time and part-time employees have lost their jobs. The Moores have also endeavoured to ensure that all of their previous regular trade suppliers and other local business creditors will have their debts honoured by the new companies, even though the total shortfall for unsecured trade and expense creditors shown by the Statement of Affairs drawn up by the administrators amounted to more than £760,000.

The big losers have been previous financial investors BGF Investments Limited, who had bought a 32% stake in the business in 2021, and HSBC, which had loaned over £4m secured by floating charges. Neither will see any significant return.

BACK STORY

The story of The Source, as told by Rich, is one of local boys who have made good in pursuit of their obsession with BMX biking. They grew up together from early ages riding the BMX track at Sidley, winning a shed’s worth of competition trophies – Marc was once ranked third in the world for his age group; then starting a small-time trading enterprise in bikes

in 2003 from a “broom cupboard” in Wilton Road, Bexhill. From there they migrated through a series of premises in Bexhill and Hastings, growing the business in just a few years into a national, then international, trading empire but retaining their central base of operations in Hastings. “Our first five employees are still with us today,” says Rich proudly.

meantime closed South Terrace from Braybrooke Road to Queens Road and took the decision to move local residents from their homes to the Salvation Army Hall in nearby St Andrew’s Square.

Costa Coffee in Wellington Place was used as a hub by the emergency services to coordinate relief efforts. HBC leader Paul Barnett and his deputy Maya Evans were also in attendance, directing the council’s emergency relief teams.

Local ward councillor Judy Rogers was on hand to help support those displaced. She said it was “heartbreaking to see the devastation”. She was particularly affected by the plight of one mother with two young children, who were forced to leave their flat having only just moved back in a month ago after the January floods: their basement kitchen and bathroom were again under water.

Arriving in 2009 at former church premises off Braybrooke Terrace below Hastings Railway Station, they built a small skatepark. Then they took a lease of the shell of the former Turkish baths on Hastings seafront and turned the cavernous vaults underground into a state-of-the-art performance venue for BMX riders and skateboarders.

But the turnover from these ride developments has never been more than 5% of the business as a whole. It was the sale of bikes by e-commerce which grew exponentially, the UK-based stock held in premises on the Castleham Estate in St Leonards eventually dwarfed in volume by huge warehouses in Germany and the USA (which are separately owned through companies set up locally and thus not subject to the insolvency process).

COVID

The onset of the Covid pandemic in 2020 seemed at first to make little inroads into business prospects, notwithstanding initial lockdowns and social distancing requirements. Investors looking for businesses which might bounce back from the economic hiatus saw The Source as a good bet. What they didn’t take into account was the concomitant effects on supply chains. Most BMX bikes are

built in Taiwan, with many components supplied from mainland China. In the short term there were material shortages which led to long backlogs in satisfying customers across wide ranges of manufacturing. Later, as factories reopened in Asia, container shipping costs soared.

The Moores and their financial partners saw demand rising, and calculated that stocks should be maximised. But then, in the spring of 2022, came the Ukraine war, rises in energy prices and other costs, and a reversal of consumer confidence. Competitors, also overstocked, were selling at discounted prices. The Source, burdened by the debt it had taken on when interest rates were minimal, now needed further funding, which was not available.

“We could have got out of the business,” says Rich. “But it’s our baby, and we didn’t want to give it up. We still believe in what we do.”

“Our problem was debt: we were over-leveraged. But the underlying business remains in good shape.”

Rich and Marc have set up their new office in the Observer Building, little more than a stone’s throw from the Source Park. They exude confidence that their BMX enterprise will remain a key feature of the Hastings economy for years to come.



Source BMX Ltd

Tales of Anguish and Anger

The Quaker meeting house in South Terrace, where the religious Society of Friends has met for worship since 1865, had suffered severe flooding in January. The damage took seven months to restore. Saturday’s deluge looks to have caused repeat devastation.

Peter Bolwell, an elder of the meeting, doesn’t know whether their insurers would be willing to pay out again. He was in no doubt that the “failed and disgraced” privatisation of the water industry was to blame, with Southern Wa-

ter preferring to pay inflated dividends to shareholders rather than taking proper heed to their public responsibilities.

Barry Ashley, owner of the Grumpy Cook café on the corner of Robertson Street, was living up to his brand name as he sat in his evacuated premises on Saturday afternoon. Contaminated water started coming up through the storm drain in his basement at 8.30am on Saturday morning. By 9am it was overflowing. Staff of East Sussex Fire and Rescue bailed him out, but the café will have to remain closed until it can be hygienically cleaned up.

He believes that his insurers will pay up, but subject to a high excess contribution because of the previous flood experience. As a not-for-profit trader, he’ll find that difficult. He too feels that Southern Water must bear prime responsibility.

Police and firefighters in the



NEWS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE... HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

Julia Hilton



Becca Horn: a seasoned Green campaigner

In the third of our series of interviews with the prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) of the main political parties ahead of the next general election, PAUL McLAUGHLIN talks to Becca Horn of the Green Party.

If central casting had been tasked with finding the quintessential Green Party candidate for Hastings and Rye they would have been hard pressed to find one more suitable than Becca Horn, the recently selected PPC. She is smart, erudite, passionate, and fully committed to protecting the natural environment and improving the lives of people in Hastings.

Born in Surrey, Becca grew up in Dorset and went to college in Stratford-upon-Avon before gaining a place at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA), the higher education institution in Liverpool founded by Paul McCartney.

She then moved to London seeking fame and fortune. The odd acting stint was supplemented by various temping jobs, and like many 20-somethings new to the capital she was forced to take on multiple employment, working long hours to make enough money just to cover living expenses. It was an exhausting experience, she recalls, which left her with no quality of life. She thought about a law conversion course but decided instead to go travelling to India, SE Asia and Australia. It was a

life-changing experience, opening her eyes to other cultures and countries and a new-found appreciation of our shared world.

On returning to the UK, she trained in a Pilates school in London specialising in the lower back. When she moved to Hastings in 2017, she took up a job as a yoga teacher with Active Hastings.

JOINING THE GREENS

The move to the south coast also coincided with her first involvement in local politics. She joined the Green Party and campaigned for Julia Hilton in the local elections in 2018, but it was in 2021 that she really became active. Outraged by the Bulverhythe sewage leak, she became a founding member of the Clean Water Action Group (CWAG).

CWAG has waged a relentless campaign against Southern Water ever since, raising awareness of the continued dumping of raw sewage into the sea and protesting at the government's lack of action in holding the company to account.

Emboldened by the success of the campaign, Becca stood in the Castle ward in the Hastings Borough Council local elections in 2022. She came within five votes of defeating Labour's Judy Rogers in what had been considered a no-hope seat.

THE POLITICS OF WATER

Southern Water's record of poor performance in recent years has had a major impact on the lives of

people living in Hastings and Rye. The seemingly never-ending dumping of raw sewage into the sea, the flooding of Hastings town centre and the numerous misconnections and pollution of the waters in Alexandra Park are also shaping a new politics in the town, and now politicians of all stripes are determined to hold the privatised water company to account.

Becca is adamant that Southern Water and the rest of the privatised water companies should be renationalised. Indeed, she believes all public utilities should be publicly owned with local commu-

ter's parent company, Greensands Holdings, as an example of the poor practice.

She seems less certain, however, when she is challenged on how these businesses will be renationalised or where the money would be found to bring the utilities back into public ownership. Becca admits that there would need to be something of a revolution in the public finances with a fundamental change in the tax system, including a new wealth tax, an end to tax avoidance, and the closing of tax loopholes to bring this about.

She also admits that renationalisation would constitute a huge gamble with the nation's finances, something akin to what Liz Truss tried in her infamous mini-budget. But, Becca insists, it's a risk worth taking, as "to do nothing would be to gamble with the future of the planet".

WHAT HAPPENED IN BRIGHTON?

Inevitably, at this point our conversation turned to the Green Party's record in nearby Brighton, where the party lost more than a dozen council seats. Was this down to failed gambles and mismanagement?

Becca said her party's defeat was due to a "combination of certain hyper-local factors", including problems with the bin collection, the closure of public toilets and a series of unpopular traffic meas-

happened in Brighton was "unfortunate" and that her party would "learn from the experience".

She identifies herself as a progressive, echoing Sally-Ann Hart, who also insists that she is not a tribal politician. Like the incumbent Tory MP, she says she is prepared to listen to all shades of opinion and that she wants to work collaboratively with other parties for the good of the community. She said she welcomed the short-lived alliance that was forged after the last local election between Labour and the Greens and was "disappointed" when the national Labour Party forced council leader Paul Barnett to end the alliance, under which the Greens were given two cabinet portfolios.

TWO-PARTY CHOICE

This experience reinforced Becca's support for proportional representation as a means of forcing politicians to work together. She says the first-past-the-post voting system reduces democracy to a narrow two-party choice between "alright and worse" and it actively excludes nuance, leaving millions of voters unrepresented. She is also an advocate of people's assemblies as a radical way of involving people in the whole democratic process.

One of the key motivations for her standing in Castle ward once again in the next May's local elections is to play a part in the rejuvenation of Hastings town centre. Becca says she is excited at the prospect of using the substantial funds from the Town Deal, the levelling up money, and up to £20 million from the new endowment-style funds announced by the Prime Minister in September to invest in key priorities in the town. She is equally keen to ensure that the funds are properly managed and that the structure of the new town board is both open and transparent.

She accepts that she starts as an underdog in both the local and parliamentary elections. The general election, in particular, will be "very difficult", she says, as her campaign will not be getting much support from the national party, which will be focussing resources on retaining the Brighton Pavilion seat. Becca also acknowledges that there will be many people who will not want to split the anti-Tory vote so as to allow Sally-Ann Hart to win. "What would be wonderful", she says, "would be to build a solid Green vote in Hastings and Rye to challenge the two-party system - if not next year, then certainly in the future."

Becky McCray



nities having stakes in power, transport, water and sewage providers. She argues that the privatised utilities have become cash cows for international asset management companies, and points to Macquarie Asset Management's substantial stake in Southern Wa-

ures. She was also of the view, however, that winning control of the council in 2020 did her party no favours as it allowed Labour to pin a whole litany of council failings on the Greens rather than be blamed for their own failures. Nevertheless, she said that what



“Huge Holes” in Benefits Safety Net

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

HARC, the Hastings Advice and Representation Centre, has published its 2023 Client Survey. In her forward to the findings, Chief Executive Jacky Everard said that, in the 38 years she has been involved with the charity, she had “never known its clients and staff to be under more pressure than they are right now.”

She reported that “more than half of people can no longer stretch their income across the month or afford to feed themselves and their families a balanced diet... Nearly two thirds of people were struggling to pay fuel bills”.

The charity CEO, whose team are trained to help people claim benefits, said that the safety net that the welfare system is supposed to offer “has huge holes in it and is in urgent need of repair.” The benefits system, originally designed to catch people when they most need it, “has become unbearable to navigate for people already in crisis”, and has resulted in the levels of mental stress being reported by clients being “higher today than they were during Covid”. The inability of very unwell people to make their finances stretch to even the basics was

pushing many of them to “breaking point”.

Ms Everard said she was “horried” that one in ten of the people walking into the HARC service say they feel suicidal, with their distress made worse by a welfare system that “bullies and humiliates them and leaves them destitute”.

HARC EXPANSION

The demand for the service has increased massively in recent years. When the charity was set up in 1982 it gave advice and support to 1,500 people with a staff team of four. This compares with 18,700 people who contacted HARC’s 24-member staff team, including 14 advisors, over the last year. Some 1,405 of these enquiries were from those who are vulnerable, elderly, disabled or isolated.

The support team represented 618 clients at review and tribunal, and in total some 89% of clients who approached HARC received support. Those whom the organisation couldn’t support were referred to more appropriate agencies.

As a result of the help of the service, HARC secured £5,189,774 in previously unclaimed, enhanced or reinstated benefits, of which £4,463,206 was secured for clients with disabilities and long-term health issues.

In comparison, it cost just £768,000 for HARC to provide its extensive range of advice and representation services comprising face-to-face exchanges, telephone and email advice, secondary advice to professional colleagues, outreach surgeries, home visits,



HARC Chief Executive Jacky Everard

complex caseloads, advocacy and tribunal work. HARC also runs two charity shops in London Road and Queens Road.

“REPEATED FAILINGS”

Ms Everard said this is the third survey that has shown consistent reporting of the “clear flaws in the current welfare system” and ongoing problems with the way health assessments are conducted. HARC has a 94.5% success rate at appeals, which shows “repeated failings in how the health assessments are conducted” and “is a clear indication that the system isn’t working.”

She acknowledged that the government plans to remove the work capability assessment for Employment and Support Allowance and

Universal Credit after the next election and, before that, to change some of the descriptors, but commented: “there is no guarantee the changes will improve the lives of our clients - for many, it will make things worse.”

As well as seeing the huge impact on clients, Ms Everard acknowledged that it was also very hard for staff to deal with such issues day in, day out. She said that staff welfare was a top priority, and that robust measures had been put in place to help the team to cope with stress levels. These include fully embracing hybrid working and reflective practices to create an environment of collaboration where staff members can team up, draw on expertise, and offer each other support.

Her conclusion seemed despairing. “I wish that I could stop saying the same things, survey after survey, that there were areas of improvement I could genuinely point to in terms of how things are changing. As I cannot, I will once again ask those who read our survey and who understand the issues we are raising, whether from the people they support, or through personal experience, to raise their voices and use their platforms to advocate for change.”

DEFIANT

However, she ended on a defiant note: “we need to not just read this report and sweep it under the carpet with the other bad news, we need to raise our voices again, at every opportunity presented, to say that enough is enough, this cannot go on.”

The 2023 Client Survey is, indeed, a very sobering report. The issues HARC deal with on a daily basis are long standing and apparently systemic. But some of the testimonies of the clients whom HARC advisors have helped are both revealing and inspiring. Jane, for example, said they “helped me with all my forms, they were there all the way and after. I just wanted people to listen to me for once. HARC were really effective in getting [DWP] to listen.”

Another client, Mick, was equally positive. “I want to tell anyone out there who is struggling – don’t give up! Going to HARC is like taking your Ford car to a Ferrari garage. You know you are in the safest hands and the service is going to be top notch.”

Gaza Protests Ignored by Local Politicians

A wide range of local pressure groups – led by Hastings & Rye Palestine Solidarity Campaign (HRPSC) but joined by trades union groupings, Amnesty International, refugee support groups such as the Refugee Buddy Project and Hastings Community of Sanctuary, and other humanitarian organisations – presented an open letter to local politicians last week demanding that they call for an immediate ceasefire in relation to Israel’s assault on Gaza.

Addressed to Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council plus incumbent Conservative MPs Sally-Ann Hart and Huw Merriman,

the letter alleged that Israel’s methods of bombardment, together with its siege tactics of cutting supplies of water, food, electricity and fuel to the trapped population, violated international law and constituted war crimes under the Geneva Conventions. It claimed that a YouGov national poll found 76% of the UK adult population supported an immediate ceasefire. Yet, despite being “our elected representatives”, none of the recipient councillors or MPs had accepted invitations to speak publicly or attend the many rallies and vigils that have been held locally “in the interests of peace and to bring an end to the indiscriminate slaughter”.

At the time of going to press, no official responses have been made to the letter. Ms Hart released a statement on 10 October backing Israel’s ‘proportionate’ response to the Hamas attacks of 7 October and followed this up with a further statement on 23 October, assuring constituents that the Prime Minister was making use of diplomatic channels to bring the violence to a halt. However, she has not backed the call for a ceasefire, nor has any local Labour politician departed from the national party’s apparently whole-hearted support for Israel.

HRPSC Secretary Laurie Holden said: “We have been overwhelmed by the support shown to the people in Gaza by the local community. Every day people are coming to our stall to donate, sign our petition or generally just help out. There is a real sense of shock among ordinary people that our



Rod Webb

leaders have let us down by failing to demand Israel stops bombing innocent Gazan children.

“We have friends in Gaza, we know how this is affecting mothers, children and families. We read out their messages at the rallies, and it is heart-breaking.

But the worst thing is we don’t know if they’ll be alive to message us tomorrow. It is appalling what we are witnessing, so we are heartened to be joining other prominent groups across the community to make our voices heard.”



NEWS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE... HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

East Hill Lift Reopens

The East Hill Lift, claimed to be the steepest funicular railway in the country, has reopened following the completion of refurbishment work.

The lift closed in October 2022 following an examination of the track. More extensive repairs were needed than originally expected, but it finally returned to full operation last week to catch the October

half term break, and from now until next March will continue to open at weekends, 11am to 4pm.

Cllr Andy Batsford, lead for Culture at Hastings Borough Council, said: "We are delighted that this much-loved asset has been restored to its former glory, enabling passengers for years to come to enjoy the spectacular views from the top of the East Hill."



Photos: Naz Montag

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉ **Letter**

BONFIRE SYMBOLS

Dear HIP,
I went to the Bonfire night for the first time and was really impressed by the organisation and great family atmosphere of the event. However, I have a couple of questions about the event that I hope someone might be able to answer for me.

I noticed that, to the right of the fire as it was being lit, there were four large burning crosses. What is the significance of that symbolism? Also, I was somewhat surprised that the main piece of music played repeatedly through the PA system as the fire burned was *Rule Britannia*. I was a little dismayed, as I was surrounded by people speaking a variety of languages. I was impressed by the multi-cultural nature of the crowd but confused by the message of the song. Are the burning crosses and *Rule Britannia* part of the usual format of this amazing event?

Laurence Flood

✉ **Letter**

PRIVATISATION DISASTER

Dear HIP
According to your front page article in HIP 236, Sally-Ann Hart apparently now thinks that water privatisation was a mistake. Wow! It has only taken her 40 years to figure that out! I figured

out that privatisation was bad in 1979. I wonder how much longer it will take for her to realise that every single privatisation/sell-off has been a disaster for the UK. Even the UK's vital defence research establishments were sold off to American corporations for a tiny fraction of their value.

Marcus de Mowbray

✉ **from our website**

FENCING ABOVE THE COURTYARD

Regarding your report *Fence Following Fall* in HIP 236, I am puzzled that the higher safety fencing was removed just after the funeral of the young lad. So, is it suddenly safe now?

Bryan Fisher

✉ **from our website**

CAFÉ CREME

Some of your report *Forsaken Café to be Offered for Castle Project* in HIP 237 makes sense. The castle needs a decent visitor centre if it is to be a serious attraction, and St Mary in the Castle at the bottom of the hill needs a new function which should somehow be incorporated into the plan. However, the café site would be wasted as a mere visitor centre for the castle. It's a stunning site, fabulous views, great accessibility via West Hill lift. It should be a cafe/restaurant aimed at both local and tourist trade. There's

nothing else in the area bar except the Plough pub. Managed properly, it should be a little goldmine.

Peter Saunders

✉ **from our website**

FORCED ENTRY

Your headline *Helena Dollimore: A Force to be Reckoned with* in HIP 237 offers an opening for me to say that the only force about Dollimore is that she was forced upon Hastings Labour by the London HQ against strong objections from local Labour Party members who would have liked more than one local candidate to choose from. As it was, no one from Hastings or St Leonards was allowed on the shortlist.

The hustings where she was selected were the most stage-managed put-up and shut-up affair ever attended by local members and run by an unpleasant National Executive Committee member who had no connections to East Sussex, let alone Hastings. There was one, not very experienced, person from Rye on the three-member shortlist, and the questions were limited and strictly controlled. Many Labour members of 30 and 40 years standing, and lots of younger members, left the Party in droves after this, because of the control freakery and the lack of genuine interest in Hastings issues that this signified, decimating the constituency Labour Party which had boasted 2,000 members in 2017.

I write from long experience within Labour as a former national Labour press officer, after a career in newspapers and TV. I ran two by-elections, helped run three Party Conferences, and was involved in the 1987 General Election when Neil Kinnock lost, then moved into Head of Comms roles at two large London Boroughs. It was a long hard slog to get to 1997 and, yes, it did require unity and discipline, not a strong point of the socialist left. But it was never as undemocratic as it is now. I even stayed loyal despite the Iraq war.

In Hastings, where I live, I was procedures secretary in 2017 for Labour, and experienced attempts to impose totally unsuitable candidates with no interest in anything but kick-starting the bandwagon of their own political career path to Parliament. Brexit, May and Johnson followed, and Labour took a beating under Corbyn - then collapsed under the onslaught of media vilification and, so I strongly believe, a central conspiracy to undermine him, the true facts of which are yet to be fully exposed.

The remaining constituency Labour Party in Hastings has been drained of energy and, I would say, integrity. It is deeply undemocratic. It allows no debate about anything that is not approved first by the General Secretary David Evans and the totally untrustworthy Keir Starmer - not even one of the most worrying issues of our time, Israel-Gaza, where CLPs have been ordered not to accept motions or to debate

the subject.

It is my belief that Labour do not want members other than to knock on doors at election time and raise money. They are intent on becoming a national party without democratic policy structures, with an annual conference that simply rubber-stamps what the leading Labour elite want.

Dollimore was a councillor in Merton, using her position as a stepping stone for selection as a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate: not unusual, of course, but it is claimed she did not serve her ward as long as she should have done. These facts, combined with her habit of climbing onto other people's hard fought-for campaigns and claiming them as her own - as with Southern Water - means to my mind that she is singularly self-interested and does not deserve election.

God forbid the Conservatives continue to destroy this country but Labour under Starmer does not represent a new kind of politics - rather, a self-interested, largely more-of-the-same kind of politics.

I will continue to vote Labour in local elections, as there are genuinely hard working and honourable councillors here, working within an impossibly tight budget. I couldn't do what they do. They have stayed in the Party for the good of Hastings Borough - a principle and cause that is a lot better to my mind than inserting oneself into Hastings for the benefit of personal ambition.

Rosie Brocklehurst

We would love to hear from you.

Please be aware we may need to edit letters for reasons of space and we will only withhold names if this is necessary for the protection of the writer.

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COMMUNITY



A regular column to update readers on the damaging effects of the current management of water in Hastings, surrounding areas (and nationally) and what people are doing about it. If you have any information, please contact community@hastingsindependentpress.co.uk marked *Clean Water Watch*.

WORDS OR DEEDS FROM SOUTHERN WATER

As if to underline the PR nature of Southern Water's drop-in at the Stade, Saturday 12 October, *Your Water Matters*, it was quickly followed by a yet another massive leak in Bulverthythe. Cllr Maya Evans posted on Facebook, 18 October: "There's currently several inches of sewage and an overwhelming stench." *Clean Water Action Group* posted in their WhatsApp group: "86 tankers have been ordered. And more rain is forecast tonight."

More rain indeed, and on 27 October there was a deluge, flooding the centre of town for the second time this year (see front page report). To add insult to injury, the report into January's flood has only just been published – completed in the absence of significant documentation that Southern Water was unable to locate. Sounds familiar? (You can read Paul McLaughlin's analysis of the report on page 2)

HOW DID WE GET HERE

On page 16, an opinion piece, *Water Woes*, provides a useful context

for unacceptable situation in the water industry, particularly focusing on where all the money goes.

OLD ROAR GILL

Miriam Lengliné of *Sewage Contamination Group* (SCG) recently reported the sad death of Rusty the dog who had entered the Gill back in May – around the time or the spill which led to the start of community action. Although we cannot be sure of the cause, Miriam posted: "For months we've been saying that there might have been dead dogs for years, months,

without their owners knowing what happened!" And apparently clear warning signs for dog owners and others have still not been placed in the Gill.

In the meantime, there have been reports of a more activity around Old Roar Gill (before the flooding). Because of leaks? To avoid leaks? Who knows?

CLEAN WATER ACTION GROUP CROWDFUNDS FOR TESTING

In the absence of appropriate action by those in charge, CWAG is raising money to do it themselves. As they say on the Crowdfunder: "The Environment Agency test the water in the 'bathing season' which is from 15th May to the end of September, but no one is monitoring the pollution in the months of October to April! People are still in the water, swimming, walking their dogs, paddleboarding, Kayaking and letting their children paddle year-round."

■ To donate, go to [crowdfunder.co.uk/p/test-the-water-clean-water-action-pollution-watch](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/test-the-water-clean-water-action-pollution-watch).

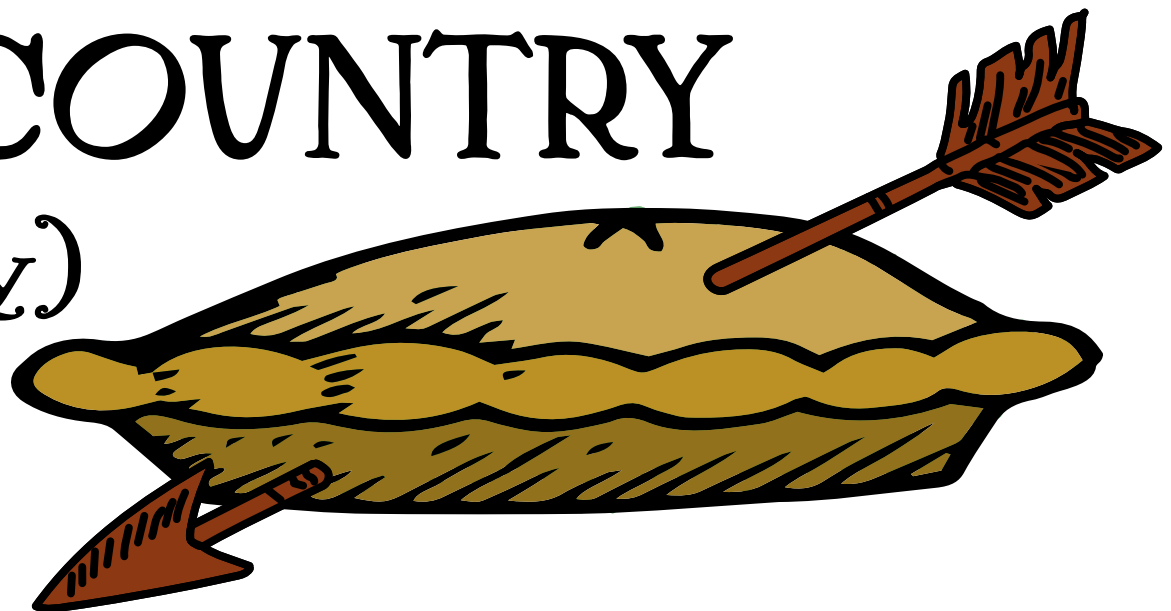
NEWS FROM OFWAT

The Guardian (26 October) reports that Ofwat has "raised a red flag" over the financial health of Southern Water (along with three other water companies) citing growing anger over "the industry's record on services and pollution". The regulator highlights Southern Water as a company needing to "shore up their long-term finances". The privatised model is clearly broken.

CORRECTION

In *Clean Water Watch* 3 (20 September), we quoted an article by Julie Bygraves in *Sussex Bylines*, *Money down the drain?* The article explains how the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model, used for setting utility prices via our bills, encourages water authorities to acquire a "steaming pile of debt". We mistakenly reported that this model allows water companies to use their 'public assets' as collateral; in fact it is their 'regulated assets' they use as collateral. (What had been public assets were handed over to the water companies on privatisation.)

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COMMUNITY

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A Merciful Menagerie

NICK PELLING & HELEN MURPHY are inspired by a visit to the **White Horse Stables** rescue centre.

It was pouring with rain on the day we arrived at the *White Horse Stables* rescue centre, just outside of Staplecross. We were met by Diane Barclay-Bernard, the original founder of this wonderful sanctuary for ill-treated animals. In talking to Diane, it became apparent that she had dedicated her life to helping animals and, in particular, horses. These noble beasts are undoubtedly a lifelong passion: a commitment that has endured beyond two husbands. Or, as Diane puts it bluntly, “these days, we don’t do men.”

Although there is an obvious romance in looking after furry creatures, Diane stresses that running the charity is very hard work. “There are no holidays in this kind of work.” If a wayward goat needs a chat in the middle of the night, then that is what she will do. Goats, it seems, are the most unpredictable and disobedient of all animals. The senior goat that we met, Philip, was certainly keen to butt into



Leah Hammond

ABOVE: Leah and guinea pigs TOP RIGHT: Philip the goat BOTTOM RIGHT: Sadie the horse

our conversations with his own point of view.

Diane is clearly the tough-minded founder of this rescue centre but her granddaughter, Leah, has evidently taken up the torch, and turned the flame up to full. Leah’s love for animals runs in all directions. But it is not all about sentimentality: she is fully qualified in

the science and technology of equestrianism. It seems that, in this type of work, you have to be pragmatic and passionate all at the same time.

Leah has created a lovely world of creatures that she calls ‘Finley’s Farm’, after her now three-year-old son. Even in the pouring rain this is a wonderful place to visit.



Nick Pelling



Nick Pelling

indeed you can sponsor a particular animal if you want. If you do this, you will get a T-shirt with the face of your animal, a mug and two free visits. The farm very much needs these donations as it is highly expensive looking after animals - the vet bills alone are quite astronomical.

Diane and Leah showed us around the horse stables where we met with a whole range of characters, including Sadie the splendid white horse and Smartie the horse who demanded to be spoken to by kicking his door again and again. Evidently, a horse with something on its mind is not easily ignored.

All of which served to remind us that this rescue farm is a full-on task: an almost spiritual vocation. You need an enormous reservoir of love in order to mother so many little beings. Both Diane and Leah seem to have this sort of maternal energy. Indeed, the whole farm is something of a matriarchy in action.

It was evident in talking to both Diane and Leah that they are ultimately engaged in an attempt to combat that thing we find ourselves constantly reminded of: human cruelty. Although Finley’s farm is clearly brilliant for children, as relatively elderly adults we found it the most perfect antidote to what we might call the grown-up news.



Helping Hastings’ Pets in Need

STEVEN SHORT

Pet Pantry wants to help pet owners struggling with the cost-of-living crisis and needs your donations.

You may have heard that there are currently more food banks in the UK than branches of McDonald’s. But where do people turn when it’s not their kids or partners they are struggling to feed - but the four-legged member of the family? Kayleigh Wilks set up Pet Pantry to answer this very need, taking donations of all things pet related “Not just cats and dogs, but rabbits, guinea pigs, even turtles!” and distributing them to owners in need.

“I’ve been rescuing for about 15 years, taking on LOTS of cats, sometimes up to 22 at a time,” says Kayleigh, who, before establishing Pet Pantry, founded Hastings Cat Lovers, which is now a registered charity. “I also rescued dogs, doing

basic training and rehoming them. Probably about 30 over the years, mostly out of my own pocket, but sometimes I’d ask for help from Facebook friends and family, or I’d hold auctions for donated money to raise funds for vets bills etc.”

Becoming pregnant seven years ago and bringing up a son with autism meant that Kayleigh had to step away from the day-to-day business of rescuing pets in need, but the idea for Pet Pantry had been sown. “Looking after animals was becoming more expensive, with more animals in need than ever and no room at rescue centres and hardly any help with pet food parcels: this sparked a lightbulb moment,” so Kayleigh set about creating a service that helped pet owners in need by forming “a community of like-minded people who could help.”

Pet Pantry now welcomes donations of all types of cat, dog, rabbit

and guinea pig food as well as cat baskets, hay and straw, blankets and towels, toys, harnesses, leads and collars which it distributes to those in need. Kayleigh explains: “Our mission is to keep pets happy, healthy and at home.”

In her first month of operation, she and her team supplied 72 food parcels as well as hundreds of worming and flea treatments. They have also handed out care packages to homeless dog owners. “We still have a huge list of people needing help, and it’s sad to have to say no,” says Kayleigh, who is also full-time carer to her disabled son.

■ *Pet Pantry has drop-off points in Hollington, Ore, West Hill, Malvern Way, Eastbourne and Bexhill and would love donations of any kind. You can find them on Facebook (where they also share information about other pet-friendly initiatives), on email at hastingspetpantry@gmail.com or on 07562246748. To donate funds directly, they also have a Paypal account: hastingspetpantry@gmail.com facebook.com/groups/966992897711588*



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COMMUNITY



Interacting with Hastings History

WILL DAVIES, from Whalebone Films, explains how he has developed an interactive Hastings History Map.

When I was young, I had an unusual picture book. It was a series of black and white illustrations of the kind of scenes typically found in children's books – fun at the seaside, games in the park and so on. But each one had a few characters acting in a strange way – a child who seemed to be staring at something I couldn't see, a family laughing at nothing... At the bottom of each page was a little plastic slider which, when moved across, revealed another layer of the image, vibrant with colour and wild new additions. The small trees of the original had transformed into large majestic ones with treehouses. I could now see that the child had been staring at a floating nymph which had been hidden before, and the family were laughing at a pair of jesters pulling each other's noses.

GHOSTS OF CRICKET

That book gave me a similar feeling to that which I get from looking at old photographs of Hastings. Old photos also can reveal a strange layer of reality hiding just out of reach. They can explain some of the anomalies which I've noticed around this town. To give just one example, why is there a single old-looking turret next to

Priory Meadow Shopping Centre selling burgers and fried-egg baps? Old photos reveal that this turret was once one of a pair which formed the entrance to the Central Cricket Ground – site of county cricket matches, circus performances, political rallies and royal visits – until it was replaced by the shopping centre in the late 1990s. This also explains why the houses on Devonshire Road were built with balconies and large windows – they used to have a view of the pitch, framed by the sea and the castle ruins (now replaced by the tall brick wall of the back of the shopping centre carpark).

When looking at faces in old photographs it can be easy to forget how much time has passed since these images were taken. There's a woman I notice in one

photo with an expression on her face that's so familiar I'm certain for a fleeting moment that I've met her. But then I see she's sitting in a horse-drawn carriage and holding a parasol, and her dad has a pocket watch. She would have been my great-great grandmother's generation. Toddlers with grubby grins wearing tatty waistcoats and flat caps. Shopkeepers, pub landladies... inevitably I start wondering what kind of lives these people lived, long ago, in these places that I see everyday. They are simultaneously familiar and impossibly distant.

BUILT FOR ANOTHER TIME

In a town like Hastings, old photographs also reveal how much of the built environment remains unchanged. They show how things have become dilapidated (often beautifully so) or parsimoniously adapted to modern life – grand Georgian townhouses with concrete steps bolted on the side as part of a conversion to council flats.



Halton House

The Old Town had its heart ripped out to make way for a main road. Ours is a town that was built for another time and has been clumsily retrofitted. These changes reflect wider developments in the fortunes and aspirations of our society and can be fascinating and occasionally moving.

Old pictures can be like half memories or dreams. I have spent so long looking at photos of the seafront before the changes of the early 20th century that I almost feel I can remember it. Passing by Pelham Crescent and feeling the spray of the waves which came right up to the road back then. Hearing those two bowler-hatted musicians I've seen in many photos from the 1890s. Listening in on conversations while sitting in a deckchair in front of the bandstand at Caroline Place (just about where the Carlisle Pub is today).

It's easy to get sentimental, but it's important to resist getting lost in the illusions created by old photos. A picture can be worth a thousand words, but by their nature, photographs simplify their subjects.

THE GENTEEL AND THE SHOELESS

Most of my favourite pictures of Hastings date from the time when Robert Tressell was living and working here. The conflicts and injustices he described in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* were not the subject of thoughtfully composed picture postcards, although if you look carefully, you can catch glimpses of some of the issues he was concerned with. The contrast between the genteel outfits of the wealthy families pictured around the smarter parts of St Leonards and the shoeless children drinking from horse troughs in the Old Town.

There is one photograph I came across recently while putting together Hastings History Map which offers a window into a complex and significant episode in the history of this town, and even the world. This is an early photo (1860s) of a grand house labelled Halton House. I cycle through Halton most days on the school run and there is no such house there now – rather a few rows of modest terraced houses. What was the story of Halton House? A clue can be found in the name of the road

which descends from Halton into the back of the Old Town: Robertsons Hill. Mr P.F. Robertson was the MP for Hastings and resident of the house which was situated near where Hardwicke Road is today, and its stables were where the London Road petrol station now stands.

HASTINGS AND THE OPIUM WARS

Patrick Robertson was a trader and deeply entangled in the illegal import of Indian opium into China. Huge profits were derived from smuggling illegal substances across borders, and Robertson profited handsomely. In response to the many problems that opium addiction was inflicting on their society, the Chinese authorities tried to further restrict this trade. The British responded with force – an episode known as The Opium Wars. The British decisively won this conflict and, as part of the settlement, the Chinese signed over the Island of Hong Kong. Robertson was well positioned to benefit, and he purchased a large area of seafront there which he developed into a wharf – a move which increased his fortune even more. Now living at Halton House, Robertson spent some of this wealth developing the area of Hastings known as The America Ground where Robertson Street can now be found. He also built Robertson Terrace which forms a beautiful part of the seafront. That fuzzy photograph of the home of its eponymous developer is an invitation to consider the threads of history which converge in those grand facades. (For a full account of all this check out Steve Peak's book on the America Ground).

SEE FOR YOURSELF

This was my motivation in creating Hastings History Map, which contains over 100 photographs pinned to their actual locations on Google Maps. So, I can stand on a street corner and literally see who stood there over a century ago and wonder about their lives and the world they inhabited. I can see things that were hidden from me before. To wander around town with the History Map for yourself, scan the QR code with your phone's camera and it will open up on Google Maps.



try
me



FEATURES

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Ben Bruges



LEFT: Dad with Slytherin, a corn snake
FAR LEFT: Valentino with Amity - they often watch TV together

HAVE ANY ESCAPED?

I asked Valentino if any of the snakes had ever escaped, which caused him to fall about laughing. This never ever happens because Valentino's father is so careful with the snakes, but it did once happen with the very largest snake, and, of course it was dad's fault! Valentino actually chortled, you know when a kid chortles? More adult laughter when I pointed out that if we put this in the article, then the neighbours will also know that the boa constrictor escaped.

Stephen explained that he had been in a bit of a rush and left the door to Amity's vivarium open. But, for security, the windows and doors are always closed when they are handling the snakes, so she wouldn't have gone far (sighs of relief from neighbours). Dad only left it open a couple of inches, but it was enough for her to force her body through.

HIP Features Editor BEN BRUGES visits a Hastings vivarium that also houses people.

Valentino's Vivarium

Valentino Cerioli, five, can't remember when he first became interested in snakes and reptiles. His mum Sarah said that he liked the reptiles when they took him to Jersey Zoo as a baby, so, for all intents and purposes, it's been for all of his young life. Ever since he has been able to ask, his bedtime stories have been reptile encyclopaedias and similar.

At the time, dad Stephen was volunteering in Jersey Zoo and three months later used to take him to the reptile house because it was warm. They took him round the whole zoo of course, but he was fascinated by the frogs and the lizards, and when he could walk, he always wanted to go in there first. It was one of his favourite places, so they used to go a lot.

Jersey Zoo is significant, in that Gerald Durrell fought against the legacy Victorian idea of the zoo - basically a concrete cage for gawping - and set up this first conservation zoo, with welfare standards, appropriate habitats and all of the rest.

The first pets Valentino remembers are locusts, which he liked because "they are fast and jumpy and very active". And now in his house, crickets are food, and fed live to the snakes. Did he know that locusts were food? He just laughs at me being squeamish. Yes, of course he knew.

Now he has three snakes and they need feeding. The family call them the 'complaints department' because they are kept in the office. 'Slytherin' is a South Carolinian corn snake, 'Monty' a banana enchi ball python, 'Amity' a motley angel boa constrictor. Monty the python is Valentino's favourite, but Bumpy the fat-tailed gecko is also his favourite.

VIVARIUMS ARE US

The dozen vivariums in Valentino's bedroom contain a dead leaf praying mantis, a fat-tailed gecko, a colony of sungaya stick insects, a few pink-wing stick insects, a greenbottle blue tarantula, a cupboard spider, two zebra jumping spiders, sun beetle, millipedes, giant orange woodlouse, zebra

woodlouse, spring-tails, a curly-haired tarantula, giant Asian forest scorpion, smooth newts and maybe more I didn't manage to note down in time.

While being shown around, I was 'encouraged' by Valentino to hold their boa constrictor. It felt feeble to say no to a five year old, so I went along with it. Everyone is always surprised when they hold a snake, thinking that they will be damp and clammy. Not at all, they feel like warm, dry leatherette. You can, however, feel the power under the skin as they slowly constrict. You can probably see the fear in my eyes in the photo. I'm still in therapy.

A bit later I saw a stick insect crawl into Valentino's ear. How come he doesn't mind? Valentino explained patiently, as if to the hard-of-understanding: "They're not really fast moving and they don't eat people. They eat leaves, not people." I could hear



the unsaid "silly" in his voice. They eat ivy and brambles apparently, which seem like tough plants to me. But not ears.

If you see a spider indoors, what should you do? I asked. Valentino told me that he saw a classmate stand on a spider and kill it. He didn't tell the teacher, but it did make him feel sad. His advice, instead, is just to stay back and let them walk away. They'll be fine. You'll be fine.

Did I mention that he's five? Mind you, he has been known to leave tarantula 'sheds' (complete exoskeletons) in places for people to "find".

She didn't get far, only under the TV, presumably because it is warm and dark there. Maybe she wanted to watch Netflix? I suggested, which made Valentino laugh - dad joke time. What would a boa constrictor want to watch? Answers to the letters page.

LITTER PICKING

Hanging out with snakes has clearly led to greater environmental awareness. "Me and mummy" go to the beach and litter-pick three or four times a month. Mummy is called the 'trash bag' (as in she holds the bag, family joke) and they have also hooked up with Strandliners, (a quick plug for those awesome people). Valenti-

“Hanging out with snakes has led to greater environmental awareness.”



Valentino weighing "Pancake"

no's horriblest litter-find was a coke bottle with burnt fag butts inside: adults and teenagers, please take note!

Valentino's happy when litter picking, mum explains, a highlight was doing an Earth Run where you ran 5 kilometres while picking up

litter. Afterwards he was given a sustainable medal made out of wildflower seeds which Valentino planted in the garden.

Valentino volunteers at the National Centre for Reptile Welfare near Hadlow, which means he gets to look after the reptiles and snakes,

and made a new friend while doing it. He fed snakes and washed the turtles and the tortoise.

Dad explained that once an overfed bearded dragon came into the centre. "Called Pancake," Valentino adds. Valentino cleaned out a new vivarium. New water. New hide. Weighed it, measured it and put Pancake into his new enclosure. Valentino is five.

CAN YOU HELP HOUSE A HERPTILE?

The cost of living crisis, mum explains, means that the centre is constantly looking for good homes for the animals that have been abandoned or donated by people who can't look after them any more. They have details on their Facebook page if anyone is interested and could help. Recently they've been inundated with reptiles and snakes because people can't afford the electricity bills, the feed and so on.

Big snakes are quite difficult to re-home responsibly. The centre would want to see the vivarium and do the welfare checks; they'd need to check that you knew how to look after them, that you've got experience, that you know what you're doing.

There was a teenage breeder who had 17 boa constrictors that the centre had to save. He was trying to breed to sell, but couldn't cope. A little snake can grow, and grow quite quickly.

KEEPING SNAKES?

Dad's main guidelines if you want to keep snakes: contact the centre for advice, or have a look at their Facebook page. First you need to sort out your enclosure, and you have to be realistic about the animal when it's fully grown.

Their boa was 190 cms (about six feet) when they rehomed her. She's now 235 cms after six months and could grow to eleven or twelve feet, and is likely to live for 25 to 30 years. That's a commitment they are happy to make. Not all people are, or even realise what is involved.

I mentioned that a student of mine helps run the Hastings Reptile and Aquatic Centre: what do they think of the shop? They've got nothing against the responsible pet trade, Dad explains, and the shop is very good, and, in fact, they bought their gecko from there, and the shop runs handling sessions for children and has other events.

I ask Valentino what's next on the list? "A Burmese python" Valentino and dad say together. "Yeh, and he's not getting one," mum adds hurriedly, "just putting



Valentino with a sungaya stick insect

that out there". That's a size too large, as far as she's concerned. And also no anacondas. So how are you going to persuade mum to let you have a Burmese Python? I ask. Valentino giggles, and mum glares at me and simply repeats "No".

Dad explains that a Burmese python needs a big enclosure, it needs a lot of water and grows to 20 to 24 feet. So, no, they all agree (to mum's relief and to Valentino's regret) that's not happening, it wouldn't be responsible.

So, talking about being responsible pet-owners, how about being responsible parents? Is Valentino in any danger? Not in the slightest, mum is adamant. Stephen's very careful with the animals, he always handles them first, we have hand gel and hand washing. Mum would never put Valentino in any danger.

Dad adds that they also think about the animals they house. The curly-haired tarantula is a calm, handleable species rather than something like a funnel web or a bird-eating tarantula. All the snakes are non-venomous, they're all constrictors, all species that are quite easy to get hold of and handle. That word 'constrictor' doesn't necessarily reassure me.

"Food or threat" is what snakes (and most animals) are trying to assess," dad explains. If you are not

food or threat, the animal will not bother to waste energy or time. The cats are perfectly safe, although they never leave them in the same room as anything unattended. The cats are far too big for the snakes to eat and do not smell of mouse or rat. Also, the snake food is pure white in colour. If the feed is not pure white, the boa will not touch it in any circumstances. The python is slightly less picky, however, will still refuse anything less than 'perfect'. The corn snake is far too small and would just run away.

There is an urban legend about snakes sizing up owners as meals. This would have to be an extremely large snake and very small owner to be true. A snake can only eat something the same diameter as the widest part of its body. Even a sixteen-foot python couldn't take something bigger than a rabbit, small dog or cat.

So who are your heroes, Valentino? No great surprise that they are David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell and that he wants to be a zookeeper and wildlife photographer. He has a while to go. He's five.

■ Contact the National Centre for Reptile Welfare here <https://www.ncrw.co.uk> To learn about litter-picking contact Strandliners strandliners.org



Ben with Amity, a motley angel Boa



The HIP List

Your Pull
Out Guide
To What's
Happening
In Hastings

Want your event listed?
Contact us now
Ian Greensmith (music),
Nadine Hayward (art,
cinema, theatre &
performance), Hugh
Sullivan (sport) and Rod
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on listings@yourhip.co.uk

MUSIC

3 November 2023

McNiff's Folk Sundowner

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 5:00pm
Cable St Rag Band
Crown House, 57 Marina, 7:30pm

Megan Leigh Mason

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 7:30pm

St Leonards Concerts

Crown House, 57 Marina, 7:30pm

The Mavericks Tribute

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

George Simmonds

Pisarro's, 9-10 South
Terrace, 8:30pm

4 November 2023

**Jury Service versus
Mystery Key**

Electro Studios, 5
Seaside Rd, 5:00pm

1200 Postcards 5th

Birthday Party
Twelve Hundred Postcards,
80 Queens Rd, 7:00pm

Gentleman's Dub

Club+ Kiko Bun
De La Warr Pavilion,
Marina, 7:00pm

Stormy-T and the**Bluesman's Lane**

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

CATCHMYDRIFT? presents**LET ME BANG!! w/ Leah****Floyeurs / Adop+ / Keith****Anderson / DJK / Japhy**

The Pig, 37 White Rock, 9:00pm

Dead Rabbits

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 9:00pm

5 November 2023

**Simon & the Pope + with Ted
Versicolor and Duncan Reekie**

Electro Studios, 5
Seaside Rd, 3:00pm

Afrit Nebula

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 4:00pm

Milton Hide

The Stag Inn, 14 All
Saints St, 5:00pm

Stone Junction

The Stag Inn, 14 All
Saints St, 5:00pm

Tangerine Dream

De La Warr Pavilion,
Marina, 7:00pm

Vinyl Night

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 7:00pm

Three & Easy

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

6 November 2023

Just Landed

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 7:00pm

Open Mic

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 8:00pm

7 November 2023

Tuesday Night Music Sessions

The Albion, George St, 8:30pm

Tuesday Night Open**Folk Session**

The Stag Inn, 14 All
Saints St, 8:30pm

8 November 2023

The Kukes

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 8:00pm

9 November 2023

**Greg Heath (sax) & The
Jazz Organisation**

The NUR, 13 Robertson
St, 8:00pm

Shanty Night with**Completely Scuppered!!!**

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 8:30pm

10 November 2023

McNiff's Folk Sundowner

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 5:00pm

Haircut 100+ Barbara

De La Warr Pavilion,
Marina, 7:00pm

Danny Horn

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 7:30pm

Kitten Kaboodle

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

The Urban Voodoo Machine

The Piper, 1 Norman Rd, 8:00pm

Fabulous Red Diesel

Pisarro's, 9-10 South
Terrace, 8:30pm

11 November 2023

Los Twangueros

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

Righteous Thieves

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 9:00pm

Totally Taylor - A Taylor**Swift Club Night**

The Brass, 18 Havelock
Rd, 10:00pm

12 November 2023

Vinyl Night

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 7:00pm

Speechless Duo

Tin Tins, 21 Robertson St, 8:00pm

14 November 2023

Tuesday Night Music Sessions

The Albion, George St, 8:30pm

Tuesday Night Open**Folk Session**

The Stag Inn, 14 All
Saints St, 8:30pm

15 November 2023

Folk Session

The Dolphin Inn, 11-12
Rock-a-Nore Rd, 8:00pm

16 November 2023

Paul Eshelby (tpt) & The**Jazz Organisation**

The NUR, 13 Robertson
St, 8:00pm

The Members

The Piper, 1 Norman Rd, 8:00pm

Shanty Night with**Completely Scuppered!!!**

The Jenny Lind, 69
High St, 8:30pm

CINEMA

03 November 2023

Talking Heads: Stop**Making Sense (40th****Anniversary restoration)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 7:30pm

The Ballad of Shirley Collins

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

04 November 2023

Filming In Technicolour:**Film Workshop for All**

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 2:30pm

Wes Anderson-Style

Zine Workshop
Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 2:30pm

Wes Anderson Night: The**Grand Budapest Hotel****and Surprise Extras!**

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

05 November 2023

A Matter of Life and Death

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 11:00am

07 November 2023

The Royal Ballet 2023-24 Live**Cinema Season: Don Quixote**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49
Norman Rd, 7:15pm

08 November 2023

Ghosts of the Chelsea**Hotel (and Other Rock &****Roll Stories) (DocFest:****The Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 7:30pm

Let's Talk Film: Everything You**Ever Wanted to Know About****Powell and Pressburger**

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

09 November 2023

Exhibition On Screen:**Klimt & The Kiss**

Electric Palace, 39A High
St, 11:00am/7:30pm

Klimt & The Kiss (DocFest:**The Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49 Norman
Rd, 3:00pm/7pm

10 November 2023

A Monk Who Wears**Heels (DocFest: The****Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 5:00pm

Free Party: A Folk History

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

11 November 2023

The Nettle Dress (DocFest:**The Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49 Norman
Rd, 12:00pm/3pm

Tlc Forever

Electric Palace, 39A

High St, 4:00pm

Free Party: A Folk History

Electric Palace, 39A

High St, 7:30pm

Tish Special screening**+ Q&A with executive****producer Aisling O'Connor,****Head of BBC Commissioning,****England (DocFest: The****Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 7:30pm

12 November 2023

Eric Ravilious, Drawn to War

Electric Palace, 39A

High St, 11:00am

A Bright Nowhere +**Director's Q&A (DocFest:****The Art of a True Story)**

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 2:00pm

Even Hell Has**Its Heroes: Earth**

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

14 November 2023

Lonesome

Electric Palace, 39A
High St, 7:30pm

16 November 2023

Typist Artist Pirate King

Electric Palace, 39A High
St, 11:00am/7:30pm

Les Miserables

Isabel Blackman Centre,
South St, 2:00pm

NT Live: Skylight

Kino-Teatr, 43-49

Norman Rd, 7:00pm

Sussex Exchange

Queensway – for film listings go to:
cinema.thesussexexchange.co.uk/

Odeon Hastings

Queens Rd – for film listings go to:
odeon.co.uk/cinemas/hastings

PERFORMANCE

03 November 2023

Upbeat Beatles

White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

04 November 2023

Magic of Motown

Continued on page 12>



LISTINGS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE... HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

< Continued from page 11

White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

05 November 2023

Sarah Millican - Late Bloomer
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

09 November 2023

White Rock Tots Autumn Term
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 10:30am
Imagine, What a Wonderful World
Stables Theatre and Arts
Centre, The Bourne, 7:30pm
The Sound Of Springsteen
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

10 November 2023

FastLove
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

11 November 2023

Gareth Malone Sing-Along-A-Gareth-Two
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 7:30pm

14 November 2023

The Ghost of a Smile
Stables Theatre and Arts
Centre, The Bourne, 7:30pm

15 November 2023

'Soundbath' Session with Julia Scott-Russell
Kino-Teatr, 43-49
Norman Rd, 4:00pm
Simon & the Pope + 'Avant Bavard': Free Live Music in the Gallery
Kino-Teatr, 43-49
Norman Rd, 6:30pm
The Bavard Bar. "A delightful blend of TED, comedy and Radio 4. Sort of."
Kino-Teatr, 43-49
Norman Rd, 7:30pm

16 November 2023

Hastings Gang Show
White Rock Theatre, White
Rock, (Check Times)
White Rock Tots Autumn Term
White Rock Theatre,
White Rock, 10:30am
'An evening with Danny Horn & The Shared Myths'
Stables Theatre and Arts
Centre, The Bourne, 7:30pm

ART

Abandoned Beauty
Until 28 November 2023
Stables Theatre and Arts
Centre, The Bourne
**Artist in Residence:
The Two Ians**

Until December 2023
St Andrews Mews, Waldegrave St
Cerebellum: Excappare
Until 7 November 2023
St Andrews Mews,
Waldegrave Rd
David Tindel RA – A Retrospective
Until 28 January 2024
Kino-Teatr, 43-49 Norman Rd
Hélio Oiticica – Waiting for the Internal Sun
Until 14 January 2024
De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill
In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Emma Biggs & Matthew Collings
Until 12 November 2023
Rogue Gallery, 65 Norman Rd
Mixed Media Show – Hastings Young Artists
From 11 November 2023
Electro Studios, 5 Seaside Rd
Nengi Omuku
Until 7 March 2024
Hastings Contemporary,
The Stade
Poles Apart – Anee Lydiate & Chris Wainwright
Until 12 November 2023
Hastings Arts Forum,
21-34 Marine Court
Roland Hicks – The Fourth Wall
Until 3 March 2024
Hastings Contemporary,
The Stade
Short Days, Short Weeks – An Exhibition by Vicki Painting
Until 2 December 2023
Solaris Gallery, 76 Norman Rd
Sir Quentin Blake – Ink
Until 12 November 2023
Hastings Contemporary,
The Stade
Stored Out of Sight
Until 16 December 2023
Hastings Museum and Art
Gallery, Bohemia Rd

SPORTS

04 November 2023

Hockey: South Saxons Men v Old Williamsonians - South East Men's League Div 1 East
Horntye Park Sports
Complex, Bohemia Rd, TBC
Rugby: Hastings & Bexhill v Old Elthamians – Kent 3 League
Visitors have won all four
league games this season –
tough assignment for H&B
Ark Alexandra Academy,
Helenswood Campus, The Ridge,
Hockey: South Saxons Ladies v Tunbridge Wells – South East Ladies League Div 1 East
Horntye Park Sports Complex,
Bohemia Rd, 12:00pm

11 November 2023

Football: Hastings United v Kingstonian – Isthmian Premier League

The 'U's lost 2-1 at home to
Kingstonian in the FA Trophy
last month, should do better
in this league encounter
Pilot Field, Elphinstone
Rd, 3:00pm

EVENTS

Autumn Programme Spun Glass Theatre-Mini Playhouse
26 White Rock
Creative workshops for
parents and toddlers 19
months-3 years. Enjoy fun,
supportive, artistic sessions
every week by the award-
winning Spun Glass Theatre.
Full programme: spunglasstheatre.com/mini-playhouse-hastings

Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday Health Walks

Gentle, hour-long walks to
boost physical and mental
health. Free, no booking
required, Times and venues
vary, see website for details.
tcv.org.uk/southeast/volunteer-south-east/east-sussex-healthy-walks

Every Monday Al-Anon

7.30pm-8.30pm
Clifton Community Church
Centre, 1-2 Stainsby
St, St Leonards
Worried about someone's
drinking? Come to Al-Anon
family groups 12-step weekly
meeting. All welcome.
al-anonuk.org.uk/groups/hastings-monday
Karaoke Night with John C Live
Havelock Pub, Robertson
St, 7.00pm
*Facebook
#generalhavelockhastings*

The Seadog Quiz

32, Station Rd, Hastings, 8.00pm
1st place - £50 bar tab
@TheSeaDogHastings

Every Tuesday

Writers Workshop
Ten weeks from 19
September, £180
10.00am-11.30am
Electric Palace, High St, Hastings
Each session, a discussion of
writing craft and technique,
and a workshopping session,
while writing exercises and
suggested reading materials
are provided every week.
hastingswritersworkshop.com/writersworkshops
OHPS Original Old Town Guided Walks
Meet by the café on the West Hill
2.30pm (until 26 Sept)

£6 Prebook online or at
Fisherman's Museum
ohps.org.uk/walks
5IVE Rhythms
10.00am-11.30am
The Crown House,
Marina, St Leonards
5Rhythms is a dynamic
movement practice that
ignites creativity, connection
and community. Come and
dance with Emma Leech.
emmadance.co.uk
Rhymetime at Hastings Library
11.00am, free
Hastings Library, Brassey
Institute, 13 Claremont,
Babies, toddlers and parents
or carers can have fun singing,
playing musical instruments
and learning rhymes.
0345 608 0196

Every Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday

The Hastings Library of Things
Tuesday 12.00pm-2.00pm, Friday
and Saturday 12.00pm-4.00pm
The Common Room, 27-
29 Cambridge Rd
A library of things to be
borrowed, used and returned.
Tools, kitchen items, jigsaw
puzzles and lots more.
hastingslibraryofthings.co.uk

Every Wednesday Writers Workshop

Ten weeks from 20
September, £180
6.30pm-8.00pm-11.30
Electric Palace, High St, Hastings
Each session, a discussion of
writing craft and technique,
and a workshopping session,
while writing exercises and
suggested reading materials
are provided every week.
hastingswritersworkshop.com/writersworkshops
Let's Do Lunch
12.30pm-2.00pm
Isabel Blackman Centre,
Winding St, Hastings
Make new friends and
reconnect with old ones over
a lovely and affordable 2
course lunch for under £10.

Every Thursday English Conversation group

10:00
Hastings Library, Brassey
Institute, 13 Claremont
To help international adults
improve their spoken English.
0345 608 0196

Every Friday Nature Babies, Wellbeing Walks, Talks, Classes and lots more

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve
Dates and times vary – see

website for details.
Explore and learn in the natural
environment at Rye Harbour
Nature reserve. Fantastic
tours, events and classes on
offer for adults and children.
rye.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/discovery-centre/events
Fixing Friday
12.00pm-4.00pm
The Common Room, 27-
29 Cambridge Rd
Bring your small items for repair.
If in doubt, bring it along!
makeandmendbexhillandbeyond.org.uk

CLASSES

Mondays

Overeaters Anonymous
7.30-8.30
Clifton Centre, 1-2 Stainsby St,
St Leonards31
oagb.org.uk
Slow and Easy Fitness
11.30-12.30pm, £3
Bewellfit, at Clifton Rd
& 9, The Ridge
Exercise for older adults
*07817 144812:
bodymoveshastings.com*
Drum Club
4.15pm-5.15pm, £6.50
West Hill Community Centre
For 15-16 year olds,
booking essential.
juliansambadrums@gmail.com

Art Classes, including Life Drawing

10.00am-12.15pm and
12.45pm-3.00pm
Ore Community Centre, 455
Old London Rd, Hastings
£10.50 per session
sjflack.art
Darragh Dance
5.30pm-7.00pm, £10,
£5 concessions
Afri-Co-Lab, 3 Marine
Court, St Leonards
Get your joy on with movement
director and choreographer
Darragh O'Leary.
afri-co-lab.org
Chair Yoga
3.00pm-4.00pm
Isabel Blackman Centre,
Winding St.
One of several classes
covering all topics.
isabelblackmancentre.co.uk
Art Class for Adults
10am-12.15pm & 12.45-3.00pm
Ore Community Centre
All levels, £10.50 per session
sjflack.art
Choir Practice!
11.00am
The Chapel of Christ
Stillness, Moon Cottage,
Guestling, TN35 4HJ
New singers of all ages welcome.
thechapelofchriststillness.co.uk

**Crossword Solution No 238:****Across:** 1. (di)D as he s(aid) 3. Mister 4. Steamy (anagram) **Down:** 1. DramAs 2. Stormy (anagram, without E)

LISTINGS

**Feel better with
Therapeutic Movements**2.00pm-3.00pm
Salvation Army Hall, St
Andrew's Square, Hastings
Suitable for all ages.*qigongsigrid@gmail.com*

6.00pm-7.00pm

Candlelit Yoga

Hastings Old Town

*oldtownyoga.co.uk***Absolute Beginners****Argentine Tango**

7.00pm-8.30pm

Upstairs at the Piper,

1 Norman Rd

*email or phone now to find out**more about our next 6 week**course. Phoebe 07947 440502**pennythepoetess@yahoo.co.uk***Argentine Tango Improvers****Drop-In Class**

8.15pm-9.30pm, £8

Upstairs at the Piper,

1 Norman Rd

*pennythepoetess@yahoo.co.uk***Beginners Vinyasa Flow**

9.30am and 6.30pm

Hot Yoga Hastings,

21 St Peter's Rd, Hastings

*hotyogahastings.co.uk***Slow Flow Yoga (Open Level)**

9.30am-10.30am

Azur Marina Pavilion

*karen@yoga-by-the-sea.co.uk***Silver Swans Ballet Class**

4.00pm-5.30pm

Ore Community Centre, Studio 2

*Annie 07704 711772***Beginners Pointe Class**

5.30pm-6.30pm

Ore Community Centre, Studio 2

*Annie 07704 711772***Alexander Technique**

Taster Sessions

1.30pm-5.00pm

Braybrooke Rd

*livingtenderly@yahoo.co.uk***Kundalini Yoga &****Meditation with Yeli**

7.30pm-9.00pm

Wellington Centre, Hastings

*yeli@happinessholistichealth.uk***Ballet Barre**

7.15pm-8.00pm.

Hastings Old Town

*oldtownyoga.co.uk***Yoga Over 60 – maintaining****movement**

11am-12.30pm

St Leonards Studio @

Azur Marina Pavilion

*zowie@stleonards.studio***Hastings Punk Choir**

7.00pm-8.30pm

Electric Palace, 39A

High St, Hastings

(And generally a drink or two
in the Jenny Lind afterwards.)**Tuesdays****French for beginners**

11.00am-12.00noon

The Cottage, 7 The

Alley, TN34 1HB

+ Conversations at the Common

Room, Eagle House, Robertson St

*George: 07835808318***Ore Youth Club Sessions**

4.30pm-6.00pm

Ore Community Centre

*sarah.adams@freshvisions.org.uk**Bev 07732823800***The Crown Knitters**

10.30am

The Crown, 64-66 All

Saints St, Hastings

Fortnightly first and

second week of month

A weekly knitting group who
knit lovely things to sell to raise
money for local charities.*thecrownhastings.co.uk/events***Sew Social with Karen Arthur**

7.00pm-9.00pm, £10,

£5 concessions

Afri-Co-Lab, 3 Marine

Court, St Leonards

A monthly gathering on first

Tuesday of the month for

Global Majority crafters.

*afri-co-lab.org***Baby & Toddler Social Meet Up**

12.00pm-3.00pm

The Common Room, Eagle House,

27-29 Cambridge Rd, Hastings

A welcome space for people

with small people to meet.

*umbrellasussex.org.uk/news***Needle Felt**

11.00am-12.00pm and

1.00pm-2.00pm

Isabel Blackman Centre,

Winding St.

One of several classes

covering all topics.

*isabelblackmancentre.co.uk***Online Chair Yoga**

Zoom, 2.00pm-3.00pm

*sueyoga1066@gmail.com***Creative Writing at The Crown**

10.00am-11.30am

The Crown, Hastings, £8

£15 – lots more classes

available for all levels

*Nicky 07938 734871***Mini-Da Vinci Art School**

10.00am-12.00pm

Art in the Park Community

Hub, Alexandra Park

Pre-school/ home-

schoolers art activities

£6.50 (adults free)

*info@artsonprescription.org***Classical Guitar Tuition**

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays

Bexhill, from £15, free

taster sessions

*bexhillclassicalguitar.co.uk***Pilates with Lucy Paffard**

St Leonards, 9.30am

*lucypaffard@gmail.com***Painting Workshop**

1.00pm-3.00pm

Art in the Park, Alexandra Park

£12 (concessions available)

Materials provided.

*Info@artsonprescription.org***Photography Workshop**

6.00pm-8.00pm

Art in the Park, Alexandra Park

£12 (concessions available)

Own camera required.

*Info@artsonprescription.org***Country Dancing**

7.45pm-9.45pm

St Matthew's Church,

London Rd, St Leonards

*hastingscountrydanceclub.org.uk***Vinyasa Flow (Levels 1-2)**

6.00pm-7.00pm

Hornty Sports Centre, Hastings

*karen@yoga-by-the-sea.co.uk***Knitting Yarns:**

5.00pm-6.30pm

Sugar Pie Honey Buns

235 London Rd, St Leonards

*Rachel: 07397794879***Yin Yoga & Relaxation**

7.30pm-8.30pm, £7

Azur Marina

karen@yoga-by-the-sea.co.uk

Daoist Qi Gong

9.00am-10.00am

The Azur Pavilion, St Leonards

*andreacorsoQG@yahoo.com***Pilates: with a roller****with Sally Paffard**

9.00am-9.30am, Zoom

sallypaffard@gmail.com

Pilates with Sally Paffard

5.30pm-6.30pm

Small class

Westhill Community Centre

*Sally: 07973 530911***Hot Yoga Hastings**

21 St Peter's Rd, Hastings

hotyogahastings.co.uk

11.00am-12.00pm

Yoga at the White Rock

White Rock Hotel, Hastings

Healing Breath, Yoga Nidra

& Tibetan Bowls, £10.

*myranicol@gmail.com***Silver Swans Ballet Class**

6.30pm-8.00pm

Ore Community Centre, Studio 2

*Annie 07704 711772***Gary Marriott's Tune****up Tuesdays**

5.15pm-6.30pm

Fun Acapella Choir

Hastings Town Centre, £3

*Text 07986911083 for more info***Ashtanga Yoga - Assisted****Self Practice**

07.30am-09.30am, £15

Wellington Health &

Wellbeing Centre

*ashtangayogahastings@gmail.com***Salsa Tuesdays with****Phyre Dance**

The Piper, Norman

Rd, St Leonards

Times vary see Facebook page.

From beginners to social
dancing and practice.*@facebook.com/**events/576448847887517***Wednesdays****St Leonards Junior Chess**

From 5.00pm

St Nicholas Centre, London Rd

A social club for children

who play chess.

*andrewjmcgettigan@gmail.**com / 07910 245 40***Slow and Easy Fitness**

10.30am-11.30am, £3

Ore Community Centre, 455

Old London Rd TN35 5BH

Exercise for older adults

*07817 144812:**bodymoveshastings.com***Yoga with Marjoly**

6.00pm-7.00pm

Azur, Marina Pavilion,

44-37 Marina

*07929577985***Hatha Yoga for You**

2.00pm-3.00pm

Sunroom, Azur, Marina

Pavilion, 44-37 Marina

*Louise@stleonards.studio***Mystical Yoga at The****Bale House**

5.45-7.00pm, £10

Hastings Country Park, Lower

Coastguard Lane, Fairlight,

Hastings, TN354AD

*enchantedmalas@gmail.com***Elemental Yoga with Catherine**

10.30am. Class Cost: £7

The Azur Pavilion

*catherineburnett12@gmail.com***Laughter Yoga with Bev**

6.30pm-7.30pm

Upstairs, Jenny Lind

*bevjones@laughyourself**tohealth.com***Wellbeing Wednesdays**

10.00am-3.00pm,

(pay as you can)

Art in the Park Community

Hub, Alexandra Park

*info@artsonprescription.org***Roots of Return**

Women's Wellbeing Circle

7.30pm-9.00pm (pay as you can)

Art in the Park Community

Hub, Alexandra Park

*info@artsonprescription.org***Buddhist Meditation and****Dharma Teaching**

7.00pm-9.00pm

In person and via Zoom.

*hastingsbuddhistgroup.co.uk***Yoga on the Harbour Arm**

(outdoors) 5.30pm-6.30pm

*oldtownyoga.co.uk***Kundalini Yoga and****Meditation Class**

7.30pm-8.45pm

The Ballroom, Bank Hotel &

Bistro, St Leonards, £10.

*soulpowerkundaliniyoga.co.uk***Relaxation: Zoom class with****Pilates teacher Sally Paffard**

8.00pm-9.00pm, £4

*sallypaffard@gmail.com***Spanish – Adult Beginners**

10.00am-12.00pm

First Floor, 7 Cambridge

Rd, Hastings

£15 – lots more classes

available for all levels

*Espanoles en Hastings FB page**spanishonseaschool@gmail.com***Argentine Tango Social Dance**

8.00pm-11.00pm

White Rock Hotel,

Downstairs Bar

A friendly social tango for those

already dancing tango with

music from tango's golden age.

£5 dancers, £2 non-dancers

*pennythepoetess@yahoo.co.uk***Qigong with Sigrid**

5.30-6.30pm

Community Hall of Greek



LISTINGS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE... HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

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Street sketchers “plein air” group

First Wednesday of each month
9.00am start: Outside Hastings
Contemporary Gallery
11.00am reconvene: Eat@
TheStade for refreshments
and discussion
meetup.com/south-coast-skyers

Thursdays**Tilekiln Youth Club Sessions**

5.30-7.00pm
Tilekiln Community Centre
sarah.adams@freshvisions.org.uk
Bev 07732823800

Co-working social media Sessions

10am
The Crown, 64-66 All
Saints St, Hastings
Free group working sessions for
creative business owners and
freelancers designed to help you
spend focused, productive time
creating and sharing content.
Insta: @brassbeemarketing,
catherine@
brassbeemarketing.com

Yoga with Marjolyn

3.00pm-4.00pm
Azur, Marina Pavilion,
44-37 Marina
07929577985

Tai Chi for Health and Relaxation

10.30am-11.30am, £5
St John's Parish Hall, Brittany Rd
Stuart 07961 949715

Nature Walks with HESNHS

Times and venues vary.
hastingsnaturalhistory.org

Meditation and Breathwork with Jung-ui

7.30pm-8.30pm, £55
West Hill Community Centre
A four-week course.
jung-ui.co.uk

Teens Art Club

4.00pm-6.00pm
Art in the Park, Alexandra Park
info@artsonprescription.org

Hastings Town Singers

7.00pm-9.00pm
Castledown School, Priory Rd
A friendly non-auditioning
community choir.
Free taster sessions.
hastingstownsingers.co.uk

Life drawing (Adults only)

10.30am-12.30pm, £10
Art in the Park Community
Hub, Alexandra Park
info@artsonprescription.org
Earth:Art Wrokshop
6.00pm-8.00pm, £10
Art in the Park Community
Hub, Alexandra Park
Explore a wide range of earth-
friendly creative processes and
techniques with Georgina Fox.
info@artsonprescription.org
Yoga at Hastings Contemporary

9.50am-10.50am
oldtownyoga.co.uk

Move It or Lose It!

10.00am-11.00am
The Hastings Centre
Friendly, low impact exercise for
older adults. Improves strength
and balance. Seated or standing.
£6 per class. First class free.
lucy.jenner@moveitorloseit.co.uk

Yoga on the Harbour Arm

5.15pm-6.15pm
(outdoors)
oldtownyoga.co.uk

Online Vinyasa Flow with Elena Voce

12.45pm-1.30pm
Classes for all levels.
Pay-what-you-can
yogawithelenavoce.co.uk

Vinyasa Flow

9.30am-10.30am
Azur Marina Pavilion
karen@yoga-by-the-sea.co.uk

Kundalini Yoga & Meditation with Yeli

6.00pm-7.30pm
Wellington Centre, Hastings
yeli@happinessholistichealth.uk

Mandala Vinyasa Flow (Advanced)

Hot Yoga Hastings,
21 St Peter's Rd, Hastings, 6.30pm
hotyogahastings.co.uk

Iyengar Yoga for Beginners

8.00pm-9.00pm
Arthur Easton Centre,
St Leonards
Mats, blocks, ropes and barre
work. Pay as you are able.
myranicol@gmail.com

Pilates (beginners)

3.00pm-4.00pm
Isabel Blackman Centre,
Winding St.
One of several classes
covering all topics.
isabelblackmancentre.co.uk

Ashtanga Yoga – Assisted

Self Practice
07.15am-09.15am, £15
Wellington Health &
Wellbeing Centre
ashtangayogahastings@gmail.com

HESNHS Walking Group

Walk 4-6 miles with this friendly
natural history walking group.
Picnic or pub lunch options.
hastingsnaturalhistory.org
Andrew: ajw.hesnhs@btinternet.com, 7597 003407

Fridays**Broomgrove Youth Club Sessions**

4.30-5.30pm
Broomgrove Community Centre
sarah.adams@freshvisions.org.uk
Bev 07732823800

Feel better with**Therapeutic Movements**

9.30-10.30am
Salvation Army Hall, St
Andrew's Square, Hastings

Suitable for all ages.

Sigrid: qigongsigrid@gmail.com

Breathe + Stretch with Karen Arthur

7.30am-8.20am, £10,
£5 concessions
Afri-Co-Lab, 3 Marine
Court, St Leonards
Greet the day and start
the weekend energised
and refreshed.

afri-co-lab.org

Traditional Yoga

Horntye Club Room,
Horntye Sports Centre
9.30am-10.40am, £10
For the yoga enthusiast

Yin Yoga

11.30am-12.30pm, £7
All abilities.

ninayoga.co.uk

Yoga on the Harbour Arm

(outdoors), 9.00am-10.00am
oldtownyoga.co.uk

Pilates: mixed ability with Sally Paffard

Zoom, 9.00am-10.00am
sallypaffard@gmail.com

Beginners Creative Writing Group

6.15pm-7.15pm
The Clifton Centre (previously
Southwater Community Centre)

Mindful Yoga – An introspective practice

10.30am-12.30pm

Chair Yoga – A supported approach

2.30pm-3.30pm
St Leonards Studio @
Azur Marina Pavilion
zowie@stleonards.studio

Gong Bath sessions

11.00am
Unitarian Church, 7a
South Terrace
Text Karen Hayler: 07986 911083

Senior Strength

3.00pm-4.00pm
Isabel Blackman Centre,
Winding St.
One of several classes
covering all topics.
isabelblackmancentre.co.uk

Saturdays**Saturday Recess Art Club**

10.30am-12.30pm,
£6.50 (adults free)
Art in the Park Community
Hub, Alexandra Park
creative activities for all
budding artists! Ages 10+
info@artsonprescription.org

Chess Club

2.00pm-4.00pm
The Common Room, Eagle House,
27-29 Cambridge Rd, Hastings
An amateur club for
amateur players
umbrellasussex.org.uk/news
Zoom Hatha Yoga
9.00am-10.00am (online only)
Pranayama, practice and

relaxation, video available.

Louiselovesyoga@gmail.com

Meditation and Breathwork with Jung-ui

10.45am-11.45am
The Stables Theatre, Hastings
jung-ui.co.uk

Yoga at Hastings**Contemporary**

9.50am-10.50am

oldtownyoga.co.uk

Strong Yoga with Lucy

Morning Yoga via Zoom

10.00am-11.15am

lamiles@hotmail.co.uk

Hot Yoga Hastings,

21 St Peter's Rd, Hastings

Book: hotyogahastings.co.uk

Gong Bath sessions

2.00pm

4 Courts Wellbeing Centre

off Sydney Close

Text Karen Hayler: 07986 911083

Antenatal Taster Class

10.00am

64-66 All Saints St, Hastings

First Saturday every month.

Free taster sessions to
learn about antenatal and
hypnobirthing with Siobhan
from The Mothership Antenatal.
themothershipantenatal.co.uk

Sundays**Yin Yoga**

21 St Peter's Rd,
Hastings. 3.00pm
hotyogahastings.co.uk

Historical Dance Group Regency Dance Workshop

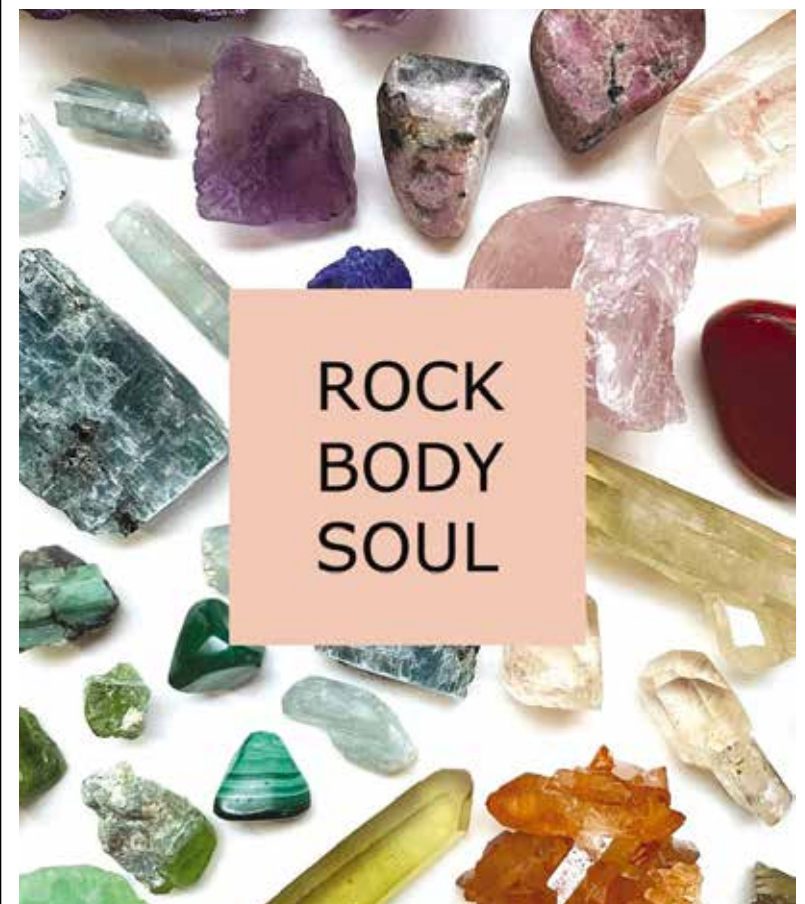
2pm-4.45pm, monthly
St Peter and St Paul's Church Hall
dianadancer@btinternet.com

Street sketchers**“plein air” group**

First Wednesday of each month
4.00pm start: South side,
The Stade open space
6.00pm reconvene: East Hastings
Angling Club, The Stade for
refreshments and discussion
meetup.com/south-coast-skyers

Sunday Brunch-time**Kid's Art Club**

10.00am-12.00pm, £5, Drop-
in or stay full 2 hours
Outside the Smokeshack,
St Andrews Mews,
Waldegrave Rd, Hastings
Join Artist and Arts Educator
Charlotte CHW for different
creative projects every
week at the revamped St
Andrews Mews. 5-10 yrs.
c.hwatts.art@gmail.com

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OPINION

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE...  HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

Water Woes

BEN BRUGES castigates the woe-ful record of Southern Water and wonders whether the company should be abolished.

Recently Southern Water, for the second time, smeared excrement all over Bulverhythe and pumped watered-down faeces onto St Leonards beach. It also left Rye without drinking water. Meanwhile Alexandra Park has been continually poisoned, possibly for the last two years. It took concerted effort from local residents to get Southern to even investigate it.

When Priory Meadow was flooded, and an eel was found swimming in the street, it resulted in local businesses closing down. The subsequent report said that the water company “has yet to locate documentation which provides an assessment of its flood risk implications.” Which points to a stunning level of incompetence... or was it simply a lie as they hadn’t made any flood risk assessment?

Southern Water is £5.6 billion in debt on an annual £792.5 million in revenue. To turn that amount of revenue (household bills are an average £401 a year) into debt is a stunning achievement. Margaret Thatcher first nationalised the industry, wrote off all of the accumulated debt, then handed over the regional monopoly cash-cows to the private sector, underselling them. Water companies started with NO debt. The debt they are now in is self-created.

Keith Lough, Chair of the Board, (£296,400 annual remuneration, going up to £371,000 next year) states that the way they have learnt from five major incidents in the last year will help them “serve customers and communities better in the future”. Five! Five that were in Hampshire and Kent, not East Sussex. We don’t even count as a ‘major incident’.

Chief Financial Officer, Stuart Ledger, (£170,100 annual remuneration, before bonuses) is pleased that SW have completed 98% of the actions in the undertakings agreed with Ofwat in 2019. If true, what does that say about Ofwat? We still ended up with a shit-show. Perhaps those ‘requirements’ didn’t go nearly far enough? In addition, Southern is still subject to a number of ‘Drinking Water Inspectorate’ notices.

Ledger told Bloomberg that



G. Owen Prachar/Ba Kode

‘large amounts’ of infrastructure investments were needed which wouldn’t be coming from the public purse, adding “I think a private model is the best way of getting the capital into the water industry.” Yet Southern hasn’t paid dividends to external shareholders since 2017 and won’t do so until 2025. Perhaps you can see the ob-

vious problem? How do they think they will get private investment when they can’t pay out dividends? He also ‘fully expects’ to receive a two-star rating for their Environmental Performance Assessment from the Environment Agency. I have no clue of the worth of a two-star rating, but note that this is for their self-assessment, not for things actually done.

Lawrence Gosden, CEO since 1 July 2022 (£427,700 annual remuneration going up to £480,000 next

year before bonuses) says: “We are at the beginning of a long journey to reduce our industry’s reliance on storm overflows.” A long journey? Brace yourselves Bulverhythe. He continues: “We cannot blame the weather for operational issues and water outages that we experienced this year.” Indeed. So that would be incompetence and lack of invest-

ment. The next investment period is 2025–30, after which ‘maybe’ the multiple issues will be addressed. I’m not holding my breath, or, rather, I will still be holding my nose.

In the couple of years that they themselves describe as ‘poor’, and I would describe as ‘a disaster’, they awarded themselves a bonus that amounted to 22% of their salary. So the CEO cost us £521,794 - half a million - per year. And will cost considerably more next year.

The board as a whole cost us

£2,146,500 per year. Before bonuses. Over two million for a talking shop. Each year. The same board who have seen the company reduced to a Standard & Poor BBB financial rating only one step above ‘junk’ or speculative. Standard advice is to not invest in BBB companies. So where is this private money going to come from?

Perhaps we can look to the general election to solve the problems? Sally-Ann Hart has publicly ‘regretted’ privatisation, but is opposed to nationalisation. Hardly a coherent position. It’s not actually clear what national Conservative policy is, but anyway, who cares? they are set to lose.

Opinion polls suggest that between 69% (Survation, 2022) and 79% (Engineer, 2022) of the public think that water should be re-nationalised. Close on 300,000

people have signed a petition calling for water to be returned to public ownership. It’s a hugely popular policy. Maintaining the current system that syphons off profit and public money while running the service stunningly badly? Hugely unpopular.

Legally and ethically, there’s no reason to ‘buy’ the utilities back. The vultures have made their money stashed away in the Cayman Islands (which is part of Southern’s back story), they inherited a clean and debt-free industry and have trashed their record on both. They have absolutely no ethical right to be paid a penny more.

In three decades, the nine main water and sewerage companies have run up debts of almost £54bn and paid out dividends of £65.9bn while overseeing a lack of investment. Ethically, that’s theft. Presumably it’s legal.

So vote Labour, get a public service back and remove the vultures? Unfortunately not.

Labour, under Starmer, has back-tracked on the promises made at the last election, they will no longer renationalise key services like water and energy. They have two policies for water, both are a mistake for the same reason – they maintain the same system that put us in the merde.

Rachel Reeves, Shadow Chancellor, has said that “nationalising things... just doesn’t stack up against our fiscal rules.” Rules that she set up herself in order to prevent spending on nationalisation. So what WILL Labour do?

Firstly, Labour will set up Ofwat2 without saying how Ofwat2 will be any better than the disaster that is Ofwat1 or how they will put things right. In the case of Southern, Labour is saying it won’t get more public money, and the reality of the market (see above) is that they likely won’t be attracting sizable private investment. No change then.

Secondly, Labour will give Ofwat2 the power to ban bonuses “in certain circumstances”, as if they don’t think now is bad enough to sack them all. As a policy it’s performative. It will simply make people think something is happening when it really isn’t. Before long the anger and attention will have dissipated, they hope, and we’ll go back to funnelling public money into private hands.

Meanwhile, Bulverhythe, our beaches, our parks, our drinking water, our riverways will all suffer.

■ Southern Water’s annual report: southernwater.co.uk/annual-report2023

“Opinion polls suggest that between 69% and 79% of the public think that water should be re-nationalised.”



Prehistoric Graffiti

KENT BARKER

You might think that the use of stencils by street artists is a relatively modern phenomenon. Just look around Hastings and see our Banksys or Stewys, or the mystery cat pictures, and you can see how effective the process is. But it seems that these artists have been 'borrowing' a method pioneered at least 20,000 years ago. And since, as far as we know, they didn't have spray cans back then, they had to develop a new method of transferring paint onto a wall.

Prehistoric art has been discovered in some 350 caves in France and Spain. The oldest is believed to be the Chauvet Cave, in the Ardèche in southwestern France, with figurative paintings dating back to the Upper Palaeolithic Ice Age, around 32,000 years ago. They are certainly older than the most famous site - Lascaux in the Dordogne - whose 600 consummately beautiful wall paintings and engravings are a mere 17,000 years old. However, like the majority of the caves these two are both closed to the public to preserve the artefacts.

If you do want to visit one of the few that remains open, try Pech Merle, about 30 kilometres east of the French town of Cahors. It's one of the experiences of a lifetime. Even if there were no prehistoric paintings to see, these caves are fantastic in themselves. Millions of years before bears, humans, or artists arrived, a river ran underground through an area of limestone rock, carving out 1.5 kilo-

metres of meandering caverns with stalagmites and stalactites. The occasional huge boulder is deposited at a rakish angle, making it look more like a film set than a grotto, and roots of trees descend from the ceiling.

Our ancestors had to avoid cave bears (who left claw marks on the walls) as they explored narrow passages and vast caverns by the light of the most rudimentary of candles. And this was the only illumination available by which they could paint. But over the course of several centuries, different generations produced sophisticated and incredibly lifelike images of single colour: spotted horses, bovinds, reindeer, woolly mammoths and ... human hands.

It would seem that the hands were probably done later - a mere 19,000 years ago - while the main paintings date back around 28,000-29,000 years. To put this into some sort of context, the battle of Hastings was just 1,000 years ago, the Christian or Common era started 2,000 years ago; the Neolithic farmstead Knap of Howar on Orkney - the oldest preserved standing building in northern Europe - is about 3,500 years old, and Stonehenge was started 5,000 years ago. So the artists of Pech Merle were crawling through the caves with flickering candles, carrying bowls of pigment two dozen millennia before Stonehenge or the Pyramids of Giza were even started.

Pigments are the clue to palaeolithic graffiti. They were made from minerals such as limonite



Banksy's Hastings Cat, Spotted Horses - 28,000 years old and Pêche Merle Hand - Palaeolithic Graffiti

and hematite, red ochre, yellow ochre and umber, often mined some distance from the caves. For the spots on the horses and for the hands, the powder or powders were blown from the mouth onto the wall. Possibly the earliest form of spray-painting. It's why the stencils are in negative. The artist placed her hand on the wall and blew the coloured dust over it, leaving just the outline when she removed her hand. And how do we know it was a woman? According to the experts, by its relatively small size. What those archaeologists don't explain is how there are so many handprints, added nine or ten thousand years after the original painting.

Is it possible that the 12 black or

red hand images were the equivalent of early tags? Could a teenager have snuck into the caves and liberally added her mark to the old masters? The only slight problem with this explanation is that similar hand prints are found in dozens of other caves, including several hundred at the (aptly named) Cueva de las Manos at Santa Cruz in Argentina. It may be stretching credulity to suggest some early form of social media communication reaching over thousands of miles and tens of thousands of years.

The technique of blowing paint was also used on Pech Merle's most iconic wall painting, the Spotted Horses - around which the handprints were added. The panel is large - 3.6 metres long - and also contains the representation

of a red fish, probably a sturgeon. The two horses are stunning in their simplicity, the outlines just a few continuous strokes. The artist has even used the shape of the rock to delineate one of the horse's heads. Then the spots were blown onto the wall.

All in all, it is an exhibition not to be missed. But you may need to hurry. An official at the site told us that it was unlikely that it would remain open to the public for many more years. Even with limited visitor numbers and durations, the fear is that these extraordinarily ancient paintings may be starting to degrade.

■ See: en.pechmerle.com for more information and to book your visit.



ARTS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE...  HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

Photos: Jude Montague



A cat on a hot late 60s Shure Vocal Master PA amp,

Repairing Vintage Audio Gear

JUDE MONTAGUE

Recently, Hastings Independent Press featured a Supersound amplifier that was bought by Montague Armstrong and manufactured on Kings Road, St Leonards-on-Sea. It still worked – amazingly for a prototype from the 1960s – but needed at least a service to iron out its kinks and straighten out unwanted distortion and get the tremolo working. The right kind of expertise for vintage equipment is hard to find. Fortunately, Justin Ellis, who has had a long-term love affair with electronics and mechanics, also lives in Hastings. He brought the amplifier back to almost-mint condition as a labour of love, working on the exterior as well as the electronic interior, even fixing the carry handles. He returned it to us in splendid condition.

Maybe there is a reason that drifters, music lovers, and music makers have washed up in this seaside town connected to the development of audio-visual

equipment. The manufacturing community (including Supersound with their connection to electric guitar pioneer Jim Burns) have also been drawn here. Vox Sound Limited moved to the town in 1971, settling their factory on the Ponswood estate after the original Vox brand passed to different owners in the late 1960s. It is one hundred years since John Logie Baird was experimenting with mechanical television in his bedroom and local workshops, beginning the transmission of live visual information down the radio waves.

To commemorate the anniversary of Baird's original Televisor, I am helping to publicise past and present makers' tales. As a writer interested in British maverick engineering ingenuity, I feel lucky that so much information is now available online, as enthusiasts contribute to special interest forums. New finds are coming to light all the time. It is important that these crafts are not only remembered but that they continue to be practised in whatever way

possible. This is not an easy task in current times, in what feels like the last leg of a long era of deindustrialisation.

ELECTRONIC FIDDLING MAKES BEAUTIFUL SOUND

I asked Justin Ellis some questions about his work fixing amplifiers and his love for vintage equipment. He has spent around twenty years fixing audio equipment although he has spent nearly all his life doing what he calls 'fiddling' with mechanical things, basic electronics, and various projects. It is the mix of craftsmanship and practical technology that draws him to the audio gear of the 1960s (and beyond), which he thinks just looks and sounds better.

During the late 60s and early 70s, the relationship between sound and technology powered a new generation of equipment. Electrified music offered opportunities to manufacture beautiful and functional objects that were also repairable. They still can be repaired by a dedicated and earnest fiddler who is confident enough to get their hands dirty. Justin says, "pretty much all the materials, fittings and components can be bought for a vintage repair and restoration project,

from the High Street hardware shop to online electrical outlets and the odd specialist seller. Occasionally a little hunting is required for the more elusive and specific parts – especially if you're the attention to detail sort."

Amplifiers offer the extra attraction of exterior restoration. There are many beautiful finishes to the enclosures: firms would pick their own cloth and their own style, create their own designs. A member of the family might have drawn the logos by hand, and parts ended up being made locally by whoever had the skills, as businesses shared skills and even personnel, perhaps poaching them.

Justin has a few regular customers who own incredible collections of vintage audio gear and he is always keeping an eye out for salvageable, broken or partially working vintage audio equipment for overall projects. But it's a challenge for any specialist in this area nowadays to deal with the amount of good but unserviced equipment. Many of these wonderful items are easily purchasable on eBay (although getting hold of them might be more difficult due to their weight and cumbersome nature) but many have problems and they can accumulate in a back room, stacking up in an ever-lengthening queue. It is even possible to learn to fix them from the 'how to' videos easily accessible on YouTube. Luckily there are some generous experts out there and Justin has his valve wizard pal Alan Vale to call up when he needs a new angle on things. It takes time and patience as well as expertise to get them into good working order. Perhaps we should club together and get a workshop at the Ponswood estate for a community repair shop! Anyone want to help fundraise/organise?

THE POWER OF ELECTRONIC INNOVATION

From the British Invasion bands of the 1960s to the Garage bands from the US and the UK who took riff-based tunesmithery into a punkier, more brutal sound, pop and rock has been powered (literally) by these innovations. If you want to see performers using the vintage gear locally you can pop into The Fracave at The Pig music venue on Hastings seafront where bands who use authentic equipment to produce these kinds of sounds are invited to play.

Suddenly, there is a threat to Justin's peaceful studio and its inhabitants. A playful kitten has entered the Ellis household with



Orbit the cat evaluating the latest repair job

its enticing dangling cables and speaker cloth screaming out to be scratched and ripped, boxes and cabinets offering cosy sleep spaces and all those bits that roll about in the workplace. Justin happily reports, "I was repairing the exterior covering of a bass cabinet recently, which involved rotating the unit every so often to expose each side for the work of making good. The pussycat had crawled into it at an early stage, deciding he enjoyed being plopped over 90 degrees every ten minutes rather than find a new hole to go to." Cats are an inventor's choice of pet, giving company in a home laboratory. Logie Baird appreciated them even while they interfered with his wires and Nipkow discs.

I ask Justin what figures stand out from the 1960s British music manufacturing scene. He picks out a few of the 'eccentric' technical risk-takers. These include musician, inventor, and entrepreneur, Charlie Watkins (Watkins Electronic Music), Peter Walker (QUAD Electroacoustics), Dick Denney (Jennings Musical Industries/VOX), and Clive Sinclair (Sinclair). Sinclair is a personal favourite, not so much for audio excellence, but a true goofball obsessed with miniaturisation. A producer of cost-effective DIY audio kits and models giving both children and adults the opportunity to get hands-on with this stuff, building and experimenting... and learning through mistakes. Let's not mention the Sinclair C5!

■ I'm looking for any stories relating to invention or manufacture locally. Do please contact me, Jude Montague via arts@hastingsindependentpress.co.uk, mentioning the topic.

Lineker Photography



Community Uplift

VICTORIA KINGHAM muses on a growing choral phenomenon emanating from Bexhill.

In a recent issue we printed a list of local choirs who were to take part in The Big Sing, an annual local choir event, which we thought would be of interest for anyone who would like to join a choir. There are a great many, and members usually hear of them by word of mouth rather than active research, web or otherwise.

It has therefore only recently come to my attention that there are two very large choirs singing joy-

fully nearby, led actively by musician Day Levale. “Are you ready to be lifted up?” they ask. “Our community choirs based in Bexhill and Eastbourne are continuing to go from strength to strength. With performances planned across the South East, including our incredible end of year concert taking place at the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, there’s never been a better time to join our family.”

Lifted Up Community Choirs “strive to lift spirits, bring smiles and unite through singing gospel, soul and inspirational music.” Catching the rehearsal for their

next big concert was fascinating. The songs they sing are part-devotional (mostly gospel), part soul music: classics like Ray Charles’ *I Can’t Stop Loving You*, Bill Withers’ *Lovely Day*, Carole King’s *You’ve Got a Friend*, Whitney Houston’s *Joy To The World*. All, as they advertise, inspirational.

How Levale achieves his performances with 100 people who are largely unschooled in formal music might well be the topic of an *Independent* feature in the near future. Watching him rehearse both soloists and choir was notable for its informality, and also for a strong feeling of group unity. Here’s a man who knows how to sing and has been singing for most of his life, transferring his enthusiasm and

skill to a diverse assembly on the South Coast. They had already learned their musical parts (and the choir is conventionally divided into sopranos, altos, tenors, and baritone) by having them sung to them – the soprano and alto parts pitched accurately in falsetto. The singers read only the lyrics, aiming to be off-book by December, so there will be no physical artefact like a word sheet between themselves and the audience. The harmony parts, I think, come from Levale’s head, though the arrangements are a collaboration between him and the keyboard player. His free and flexible musicality seems largely the result of lifelong practice in a particular *milieu*, within a gospel church community. He also, inci-

dentally, plays various instruments and keeps a music shop in Bexhill where local musicians take instruments to be repaired – “quite a hangout for cool people,” laughs one of their community.

They are accompanied by a keyboard player and a backing track, conventionally amplified. The soloists have microphones. They sing, intentionally, in the style of all the best gospel/blues singers, and the articulation of the lyrics is largely American, or perhaps what they call transatlantic. You’d wonder why, until you realise that to sing *Don’t Let Nobody Drag Your Spirit Down* in any other style sounds absurd. Why it does is probably the topic of a PhD in musicology, but anyway *Please Don’t Let Anybody Reduce your Buoyancy of Mood* would be a British equivalent and nobody would want to go there.

St John’s Centre is a church in Bexhill largely given over to community activities. They practise for a whole afternoon, long in comparison to many choirs, and sometimes twice a week. I look forward to seeing and hearing the final result at De La Warr on 10 December. I am sure that it will be, at the very least, uplifting.

■ *The Lifted Up Community Choir performs at DLWP on Sunday 10 December, 6.30 pm. Tickets at dlwp.com/event/lifted-up-community-choir/, choir details at liftedupcommunitychoirs.com*

Snow Cake

SERENA FERRARI

A rare screening of the un-streamable but award-winning film, *Snow Cake* (2006), starring the late Alan Rickman and Sigourney Weaver will take place at the Hastings Centre on 20 January in the new year.

The event, for which tickets are now available, will be hosted by Henry Normal - former executive director of Baby Cow Productions - to raise money for local charity Project Art Works. Following the screening will be a Q&A with writer Angela Pell, Sigourney Weaver’s autism advisor Ros Blackburn (via zoom), and hopefully - if the stars align - a surprise acting guest from the movie (also via zoom). There will be a

raffle that night with some lush prizes including a £300 voucher for a stay at the TV-premiered *Eco Lodge* also known as the Looking Glass Lodge.

Shot in Wawa, Ontario, *Snow Cake* is about the burgeoning friendship between travelling Englishman Alex (Rickman) and Linda (Weaver), a high-functioning autistic woman whose daughter has just been killed in a car

accident with Alex. But despite the opening tragedy, the film is a life-affirming story about what it means to be living with someone who has autism. The premise for the film came to Pell’s mind when she and her husband Henry Normal attended Ros Blackburn’s talk in the wake of their then two-year-old son’s diagnosis. “I remember at the end, the only question my husband could think to ask was ‘Do you love your parents?’ and Ros (who is autistic) paused and said ‘they’re very useful.’ And that’s what we’ve always been trying to do really, is be useful.”

Some of you may recognise Ros’ bluntness in Weaver’s portrayal of Linda. Advised by Ros herself, Weaver’s interpretation of the role is heavily based on Ros’ verbliness which sets the film up for some heartfelt laughs, and it is precisely this mixture of humour, love and loss which makes the film something worth viewing. It will come as no surprise that both Rickman and Weaver received nominations for their acting which was harnessed by director Marc Evans.

One way in which Pell and Normal have tried to be useful to their son Johnny was by exposing him to an art practice, one that is maintained today thanks to the help of Project Art Works. All the proceeds from the evening will go to this local charity which collaborates with people of complex support needs by providing in-house and out-house conditions for autonomous and collaborative art practices. Their wide variety of programmes offer inclusive studio spaces for neurodivergent artists; art breaks for children with complex support needs alongside their parents/carers; and the Explorers Project, a national creative programme increasing the visibility and representation of neurodivergent artists in contemporary visual art.

It promises to be a joyful communal night, and for an undeniably good cause.

■ *Snow Cake screening: The Hastings Centre 20 January 2024. Tickets available through Eventbrite*

CROSSWORD CORNER

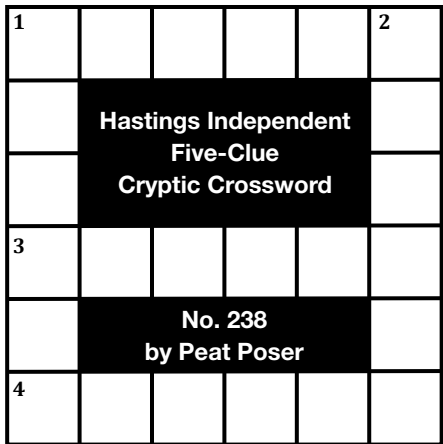
Across

1. Some did as he said for careers (6)
3. Use this on houseplants man (6)
4. Yet Sam changes for exciting romance (6)

Down

1. Small whisky as seen at end of tv plays (6)
2. Try some (without drug) when wild weather (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 13

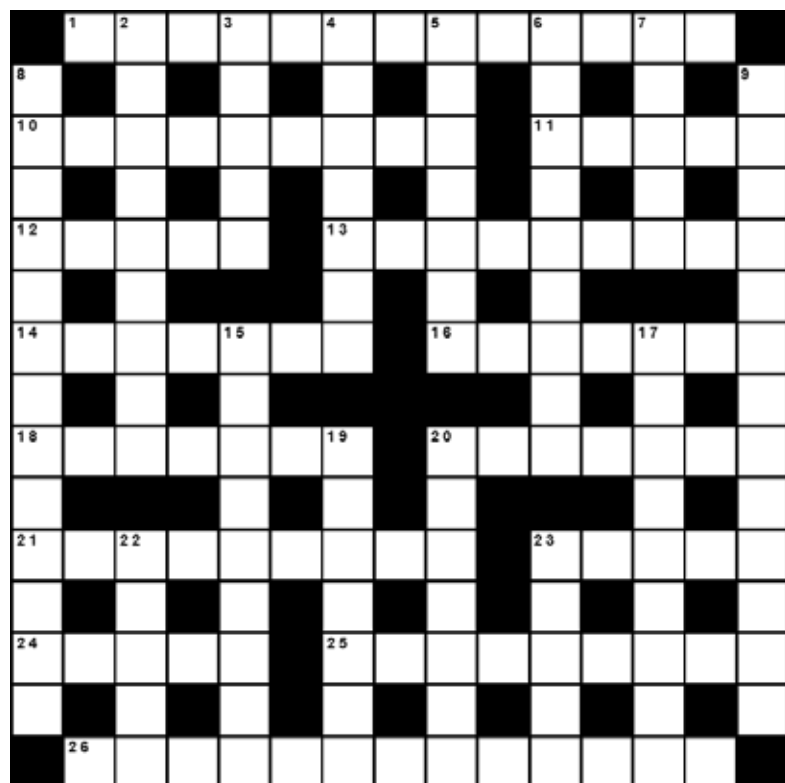




ARTS

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE... HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

HANUSHKA'S CRYPTIC CROSSWORD No. 3



EXPUGNATIO

ACROSS

- 1 Early in the day, performance art in Greek letters – but mainly for Roman shows (13)
 10 Lounge roughly, with cowl-like interspersions, extended peroration (9)
 11 Plant family, opening after 9 (5)
 12 House game, running numbers from Camelot to Avalon (5)
 13 Inly perplexed, I add a bit, for want of capacity (9)
 14 Follower delivered from a business organization, audibly buoyant (7)
 16 Cause pain without aspiration? Eff off! High-class cover for a projecting part (7)
 18 Donkey sounds like yours, but pledges certainty (7)
 20 Alternative publication by Kingsley – volatile stuff (7)
 21 In carnival, good in overrunning (9)
 23 King, rioting in West, gets trousers (5)

- 24 Masses of chemicals hanging in the atmosphere, man! I'm bisexual (5)
 25 Priest in car crash, one that trains (9)
 26 What the Lamb did: lose the basket, Time No Longer. And constant, unite! (5,3,5)

DOWN

- 2 I join Unit in Mons, manufacturing guns (9)
 3 Ghana town takes measurement for friendly greeting (5)
 4 Cat-like, only bigger (7)
 5 Raise tax within three fifths, pound thrown in (7)
 6 Emergency prophylactic administered by Rin Tin Tin, King replacing Nitrogen (9)
 7 Climbing in East, found satisfactory edible mushroom (5)
 8 Uppity short mother gets seaweed and carpet particles for compounds (13)
 9 Fly, loser, adieu! Bewildered,

make for woman of independent means (4,2,7)

- 15 Turpin set about holy man after a recalcitrant bit of sunshine for good measure (9)
 17 Run, as vile concoction spreads world-wide! (9)
 19 Castrate domesticated animal? A little bit (7)
 20 Call of sheep: sounds like a little horse within, for example, suspended gear (7)
 22 Bone of monkey-like mammal, not living but loud (5)
 23 It's in the bag: a tenth of everything (5)

HANUSHKA COFFEE HOUSE is proud to present a £10 voucher to the first correct solution (selected at random).

Solutions by email please to verambell@yahoo.com, not later than 12 November.

THE WINEROOM

EVERYDAY, FINE AND RARE



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ARTS DIARY

HOWERD'S END AT THE STABLES

Saturday 18 November, Stables Theatre Hastings, 7.30 pm

Award-winning actor Simon Cartwright plays Frankie Howerd and Mark Farrelly appears as Frankie's lover, manager, and chauffeur. The two-hander, written by Farrelly and set at their home in Somerset, offers the chance to experience the span of Howerd's fifty-year career and his personality as a true survivor.

■ Tickets and Box Office: 01424 423221 More details: simoncartwright.co.uk and markfarrelly.co.uk

TAREK LAKHRISSI – UNFINISHED SENTENCE II

11 November – 21 January, Sat-Sun 12.00-4.00pm, Mon-Fri by appointment. Public opening: Saturday 11 November 4.00-7.00pm Flatland Projects, Unit 7, Beeching Road Studios, Bexhill TN39 3L3 Mobilising language as a raw material, Lakhrissi introduces sound, sculpture and other visual media into his installations and performances. At Flatland Projects, Lakhrissi will be present-

ing an installation inspired by Monique Wittig's 1969 novel *Les Guérillères* – themes of rebellion and restoration.

BEXHILL FOOTBRIDGE PROJECT COMMUNITY ART EVENT

Sadly, the launch was rained off. However this open air gallery has brought much joy to the community, and they hope to reschedule the event in the near future. The Footbridge Project is a community group run by volunteers who are aiming to visually enhance the well-used but unloved footbridge that crosses the railway line in Bexhill.

JAZZ HASTINGS EXTRA! GEOFF SIMKINS, SAXOPHONE AND LIAM NOBLE, PIANO

Barnaby's Lounge, 46 Robertson Street, Friday 3 November Hurry for outstanding performance TONIGHT ONLY organised by Reggie Hendrickse. In addition to the monthly Tuesday gigs at EHSAA on The Stade, Hendrickse has organised a special performance. Two of the UK's finest musicians come together

in a musical interplay that is both challenging and inspiring. Based on their recent recording: *Lucky Teeth* 2023, this is a one-off performance with limited seating.

HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS

Bexhill, De La Warr Pavilion, 22-23 Dec, 2.00pm and 4.30pm Director/actor of *Horrible Christmas*, Neal Foster, says "Christmas is a special time of year, and it's wonderful to perform in a heart-warming show about the importance of family in the company of *Horrible Histories*, who always know how to have fun!"

JAZZ HASTINGS: PIGFOOT PLAYS ELLINGTON

EHSAA, The Stade, Hastings, Tuesday 7 November, 8.30

Chris Batchelor: trumpet, James Allsopp: baritone sax, Liam Noble: piano, Paul Clarvis: drums

An imaginative reworking of a range of Duke Ellington's iconic compositions, from the early Cotton Club blues material to Swing hits and through to the exotica that was inspired by Ellington's extensive travels.

SIR QUENTIN BLAKE INK

Last chance to see!

Three new sets of pen
drawings created exclusively
for Hastings Contemporary.

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Visit us Wednesday – Sunday, 11am – 5pm.

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Supported using public funding by
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ENGLAND**



Sir Quentin Blake, from the *Ink Portraits* series, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.



FOOD

HASTINGS INDEPENDENT IS YOUR PAPER – USE YOUR VOICE...  HASTINGSINDEPENDENTPRESS

Eat Write Love

NICKY AND SONJA OF CREATIVE CONCOCTIONS

The good old apple! Beautiful to look at, versatile to cook with, the comforting companion to warming winter dinners. Not today!

In today's column, Nicky and Sonja invite you to have an apple a day with your breakfast! Yes, let's turn this beauty into super healthy, super crunchy, frankly rather moreish, baked apple granola. Can you smell it now, crisping in the oven? Hold that image! Grab your journal and pen!

Journaling #1: Peel, Chop, Crunch into Apple Memories*Step One*

Feel the smooth skin, look at the patterns. Peel the longest apple curl! Now chop open the apple. Close your eyes and crunch into it slowly, really slowly. Doesn't it taste sweeter?

Step Two [5 mins]

Where does your mind take you? What fond apple memory, recent or far, comes to mind? Picking apples fallen from a tree on the pavement? Varieties of apples stacked high at the green-grocers? Or a hot apple crumble at a friend's house after school?

Reflect [1 min]

- What one word captures this memory?
- What stirs in you now with this sweet apple memory?
- What might you want to revive?

APPLE FUN FACTS:

- There are 7,500 varieties of apples worldwide!
- Apple trees take 4-10 years to bear fruit.
- The Granny Smith was named after the cultivar, Maria Ann Smith, originally from East Sussex!
- Apples ripen up to 10 times faster in a warm room, so it's best to keep them in the fridge.



Photos: Sonja Colman

**NUTRITION INFO**

Top health benefits include:

- Soluble fibre – helps lower cholesterol
- Polyphenols – help lower blood pressure

- Pectin – supports gut health
- Quercetin – helps manage blood sugar levels
- Antioxidants – help protect against different cancers

BAKED APPLE GRANOLA (SIX SERVINGS)**Ingredients:**

- Granola
- 12 tbsp oats
- 1 tsp demerara sugar
- 6 tbsp flaked almonds
- 2 tbsp pumpkin seeds
- Apples
- 4 dessert or Bramley apples
- lemon juice
- 4 tbsp raisins
- 1.5 tsp cinnamon
- 2 tbsp maple syrup to taste – if you use dessert apples reduce this to 1 tbsp as the apples have more sweetness.

Method:

1. Warm the oven to 180°C.
2. Mix the granola ingredients in a bowl ready and put to one side.
3. Peel and slice the apples, drizzle with a little lemon juice as you do this to stop them going brown.

4. Put apples in a suitable baking dish, mix in the raisins, cinnamon and maple syrup, and then top with the granola.
5. Bake in the oven for about 1 hour – you may want to cover with foil about 30 mins in to avoid the topping burning.

SERVING SUGGESTION

- Serve with natural or coconut yoghurt for probiotics.
- Substitutes:
- Fruit: pears, peaches, apricots.
- Nuts: cashews, hazelnuts or sunflower seeds

STORAGE:

Granola lasts for weeks in an airtight container. Apples can be kept in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Journaling #2: Your 5-a-day Breakfast Challenge [5 mins]

See how five minutes of journaling with your apple granola breakfast for five days can change up your day. Apples last five days in the fridge, so we're good to go!

Ingredients: apple granola, yoghurt, journal, pen

Method: As you're eating, write down how it feels and tastes. Is it filling? Satisfying? As you progress to Day 5, what do you notice? Easier? What do you notice about your energy or mood? What do you imagine breakfasts can look like after the challenge? What might you add to this recipe to make it your own?

Reflect [1 min]

Write an inspiring motto for yourself that emerges from your 5-a-day challenge.

Journaling #3: Action!

Healthy comfort foods: What twist can you give your favourite apple dishes to make them both satisfying and healthy? What's the first step?

■ *Creative Concoctions is a local social enterprise, boosting creative health. For information on our Concoct Your Life workshops and our individual workshops: Nicky: insta: @nickytorode, diamond-minds.co.uk; Sonja: insta: @ryenutritional-health, ryenutritionalhealth.co.uk*



FOOTBALL

Agutter's Return to Pilot Field Delayed by Rain

21 OCTOBER:
BILLERICAY TOWN 2,
HASTINGS UTD 0
24 OCTOBER:
MARGATE 1,
HASTINGS UTD 2
28 OCTOBER:
HASTINGS UTD V
CARSHALTON ATHLETIC
POSTPONED

HUGH SULLIVAN

Hastings United have sacked their manager Paul Barnes, appointed only in May this year, after a run of poor results. In a 'Back to the Future' move, the club immediately re-appointed Chris Agutter, who managed the 'U's for four years between October 2017 and October 2021 before leaving to join League 2 side Stevenage. Assistant manager Andrew Brown and first team coach Ben Cornelius have also returned.

Agutter was immediately at the helm for a Tuesday evening away match against Margate, where the team came from a goal down to win 2-1, and was due to return to the sidelines at Pilot Field last Saturday until heavy rain forced a postponement of the scheduled match against Carshalton. The next three fixtures - at Chichester City on Tuesday (after this newspaper has gone to press), at Essex outfit Hashtag United tomorrow (Saturday) and at Crawley Down Gatwick in the Sussex Senior Cup next Tuesday - are all away. So home supporters won't be able to see fresh action under their returning team boss until Saturday week, 11 November, when Kingstonian are the visitors.

Agutter can boast an outstanding record during his previous stint as United manager. Having piloted the team to a play-off semi-final in the South East Division of the Isthmian League in his first full campaign in 2018/19, he led them to the top of the league table in both of the subsequent



Chris Agutter, back as 'U's manager

seasons, only to see in each case a probable championship title and automatic promotion wiped out by the Covid pandemic - first by the initial lockdown in March 2020, then by the further lockdowns and social restrictions during 2020/21.

His sudden departure in October 2021 to take up a youth coaching role at Stevenage seems to have been a unilateral decision on his part, and in the short term cast something of a cloud over his legacy. But this was soon dispelled by the success of his replacement Gary Elphick (who had been himself recruited as a player by Agutter) in managing what was essentially the team Agutter had built to win the South-East championship in April 2022 and then consolidate in the upper reaches of the Isthmian Premier League last season.

It's a little ironic then that that team was effectively disbanded during the summer amidst the turmoil arising from the club's well-documented problems off the field. With Elphick and his assistant Jon Meeney quitting, and the majority of their first team squad scattering to the four winds, new manager Paul Barnes had to rebuild from scratch. It's not clear to what extent the replacements that he brought in will remain loyal - or be regarded by Agutter as suitable calibre for his team in the longer term.

Two of Barnes' recruits who had won plaudits during this season's early encounters, Femi Akinwande and Bailey Akenhurst, have already moved on, in each case to clubs to which they had shown respective mettle while representing Hastings against them.

Striker Akinwande played for United against league leaders Hornchurch on 10 October. Five days later he appeared as a substitute

for Hornchurch in a match away at Cray Wanderers, and has subsequently scored three goals in two appearances for the Essex side. Left back Akenhurst likewise played

two FA Cup matches for Hastings against Erith and Belvedere in September, and indeed scored the winner in the replay at Pilot Field, but turned out last Saturday for the E&B team at Herne Bay.

Agutter will no doubt have been cheered, on the other hand, by Barnes' recruitment over the summer of two of his previous Hastings proteges, Adam Lovatt and Davide Rodari, both of whom seem likely to stay as key members of the United team. Lovatt had spent the last three years as a squad member of - or, more often, out on loan from - League 2 club Sutton United. Rodari, similarly, signed for League 2 club Crawley Town in January 2021, but was given few first team opportunities and sent out on a series of loans. Each was initially launched by Agutter into senior football with the 'U's while still a teenager; now each, at the age of 24, has the chance to repay their manager's early confidence,

albeit at a lower level than they may have hoped three years ago.

First match of Agutter's new reign was at Margate, where Hastings gained a morale-boosting 2-1 win over the home team. He fielded a starting eleven which differed on only two counts from the team which Barnes had selected for the previous Saturday's 0-2 defeat at Billericay: TT Walters coming in for Ibrahim Bangura and Ollie Black replacing Craig Stone. It's not clear at the time of going to press whether Stone - who had been acting as Barnes' assistant but will not continue in this role - has played his last game for the 'U's. If so, his absence will be a huge loss, having been arguably the most consistent defender and also leader of the team both in Agutter's first reign and under Elphick. On the other hand, the return of Black, another whose teenage career at Pilot Field originated under Agutter, is a welcome plus.



Seagull team in Arena League contest at Dover

SWIMMING

Seagull Successes in the Water

Hastings Seagull Swimming Club are celebrating notable success at the recent Arena League competition in Dover. Round 1 saw six swimming clubs from South Division 1 East compete. The Seagull team of 29 swimmers, led by new club captains Lauren Crawford and Tom Youdale, put on a spectacular performance throughout the competition and finished in

first place with a resounding lead, 53 points ahead of Dover Life Guard Club in second place.

Euan Youdale, chairman of Hastings Seagull, said: "Achieving such a convincing first place in Dover is testament to the hard work and positive attitude of our swimmers, who swam their hearts out on the evening and did their club proud. As did our amazing coaching team, who played a key part in this success. Thank you also to the team managers and officials who dedicate so much time to the club."

Seagull's venue for Round 2 will be at the Prince Regent Swimming Complex in Brighton, the races taking place on the evening of Saturday 11 November. The third and final round will be contested in December.

Five of Seagull's swimmers - Eden Arnold, Imogen Magri, Lucius Waite, Harley Williams and Tom Youdale - were selected for the

30-strong Sussex ASA team competing in the Swim England county team championships in Sheffield last month. Two Seagull coaches - Sam Williams and Matt Page - were also recruited as team managers. Sussex finished a respectable 14th out of 20 in Division One, having been promoted the previous year.

"It's a huge honour to be selected to swim for your county," said Euan Youdale. "Well done to our five swimmers, who played an important part in Sussex's move up. From what I hear, the team spirit this year was second to none. Thank you to Sam and Matt for helping to create such a positive environment for all the Sussex swimmers."

■ For more on Hastings Seagull swimming club, including how to join, see their website www.hastingsseagullsc.org.uk

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