

Hastings Independent

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Hastings Independent Press



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FREE

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Naz Montag

BLOOM OR BUST?

“£100m” for garden town project, but council cuts still impending

HUGH SULLIVAN

The cabinet of Hastings Borough Council (HBC) met on 6 November to debate a very mixed financial agenda. They were reviewing a latest update of the various projects within the £24.3 million Town Deal programme currently going forward, and went on to contemplate the prospect of receiving £40m of further levelling up awards to be bestowed upon

Hastings from central government coffers over the next ten years.

But they were also on the receiving end of two sobering reports from the council's Chief Finance Officer, Kit Wheeler. A Medium Term Financial Strategy report which he presented to them shows a forecast £13.8m cumulative shortfall between council income and expenditure between now and March 2027, including £4.3m in the current financial

year, described as “completely unsustainable for the future going concern of the council”. A declaration of insolvency would be unavoidable without substantial spending cuts and/or sales of capital assets to bridge the deficit.

Leader Paul Barnett began the meeting by reversing the order of agenda items, he said, to accommodate the majority in the public arena who had come to hear debate on the Town Deal programme. So the

positive news came first. It was announced last month that Hastings would receive a further £20m to be spent on capital projects as a partner in the Levelling Up Partnership scheme promoted by DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), plus another £20m spread over ten years as one of 55 towns to benefit from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's

Continued on page 2>



7 ONE WOMAN FOUR FLOODS



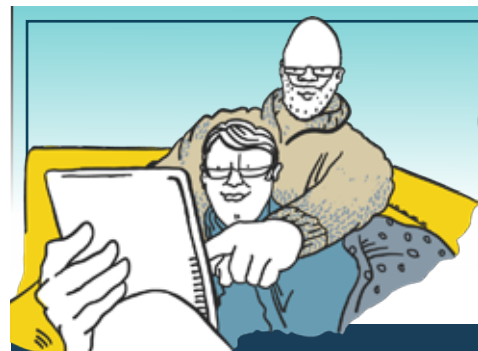
12 RISING TIDES



27 WINNING WAYS

THE HIP LIST >

13 4-PAGE EVENT LISTINGS GUIDE



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NEWS

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Shorter days, longer paper! There may be no precise correlation, though perhaps there's more going on in Hastings now that the clocks have gone back and Christmas is on the horizon. Some things, though, have a weary predictability. Winter means rain, and rain around here means flooding. Do read the tragic tale of a South Terrace homeowner who was inundated yet again (p 7). See also our regular feature Clean Water Watch (p 8) and political reaction in Letters (p 6). And don't miss the double page feature from David EP Dennis who has taken on an unenviably wide brief overseeing Bexhill's Wild Domesday Project which will include research into the town's water and sewage. Thank you to all of you who have contacted HIP. As ever we rely on you for news, comment and reaction. So please keep it coming.

On a more cheerful note, why not immerse yourself in the warming music of the saxophone in the Arts section (p 20 & 21) and if you ever doubted that 'community' is alive and well, read the fascinating profile of Day Levale and the Lifted Up Community Choir (p 23). And while we are on the subject of the human voice, there's a world record waiting to be broken for singing upside down. It's currently held by Hastings' musician Mike Hatchard who is also interested in beating his own time of 6 minutes for playing the violin topsy-turvy (p 24).

Alternatively the best way to keep warm and dry without a rush of blood to the brain may be to head to HIP's Christmas Party and Fundraiser on December 14 – see the announcement on p 18. We'd love to see you there.

< Continued from page 1

Long Term Plan for Towns. Deputy leader Cllr Maya Evans, who is the council's portfolio holder for Regeneration, told her colleagues that the £10m allocated for the garden town project from Town Deal funds is just "phase one".

She spoke of the garden town regeneration covering an area of the town centre "two or three times bigger than what we plan at the moment,, and described it as "now a £100 million project". To get to this figure she said that "we'll do our best to claw funding wherever available". She made strong suggestions that Southern Water should be first in line to contribute.

"Housing, health and culture are the lynchpins which will inform our levelling up projects," Cllr Evans concluded. "Hastings is transforming, and everyone needs to benefit... It's a turning point in history, a really big step for the town."

Fellow cabinet members piled in with enthusiastic support. Cllr Barnett described the current town centre as "awful" but assured his listeners that it "will look completely different in a couple of years time". Cllr Andy Batsford said that this kind of transformation "is what we get involved in local politics for". Cllr Judy Rogers seconded Cllr Evans' motion "to continue to progress the implementation" of all Town Deal projects. It was universally approved.

BUDGET DEFICITS

Then came the presentation of the two reports outlining the council's financial predicament. An immediate monitoring survey showed that



Naz Montag

HBC is now heading for a total overspend of £3.4m on its current year budget (which already anticipated a £0.9m deficit) as a result of the rise in homelessness coupled with salary increases across all departments in line with a nationwide local authority pay settlement. Recently appointed Head of Housing Chris Hancock told the cabinet that the trend of people needing temporary accommodation had "stabilised" but that development sites for new housing had been delayed – viz. at Harrow Lane – so that "we won't make our target".

Mr Wheeler went on to present the red-ink figures for the following three years amounting to the cumulative total of £13.8m. "It's a very big deficit we need to address."

Cllr Barnett commented that councils all over the country had "lived in hope" for more than ten years – "those hopes have been dashed." Hastings, he said, had "become a popular location as a creative, exciting and 'dressing-up'

town", but that success had itself produced a housing crisis, exacerbated by the government's failure to stop evictions under Section 21 of the Housing Act. "I've come to the conclusion that it's time to be really pessimistic... We're not going to be bailed out. We have to take responsibility."

A motion was passed under which the council is to halt any capital expenditure that isn't a statutory responsibility or will lead to demonstrable revenue savings. It will look to identify further capital assets to be sold off. Savings in service costs will need to be found so as to balance the budget, with a focus on reducing expenditure on temporary housing.

Full Council should "note the actions to address the budget deficit and, if no conclusive savings [are] identified, that the issue of a Section 114 notice [a formal declaration of insolvency] will take place in 2024/25".

So bloom or bust? Or both?

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HASTINGS TIDES

DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 17 NOV	H0:45am	L7:43am	H1:00pm	L8:01pm	7:16	4:08	
SAT 18 NOV	H1:31am	L8:25am	H1:52pm	L8:47pm	7:17	4:07	
SUN 19 NOV	H2:26am	L9:14am	H2:57pm	L9:43pm	7:19	4:06	
MON 20 NOV	H3:31am	L10:16am	H4:17pm	L10:53pm	7:21	4:04	QTR
TUES 21 NOV	H4:46am	L11:34am	H5:42pm		7:22	4:03	
WEDS 22 NOV	L0:17am	H6:06am	L12:58pm	H6:58pm	7:24	4:02	
THURS 23 NOV	L1:32am	H7:16am	L2:07pm	H8:00pm	7:25	4:01	
FRI 24 NOV	L2:34am	H8:13am	L3:06pm	H8:51pm	7:27	4:00	
SAT 25 NOV	L3:28am	H9:02am	L3:59pm	H9:37pm	7:28	3:59	
SUN 26 NOV	L4:18am	H9:48am	L4:48pm	H10:19pm	7:30	3:58	
MON 27 NOV	L5:04am	H10:32am	L5:33pm	H11:01pm	7:31	3:58	FULL
TUES 28 NOV	L5:47am	H11:14am	L6:14pm	H11:42pm	7:33	3:57	
WEDS 29 NOV	L6:28am	H11:55am	L6:53pm		7:34	3:56	
THURS 30 NOV	H0:21am	L7:07am	H12:35pm	L7:29pm	7:36	3:55	

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

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Beef About Wellington

DEBORAH RIPLEY

Since arriving in Wellington Square in late 2016, I've witnessed firstly a gradual and then, more recently, a rapid decline of Wellington Place opposite. I knew I was embarking on life in a town centre with all that goes with it – being very close to a connecting road and the noise levels of week-end nightlife that continue into the early hours. But had I known that Wellington Place would turn into a food delivery hub, I'm not sure I would have taken the risk.

I and other residents at the lower end of Wellington Square and York Gardens are now subject to the monstrous sound of motorbike and scooter riders who have modified their exhausts and/or engines entering and exiting Wellington Place at all times of day and late into the evening delivering food. Some ride quiet electric bikes or scooters. However, some choose to have their vehicles tuned up to the highest volumes, and enter and exit with no care for those around them, neither residents, local traders nor pedestrians.

Additionally, they ride with impunity through the no-entry signs at the junction with Albert Road and park up during the times when motor vehicles are prohibited. More than once I've heard a small child scream in shock and fear as a bike pops the exhaust at ear-shattering volume.

The proliferation of delivery riders has attracted other bike riders who join them, comparing

vehicles and their capacity for noise. The area opposite Poundstretch has become a bike hang-out on some days, continuing late into the evening, long after the food outlets have closed.

PLANNING PROPOSAL

East Sussex County Council has the responsibility for regulating traffic and parking on the streets of Hastings, including maintenance of the area of Wellington Place, York Gardens and the bottom of Queens Road, which is supposed to be pedestrianised, between 10am and 4pm. Last month, following a consultation on access and parking hours over several months with local traders and residents, a proposal was put forward at a meeting of its planning committee to extend the prohibition on driving and parking within this area to 9pm. This change would not have solved the problem outright, but would certainly have been a big step in the right direction, and it seemed to gain general support. Local ward councillor Godfrey Daniels is a member of the committee and spoke in its favour.

The proposal was rejected, however, because there was apparently a single objector – not identified, but impliedly one of the fast food outlets on the block – whose opposition would have forced a public inquiry, under the procedure adopted by the council, into all the traffic modifications being debated. So that was that: a public inquiry isn't going to be held any time soon.

POLICE AND COUNCIL INACTION

In the meantime, my repeated reports to Sussex Police via Operation Crackdown – supported with good quality photos and video –

seem a complete waste of time, as I see no improvement and no one communicates with me. Vehicles, including those causing the most noise, enter and exit through the no-entry signs into the paved area of Wellington Place at all times of

day and evening. This is surely illegal. Motorbikes and cars, parked at times when motor vehicles are prohibited, not only never seem to get parking tickets, but appear to be ignored by ESCC parking control.

Hastings Council Environmental Health closed my most recent case with no feedback to me at all. Calls to 101 have had little effect as I seldom get the promised call back. In fact, I often feel I am the problem, taking up police time when they have 'more important' affairs to attend to.

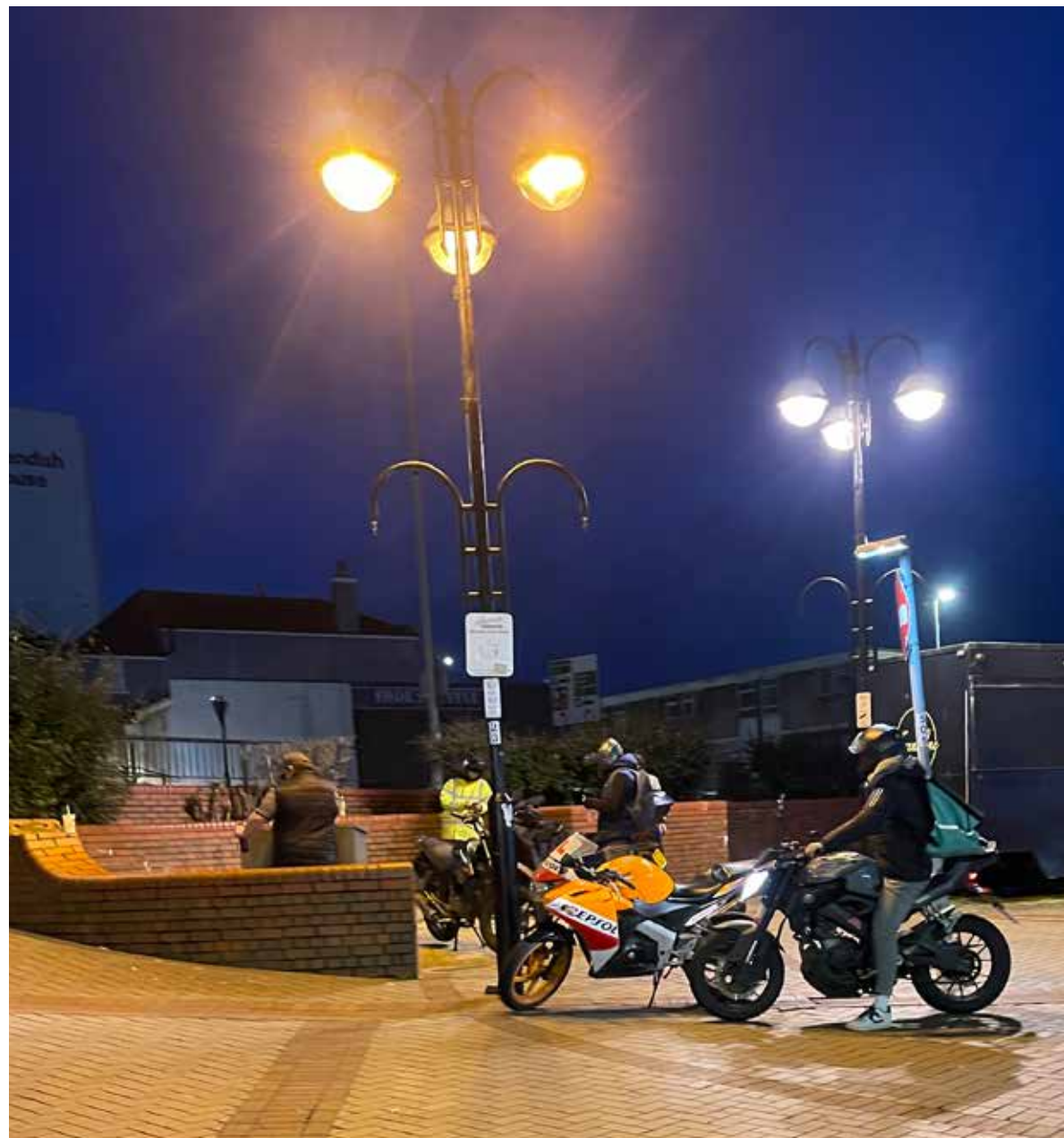
Following a comment I made about a community policing meeting for our ward on a Facebook post, I miraculously received a call where an officer promised a meeting would be arranged in early September. I heard nothing further. Having formed a resident group with over ten neighbours who are affected by these problems, we continue to press for change.

I'm well aware I'm living in a town faced with severe economic

challenges and lack of opportunity. I recognise the need for employment, both in the food outlets and as delivery drivers. And I concede that there are quiet and respectful bike riders here, who cause no problems.

But I'm sure that the partial exemption for traffic to enter the area to load and unload was never intended to enable the fast food economy, with its relentless noise level, pollution and physical impact, to dominate the street environment.

Other local authorities across the country – including, to my knowledge, several London boroughs and the towns of Dartford and Canterbury – are grappling with similar problems. But in Hastings we residents are being ghosted by the very agencies that should be supporting and looking after us, which is utterly disheartening and depressing. I feel trapped in a triangle of unrelenting noise and disruption, ignored by those who could make a concentrated effort to improve the quality of our lives.



Snowflake Meltdown

From 2006 The Snowflake Trust has operated as a charity providing shelter and physical support to those in need in Hastings and St Leonards. Between 2011 and 2020 the Trust's Winter Night Shelter offered immediate temporary shelter at a series of rolling locations to people who would have otherwise been sleeping rough on the streets.

In 2020, taking account of the Covid pandemic lockdowns and social distancing edicts, central government became seriously concerned at the risk of people

contracting and transmitting the disease while rough sleeping, and sufficient public funds were provided to ensure that almost all homeless people could find temporary accommodation. Snowflake's shelter offer became thus, for a short period, effectively redundant. Instead, the charity adapted its support for its still precarious clientele by providing hot evening meals seven days a week.

It has done that over the last three winters. Earlier this year, it also opened a community café

– Igloo in Robertson Street – with the intention of staffing it with volunteers and applying all profits to the meal provision service. But Igloo wasn't the success that the charity trustees hoped for. It closed after only a few weeks, with chair Andre Crighton explaining to volunteers that lack of donations or other funding made the venture unsustainable.

Sadly, Mr Crighton has also announced that, due to the ill-health of a number of the trustees and the need for the others "to stop, rest, regroup and recruit", the winter provision of hot meals will also be suspended for this winter.



NEWS

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West Hill Road Landslide – Whose Responsibility?

HUGH SULLIVAN

On Sunday 5 November, after days of heavy rain, there was a slide of rock, debris and mud down the slope below West Hill Road that affected one or more properties on the Marina road below.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) were summoned in the early afternoon to assist. They say they provided safety advice to residents of Marina, and contacted a scaffolding company whose poles were being affected.

Seven hours later, at around 9pm, there were reports of a further landslide affecting properties at both the top and the bottom. A structural engineer attended the site, and a police drone and helicopter were called in to help assess what was occurring.

Residents were briefly evacuated from 11 properties in West

Hill Road, according to an ESFRS spokesperson, though most were swiftly invited to return. Two properties, understood to be at No 61, were still apparently vacated at the time of going to press.

There is a distance of over 50 yards down the slope between these properties and the back yards or gardens of Marina below. This cross-section of land is covered in dense scrub, though the slope immediately below No 61 is gouged bare as if by watercourses. The whole area has a history of instability arising from its geology of sandstone layered with silts and clays. The risk of landslides and mud flows increases with water penetration.

A footpath known as Sussex Steps, which formerly ran down through the area from West Hill Road to Caves Road, collapsed in 2002 and has never been reinstat-

ed. Further east, a memorial garden containing a burial tomb for James Burton, founder of St Leonards two centuries ago, has subsided and remains closed to the public.

Most of the area below West Hill Road is designated as Caves Road Cliffs local wildlife site (though, apart from rabbits, it's not clear what zoological life enjoys the terrain). But who, if anyone, owns it? A spokesperson for Hastings Borough Council stated last week that the council is not the owner and "so has advised residents directly affected to contact their insurers or landlord for further specialist investigation".

It seems frankly unlikely that any buildings insurers that have carried out due diligence on the potential risks will still be offering cover. Many substantial buildings on the south side of West Hill Road



Naz Montag

have been long abandoned – Gambia House and West House, in particular. Others cling on with apparent fatalism: No 65A has adopted as its property address 'Cliffhanger'.

One exception, however, is a five-storey residential building erected within the last four years at No 59A. Planning permission was granted for this in December 2018, subject to a condition that "development shall not commence until a full and adequate Land Sta-

bility and Soils Report has been submitted and approved and measures taken". This report concluded that risks of subsidence could be minimised by using a piled foundation system and erecting a retaining wall in order to protect any garden to the rear. The property was duly built. No one seems to have been required to consider whether the building might affect land stability below the property.



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Northeye Purchase: £9m Private Profit Revealed



Jeff Newnham

A private finance enterprise, Brockwell Group Bexhill LLP (BGB), has made an astonishing profit in its dealings over the former Northeye prison site on the western edge of the town.

Land Registry records show that on 11 August 2022 BGB bought the site for £6.31 million from the UAE government (which had been using it for some unexplained military education purposes until around four years ago). The Home Office has now told campaigning Bexhill resident Jeff Newnham, in response to Freedom of Information (FoI) requests made by him, that it paid BGB £15.3m for it just 13 months later.

In 2019, Rother District Council's Local Plan allocated the site for the development of 140 homes, 30% of

which were to be affordable housing, along with sports fields and a children's play area. The Plan called for "a Green Infrastructure framework and landscape-led masterplan". One has to assume that the price paid by BGB in 2022 took due account of this potential for residential development.

But on 29 March this year it was announced by Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick that the Home Office was planning to buy the site in order to provide accommodation for up to 1,200 male adult asylum seekers instead. The proposal was justified principally on the ground that it would be cheaper for the Treasury than the spiralling costs being incurred in accommodating them in rented hotel rooms.

Press investigations subsequently put forward evidence not only that the buildings on the site were in a squalid state, but that the ground around was also likely to be contaminated with asbestos. Any demolition or other major re-fit would involve a huge clean-up bill.

Nevertheless, on 21 September, according to its FoI response, the Home Office – having by now indicated that the site would be used as a detention centre for asylum seekers rather than as voluntary accommodation for them – proceeded to complete its purchase of the site from BGB. The £15.3m price netted the beneficiaries of the private partnership a profit of just under £9m, accrued without any

appreciable input on their part.

Mr Newnham, who leads a campaign entitled *Save Northeye*, which opposes the use of the site either for accommodation or detention of asylum-seekers, commented: "There is no logical geographical reason why Northeye, in one of the UK's most expensive areas for land, should ever have been purchased by this government. How did it allow itself to be sold, at taxpayers' expense, a site so wholly inappropriate? A site where the only real beneficiary seems to be the vendor, which made a whopping £9 million profit."

He is continuing to pursue a legal challenge against the Home Secretary – now James Cleverly rather than Suella Braverman – to halt its proposed use.

In the meantime, the separate campaign group *Bexhill Stand Up To Racism* (SUTR) held a public meeting at the Little Common Community Centre on 30 October under the title 'Refugees welcome – Stop Northeye – Build homes not detention centres'.

Among many speakers to an audience of around 50 attendees, Mark, a local resident, highlighted the positive role of migrant workers and refugees, particularly in Bexhill. "The Rother District Plan has always been to turn the Northeye ex-prison into housing", he said. "That's what we need, affordable housing for working people, wherever you are from."

Daniel Rushby of SUTR concluded: "We know that the government are scapegoating refugees in a desperate attempt to blame others for their own failures. Refugees should not be arriving in small boats, they should be given safe passage, just like the Ukrainians. Our campaign against racism continues. We oppose the plans for Northeye and welcome refugees."



Bexhill SUTR meet at Little Common Community Centre 30 October

ALL TO THE HALL!

NOV

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18th

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FAIRBENEFIT
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NEWS

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WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

Letter

BENEFITS INJUSTICE

Your excellent article *Huge Holes in Benefits Safety Net* in HIP 238 described the terrible state we are in in this country, with people falling through the safety net all the time.

I admire the work that Jacky Everard and her team do for people in need and on benefits at HARC. What she does not say is how compassionate staff are, and how deeply upsetting and stressful it is for them to see so many people struggling. It is indicative of what the country has come to in 2023. Over 40 years, need has increased by a factor of 12 - 18,700 people seen each year now as compared to 1,500 four decades ago.

When a wealthy Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, says living in tents on Britain's streets is a 'life choice', she reinforces hateful attitudes in the wider populace, and stigma spreads. This applies to all people in need.

In 2021, when I could not walk and needed a wheelchair, I was shocked to find the unhelpful East Sussex Disability Service was outsourced and run by a profit-making private company who take public money. Our taxes! When I sought help for

the first time ever in retirement, and after 42 years of work and paying NI and tax, this outsourced company made a wrong assessment on a form. I sought advice from HARC who pointed me in the right direction to complain. I got an apology and an immediate offer of a wheelchair, but not before much stress. Luckily for me, a Hastings friend, Felicity Laurence had meantime surprised me with the gift of a wheelchair.

In September, award-winning Guardian journalist Simon Hattenstone wrote an article about a disabled single mother of two in the south east trying to manage on Earning and Support Allowance (ESA), whose benefit and housing support was stopped all

together. She had filled in a new form to let the DWP know she worked "16 hours a week".

I was horrified at her predicament. I wrote a Freedom of Information request to the DWP. I asked them three things. Had they changed the wording on the part-time work threshold rule, to 'less than 16 hours' and, if yes, when had they done this and had they informed people? Eventually I got an answer: yes, it had changed in February 2023, and no, they had not informed individuals. CAB and other agencies websites were automatically updated, but the DWP refused to say what it had changed from, "as this was not recorded". It was an easy trap. People who had been used to writing '16 hours work' and not 15 hours 59 minutes or less, fell into it. Luckily I found a clue in a Northern Ireland Gov website, which in 2022 had said that ESA claimants "are permitted to work for up to 16 hours". That is different from "less than 16 hours". I reported this to Simon Hattenstone and the Guardian.

Slights of hand like this work towards meeting Chancellor Hunt's goal of saving £1.3 billion on DWP budgets. Yet, at the same time, the government talks of reducing the top tax threshold for higher earners. Cruelty and injustice reign supreme.

Rosie Brocklehurst

Letter

FLOODS – THE LIB DEM VIEW

Dear HIP

For the second time recently Hastings shopping centre has been flooded, causing great distress and economic damage.

The latest incident was at a time of heavy but not wholly exceptional rainfall. I understand that some years ago an underground retention tank was constructed to prevent flooding, but it is clear that either the design or the operation of the system has failed again. All those affected are

entitled to know why.

Hastings and Rye Liberal Democrats call for a public inquiry into the flooding to find and rectify its causes and hold to account those responsible. Nothing less will satisfy a public which is entitled to know the truth.

Martin Griffiths

Chairman, Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats

Letter

RADICAL SOLUTIONS

Dear HIP

Demolish Priory Meadow and convert the site into a new home for Hastings United Football Club. The pitch will help absorb excess water. Move the retail businesses into the Debenhams/Owens building to create a multi-story shopping centre. Three problems solved.

Fiona MacGregor

Letter

A DONKEY RIDE

Dear HIP

I was a passenger on the 100 bus to Hastings yesterday. I was sitting at the end of the back row. A male passenger was sitting at the opposite end. Suddenly two women got on the bus with a donkey.

There are five seats in the back row with four seats facing us, and very little space between all nine seats. The two women and the donkey sat next to me. It was young and excited and difficult to manage. Its behind was pressed up against me, and I was straining against its weight and size as it kept pressing. I am barely five foot tall, slim and 82 years old.

The journey felt endless, very uncomfortable and SMELLY. At last, as I was getting off at Harold Place, I spotted lying in the passageway a piece of poo. It could only have come from that excitable animal as it came in

I had overheard the mother

saying earlier to her daughter that they were "entitled" to use the bus with that animal.

And that is the crux of this story. ENTITLEMENT! That is the prevailing attitude nowadays. Not RESPONSIBILITY to consider others but ENTITLED to act in whatever way suits you.

Of course I understand the animal was actually a HUGE dog. But it was the same size as a donkey.

These women took up the space of five people and the rest of the space could not be used. I expect the donkey travelled FREE.

Is this at all fair?

Joyce McLeman

Letter

PAYING ALL OVER AGAIN

Dear HIP

Well done for holding various organisations to account for the state of the water supply and waste water treatment industries in HIP 238.

Congratulations especially to Ben Bruges for *Water Woes* – the detailed analysis of the shortcomings of the water supply industry and Southern Water's part in particular. It should never have been allowed to get like that.

And now, as customers, we are going to be asked to pay all over again for the debacle, and wait years for things to improve.

Keep up the pressure.

Haydon Luke.

from our website

FORCED ENTRY

I've had occasion to email Sally-Ann Hart several times over the past two years. She never, ever replies. I get a stock reply from some clerk. Even when I specifically requested a response from the MP, who is accepting a huge salary paid for out of our taxes, this was ignored.

Helena Wojtczak

from our website

So many of the holes in society's safety net are only drawn together by the work of organisations and individuals like Ms Everard and her team. There's a fabulous team in Rye too. Thank God for their work, that's all I can say... I don't know where our community would be without them. But I do know we need things to change...

Guy Harris

Letter

TAKING A BUS IN THE RAIN

Dear HIP

Standing under the bus shelter at Bexhill's Ravenside Retail & Leisure Park, along with 20 or more people, some with prams and pushchairs laden with shopping and children. The bus shelter is totally inadequate. It offers a canopy possibly 4 by 1.25 metres that is open on 3 sides. It is situated between open fields and countryside and the nearby sea. The bus shelter at the back is open to all weathers. The rain came lashing in from the fields, those that could get under the canopy were drenched from the waist down. Others stood in the rain (umbrellas are totally useless in in this situation).

The 98 bus came after 20 minutes. Everyone was drenched, bags of shopping sodden too.

Here is a very busy retail park with M&S and other major outlets. The bus stop is always full with mainly elderly people and families with young children. We deserve better. The bus should actually pull into the retail park where a proper shelter could be built serving hot tea, coffee and buns, free if the bus is cancelled, or more than 10 minutes late!

I have written to Stagecoach accordingly.

David Quay

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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Photos: Sarah Lake



One Woman, Four Floods, No Justice

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING
investigate one woman's struggle with Southern Water

In the last edition of HIP (238), much was written about the seeming incompetence of Southern Water and the filthy cost of it. But we decided to zoom in on the way this blundering company has wrecked the life of one particular woman. We are well aware that numerous people and businesses have their own stories of watery ruin, but sometimes one person's experience brings the wider problem into sharper focus.

GROUNDHOG DAY

In 2003 Sarah Lake bought a property to let in South Terrace. The rental income was going to be her

means of surviving financially. It was a sensible little plan. But now her plan and indeed her financial life has been devastated. Her maisonette has been flooded four times in just over two years. Inevitably, she is angry, upset and wants to know why it keeps on happening. In her words, "I am stuck in a weird Groundhog Day." The blame appears to lie with Southern Water, who have had responsibility for that whole watercourse since 2019. It is very hard to escape the view that the company is either incompetent or callous. Or both.

The consequence of their apparent negligence is that, of course, she cannot rent or sell her property but she remains stuck with the mortgage, the council tax and all the other expenses. Her income and

outgoings simply do not add up, and she is now sliding into debt. Inevitably, it has also affected her mental health, leaving her with serious anxiety issues leading to a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. When we spoke to Sarah she was clearly very upset, to the point of tears. Nevertheless, quite remarkably, she is engaged in a battle for compensation with Southern Water that would exhaust most lawyers. But, as she said, it is almost impossible to talk to the right person at Southern Water, "they push you from pillar to post and just grind you down."

For their part, Southern Water have not admitted guilt as such but their approach seems to almost imply it. They paid for a complete refurbishment of the property to the tune of £82,500 but the recent floods have simply ruined it all again. Insanely, this was the third time they have paid for repairs. Even more insanely, they have spent almost as much as the property was worth before the floods.

ABSURDITY ON TOP OF INSANITY

The most recent flooding in late October took the water levels up to about ten feet in the basement and very nearly drowned the poor tenant's dog. They even paid for Sarah to have psychiatric help, as if her very real money worries could be sorted out by a few chats with a shrink. These handouts cannot alter the fact that Sarah's finances are ruined and, worse still, it seems highly likely that the flooding will just happen again and again. Even the water company must surely see that refurbishments of property with the current drainage situation is absurd.

The apparent incompetence of Southern Water comes with a sinister edge. Sarah has been told that if she takes her story to the media, they may, in their words, "withdraw goodwill." There is surely a whiff of blackmail about such an approach.

Just before the recent heavy flooding a report was published

into the problems of the drainage system, produced by the engineering consultancy Ardent, commissioned by East Sussex County Council. This report states that "Southern Water confirmed that they installed the manhole in 2019" and that it repeatedly "surcharges," which we assume is engineer-speak for bursts off. The most extraordinary part of the report is probably the line that says Southern Water has "yet to locate documentation" which shows what flood risk assessments were undertaken when they took over. Either they didn't do an adequate risk assessment or they have perhaps, conveniently, lost the paperwork. Astonishing.

THE LONG SEARCH FOR COMPETENCE

The way forward for Sarah is at present hard to perceive. She does not have the wealth necessary to wage a long legal battle with Southern Water. Unless the drainage system is changed, it is likely that floods will just keep happening. A visit to the road shows that although the manhole has been sealed up and tarmacked over, the road itself is so full of cracks that more bursting points are probable. Sarah says many people just glibly shrug and mumble about global warming. There may be something in that, but the critical thing here seems to be that the whole drainage system under South Terrace needs immediate attention with a view to increasing its capacity, so that it can cope with changing circumstances. It is surely a problem that competent engineers can solve.

■ *We wait to see if Southern Water can discover some competence. If they could also find some humanity, they should stop the quasi-bribes and cough up a full compensation.*



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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*.

TOWN CENTRE FLOODING

We are all aware that there is little trust between the public and the water companies and the recent floods just added to that view. At a cabinet meeting on 6 November, the leader of the council, Paul Barnett, said: "I was unimpressed on the day of the floods with the response of most of the agencies we've been talking to over the last two years about water problems." Those affected in the town might have reacted more strongly (see page 7, *One woman, Four Floods, No Justice*).

Cllr Barnett went on to say that those agencies had now all stepped

up to make new commitments to resolve this matter and make Hastings a priority. He also reassured people watching the meeting live or online that "we're in a stronger position now than we were two weeks ago, both short term and in response to any future emergencies."

But lessons learned and commitments made can be quickly forgotten; especially when the root of the problem is a complex web combining lack of commitment, poor communication, deliberate obfuscation, lack of resources and underinvestment within and between the various agencies involved. Trust should be earned.

We will continue to watch developments.

SEWAGE CONTAMINATION GROUP (SCG)

At the same meeting, Myriam Lengliné of SCG asked a question about the lack of warning signs in the gill, something the group have been asking about since the pollution incident in May this year which promoted action from local residents. Poor communication and obfuscation appeared to be at the heart of this brief exchange. The question had been prompted by a meeting in the gill between Laura Morden of SCG and an envi-

ronmental officer at the Environment Agency (EA). During the meeting he apparently clarified that, as riparian owner of the gill, it was the council who were responsible for putting up signs after the spill on 14 May.

The response from Cllr Paul Barnett was significant: "If we put up a sign saying the water is not safe, that could be very difficult for our relationship with the EA." This despite strong evidence from the EA testing downstream from the gill and residents testing in the gill that there are high levels of E. coli. Speaking next, Cllr Ali Roark pointed out that HBC has a commitment from SW for an ecological survey of the gill following a meeting the previous week.

This hints at politics coming before the safety of the public, their pets and wildlife in the gill. As well as poor communication and obfuscation, it also raises another issue already mentioned: under-resourcing. This seems a likely reason that an 'ecological survey' from SW is, even now, just a commitment, and the EA appears unwilling to undertake such activity.

[Within the bylaws for Old Roar Gill Nature Reserve Section 2, Areas of water (x) "committing any act

which pollutes or is likely to cause pollution of any water" is prohibited.]

TEST RESULTS FROM CWAG

As if to underline the pollution/testing problem, here are the latest results from the citizens group, Clean Water Action (CWAG).

St Helen's Down (Pelham Beach – direct outfall sample):

8,200cfu/100ml for E. coli and 5,300cfu/100ml for faecal streptococci (a strong sewage smell noted at the site)

Coombs Hastings (Goat Ledge – surrounding water sample):

7,200cfu/100ml for E. coli and 800cfu/100ml for faecal streptococci

Seaside Road Hastings (West Marina Beach – direct outfall sample):

>1,000,000cfu/100ml for E. coli and >360,000cfu/100ml for faecal streptococci

NOTE:

Safe E. coli levels for bathing water quality are <500cfu/100ml and faecal streptococci <185cfu/100ml

Pink Star Pilates

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING investigate the P word

We should admit something: we thought Pilates was just another variant of yoga, probably a branch of transcendental PE first inscribed on palm leaves by a flexible Brahman eleven thousand years ago. We were so wrong. In fact, Pilates was created by a twentieth-century German ex-boxer – Joseph Pilates – who became a prisoner of war in a British camp during the Great War. Whilst interned he developed a system of exercise that kept him in incredible shape. Inspired by this, and the fact that we are feeling a bit decrepit – knees not working and weird foot-swelling issue – we decided to give it a go and so we enrolled in an introductory class.

TRAINING WITH THE QUEEN

To be honest, we struck lucky. Our teacher was Claire Mason, from Pink Star Pilates in St Leonards, and she proved to be a brilliant tutor. We spoke to her after our last class to see how she got into the highly toned world of Pilates.

She said that it all started when she fell over about fifteen years ago and broke her arm. The rehabilitation programme involved Pilates and she was smitten. She then undertook training in London under the guidance of a woman that The Times has called "the Queen of Pilates", Lynne Robinson.

As a teacher, Claire manages to be both quite precise but also sensitive to individual weaknesses or health issues. She took us through all the basics, carefully explaining that posture and breathing come first but also that the exercises gradually develop core strength. It's not really about feeling the burn, more about getting your spine and your muscular system to mesh together. The key is not masochistic agony but listening to your body. Turns out bodies have a lot to say.

ROLLING AND UNROLLING

You don't need a lot of equipment: a mat is enough, and Claire provides them if you don't have one of your own. She is very good at demonstrating each move, many of which have memorable names like 'the

Cobra', and then she will offer you little bits of advice as you attempt to become a human reptile. Actually, 'the Cobra' and 'the Cat' are extremely good at rolling and unrolling your vertebrae, and after class you can genuinely feel your body in a different sort of way. Bits of you that you don't normally use are brought into the moves.

Claire is keen to point out that Pilates is not about losing weight: it is not a fat-burning sort of exercise. And it's not about spiritual enlightenment. It doesn't come with all that mystical baggage. It's much more focused on the body as a piece of complex engineering that needs regular attention – little and often.

A WHOLE NEW BODY?

She does admit that you can become a little obsessed with it. Her partner says she sometimes becomes the "posture police" – keen to critique anyone and everyone's bodily composure. It's certainly easy to see how you can become obsessed with Pilates. Joseph Pilates claimed that "in ten sessions you will feel the difference, in twenty you will see the difference and in thirty you will have a whole new body." We don't seem to have whole new bodies just yet, but it is certainly true that it boosts your



Pink Star Pilates

Claire Mason showing how it's done

mood, and to be honest we have only done four classes so far – so maybe we just need to be patient.

What we can say is that Claire is a wonderful teacher, mixing good

humour with a sharp focus on the overall aim. Perhaps the biggest compliment we can give is that we have signed up for more sessions, en route to bodily perfection.

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Hastings Helps Hastings

ROBIN GRAY explains.

The 'Hastings Sierra Leone Friendship Link' has been working since 2003 to improve the lives of the residents of another Hastings over 3,000 miles away, in West Africa. The little town was virtually destroyed during the Rebel War in the 1990s and appealed for help.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Combined churches in Hastings & St Leonards (known as the LOAF Project) rebuilt thirteen simple bridges, and The Link has continued that work, helping the local people to build a community centre and to extend and refurbish the Health Centre. Perhaps the most amazing development has been the dozen school partnerships which have led to global curriculum work, teacher exchanges and the setting up of 'school farms'. Starting with a donation of seeds from Battle Horticultural Society, The Link has funded a project that now involves some 30 schools in and around Hastings SL. The children

have taken to the theory and practice of raising food with great enthusiasm, and thanks to the country's warm, wet climate, they proudly produce more than one crop of all kinds of vegetables each year – either to improve school meals or to sell and raise funds for basic school materials.

A group of our teachers has just returned from Hastings SL where they spent their half-term holiday teaching in their partner school. Two members of the group studied the present state of sanitation in the schools, updating a survey that The Link had carried out before the Covid epidemic. We now have a clearer idea of what is needed. A reliable water supply may require a deeper well or borehole, and re-

pairs to a water-pump or the building of a water-tower. Most schools have utterly inadequate sanitation, which has a serious impact on the education of the children, especially girls. This will be a huge and expensive undertaking over time, so The Link's various fundraisers are vital.

FUNDRAISING FUN

Recently, Sussex Brass gave a wonderful concert in Alexandra Park for The Link, and there was also a highly successful music quiz. The two fundraisers coming up are a cryptic quiz competition and a wine-tasting evening. (The questions for the quiz are easily obtained online at hastingshastings.org.uk or from the Community

Information Hub on the side of the Old Town Hall, off Priory Meadow).

This year's theme is 'In the Garden'. There are modest cash prizes, but above all, hours of brain-teasing amusement for the family over the Christmas holiday. The wine-tasting evening will be run by wine expert Ted Bacon at St Leonards CEP Academy, Collinswood Drive, St Leonards at 7pm on Saturday 9 December. It's a fascinating and convivial evening, and we'll sample wines that Ted suggests might accompany the different stages of a Christmas meal. The evening includes a raffle, a wine auction and a buffet supper. Should be fun.

■ Details and reservations from lynnwhi@live.co.uk

Thinking Inside the Box

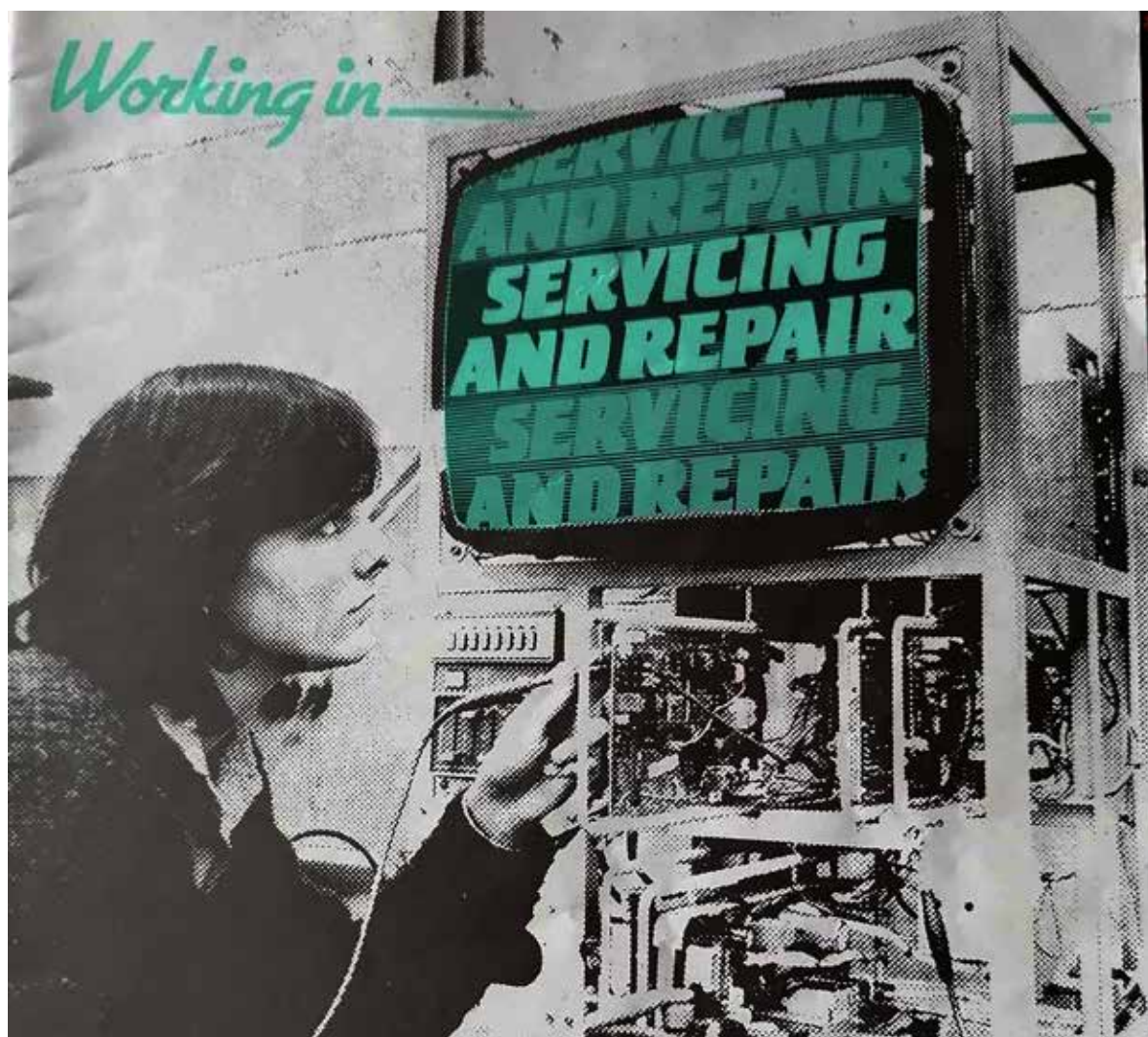
JUDE MONTAGUE uncovers a slice of Social History

I have been chasing history. Specifically, Hastings history. My research has uncovered the tale of the first woman ever to become a technical apprentice with Redifusion TV. In the 1970s Maureen Coutts found herself in a realm of work in which all the manuals and documents referred to 'he', 'him' and 'his', as if women had no place in this male world.

MAKING CHANGE

Many of us remember the Manpower Services Commission. It had been founded in 1973 to coordinate employment and training services in the UK, and it was to become responsible for the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) and Job Creation Programme. By the end of the 1970s and early 1980s its activities focused on the absurd catch that you couldn't get work without work experience. To help counter this, they produced a series of pamphlets to try and change social attitudes and increase opportunities for young people. For example, they wanted to encourage more women to enter the electronics industry. Maureen was chosen as the cover girl for a booklet, and it has some interesting detail about the jobs and what they entailed. The booklet brings us Maureen's voice and attitude from the era:

"I've always been someone who



fiddled with a screwdriver and undid things to see how they worked – I took my sister's sewing machine apart. So I went to further education college and did a full-time preliminary electro-mechanics course for a year. Then this company came to the college and recruited two of us as apprentices. I didn't find it difficult being the only girl on the course, or in the workshop. It depends on your attitude. You must speak up and make yourself known, ask ques-

tions – otherwise, no one will know you're there."

ADJUSTING YOUR SET

For the booklet, Maureen described the kind of jobs she carried out. She might be working on a test rig or a sub-set (subscribers' sets) that had been identified as faulty. The hardest mental work was to find out what was wrong for which a technician needed to examine the individual components on the board. Although the sub-sets

would come in with notes about what was faulty made by the field technicians, it was not always straightforward. The usual job would be to change the tube, but the fault would often not show. The set had to be run for a number of days which she called 'putting on soak'. The set had to be plugged in and allowed to run and heat up for days so that eventually the fault showed up.

Looking back, Maureen reflects: "All the men I worked with

had no problem accepting me – especially my small hands as I could get small things out of the backs of TVs when anyone dropped something in there." She was only criticised by one person – a female customer who rebuked her for "taking a man's job from him".

DON'T THROW IT AWAY

At the time Maureen was working, there were rapid changes in technology. There were no video recorders when she began her apprenticeship, but by the time the booklet was written, they had become the big thing, and Redifusion employed a VCR specialist in the workshop. But, what she never anticipated was that in the future, no one would get their TVs repaired, just throw them away and buy a new one.

In 1982 Maureen moved to Lancashire, where she explained her job experience and skills at the jobcentre. The woman working there looked her straight in the eyes and said: "Oh no, my dear, you don't do that up here." Yet on a bookcase there in the very jobcentre there was the MSC booklet with Maureen on the front cover, giving a shining example of a TV technician!

But Maureen took these attitudes with a pinch of salt. As she says: "I was always a bit of a tomboy and rode a motorbike. You had to be able to give as good as you got. Oh, and work hard."

■ If you have a story about technology in Hastings or St Leonards-on-Sea please get in touch. There will be an exhibition, *Spirit of Invention to commemorate a hundred years of Logie Baird's invention of television at the Electro Studios in St Leonards-on-Sea from 7-13 May 2024.*



COMMUNITY

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Isabel Hodger

Word Up!

NICK PELLING & HELEN MURPHY
find out about the town's new
adult literacy group.

Do you know an adult who struggles to read fluently? The difficulty is really not unusual. A recent national survey estimated that 7.1 million adults in England could be described as having poor literacy skills and 2.4 million can barely

read at all. Obviously, adults in this situation will find their life chances seriously curtailed; you only have to think of trying to apply for a job or simply navigating the internet to realise that many of life's roads will be blocked by difficulties with words.

Hastings has many people in this category, but a new branch of the charity, *Read Easy*, has recently been set up in the town, and it aims to offer help to struggling readers. *Read Easy* offers something quite unique: one-to-one

tuition, with no costs, no deadlines, and no 'pass or fail' style judgements.

UP AND RUNNING

We recently caught up with the Team Leader of the charity, Rob Hiley, to learn a little more about it. He told us about the origins of the organisation. The founder was Ginny Williams-Ellis, who first offered one-to-one literacy help to inmates in Dorchester prison. She found that this approach minimised any embarrassment or awkwardness and worked really well. She realised, however, that once people left prison the help simply stopped. And so, in 2011, she began the process of creating localised groups around the country. There are now about 80 affiliated groups. Rob explained that in order to set up a branch in Hastings, for the East Sussex wider area, an enormous amount of work, training and admin had to be completed. But, now they are very much up and running.

Although *Read Easy* is always looking for volunteers, the real issue at this early stage is finding

ways to reach out to struggling readers. Inevitably, people can be embarrassed to admit they have a problem, and maybe, if schools and other institutions have already failed them, as Rob says, "there will be a lack of trust or a shortage of self-confidence." And some people find ways of surviving in the literate world, and their coping strategies can also incline them not to come forward. *Read Easy* hopes to offer a non-intimidating approach with the sessions only lasting 30 minutes, twice a week and the venue being "a private space in a public place." There are no classrooms, as these would probably only reignite memories of a difficult school time.

SLIPPING THROUGH THE NET

There are many complex reasons for relatively weak literacy. Perhaps inevitably, it tends to be connected to poverty levels. In a table laying out income deprivation levels of 316 local authority areas in England, Hastings is 13th from the bottom. There are undoubtedly serious literacy problems here,

but accurate figures are hard to come by and so it almost feels like a hidden problem. But, poverty does not explain everything. As Rob says, there are "many ways to slip through the educational net."

Perhaps the most recently notable example of someone slipping through the school net without ever really learning to read effectively is Jay Blades, of *Repair Shop* fame. When he was at school nobody bothered to test him for dyslexia: he just blagged his way through. At the age of 31, he was diagnosed with the reading age of an 11-year-old. But, he sought help, and turned to *Read Easy*. His reading journey is movingly and brilliantly captured on a BBC documentary, which is well worth a watch on bbciplayer.

Read Easy is really only just getting started in Hastings. If you think you can help or help someone else in any way, or just want more information, the contact details are below.

■ For more information visit readeasy.org.uk/groups/read-easy-east-sussex.

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Power Station Campaign



Power Station Campaign

Hilary Powell and supporters outside their HQ

Power to the People

KENT BARKER

Will Hastings become part of the growing campaign to turn its streets and rooftops into mini renewable power stations? A number of local people have started to circulate news of other projects – particularly in East London – in the hope of generating support here.

The story of the Community Interest Company Power Station in Walthamstow is a quite extraordinary one. Two artists and activists, Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn, camped out on the roof of their terraced house throughout November and December a couple of years back to raise money and, perhaps more importantly, to raise awareness of their project.

Their goal is to install solar panels on 150 rooftops in their street and to make the electricity available to residents and local subscribers. So far they have raised £115,000 through Crowdfunder alone, enough to complete Phase 1 of the scheme with panels on 25 properties. The plan is to cooperate with other local organisations – schools, businesses, social housing and community buildings. As they say: “We got tired of waiting for the government to take action and responsibility ... we’ve seen the energy markets going crazy. 27% of

people in our own borough of London – Waltham Forest – are in energy poverty ... We decided we would set about building a renewable power station on our street.”

They calculate that with an average retail price of a 3kW solar system at around £6,000, and with just over 22 million houses in Britain, it would cost £133.56 billion to fit every one with solar panels. But that would meet 100% of all domestic electricity needs in the summer months, and nearly two-thirds in the winter. In comparison, Britain has nine nuclear power stations. The latest one being built is expected to cost more than £30 billion. On that basis, nuclear power stations ‘cost’ £270 billion and provide just 15% of our energy needs.

COMMUNITY SOLAR

The local model is already working in the United States with about 1,600 Community Solar projects up and running. There, it seems to be more industry-led with photovoltaic and renewable energy systems shared by a number of electric customers, including homeowners, renters, businesses and non-profit organisations. Electricity savings and other benefits from the solar project are split among its shareholders and solar subscribers at a rate based on the level of investment. It has required a change in the law, and shared renewables legislation – specifically for community solar – has now been enacted in 22 states, with others soon to follow.

In the UK, a Local Electricity Bill is currently making its slow way through parliament. It’s designed to enable local projects here to generate clean electricity and supply it both to local people and to the National Grid companies at a realistic price or, as the bill puts it: “on fair terms”. It would also require larger energy suppliers to

with them, they face an uphill battle and might be left with the situation facing Power Station in Walthamstow. They can finance or help get solar panels onto roofs but can’t sell surplus power back to the grid at a financially viable price, and they face formidable barriers even to share the power within their community.

Part of the attraction of Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn’s vision, though, is the empowerment of the disenfranchised. It’s a cruel irony that the people most affected by fuel poverty are those least likely to be able to afford the £6,000 for a renewable system. And, as they are more likely to be renters rather than homeowners, they have

any method of raising funds for the project, and it’s one that might well appeal to the artistic community in Hastings. The concept is simple. Invite artists to design and ‘print’ money and then sell this artwork and donate the proceeds to the project. So if someone created fifty £20 notes and sold them at face value they’d have raised £1,000. Buying a small work of art for £20 isn’t really much of a stretch, especially if you know it’s going to a good cause. And there’s just the possibility that the artist you bought it from will become established, and your banknote might become worth rather more. The antecedents of this idea came in 2018 when Edelstyn and Powell printed their own banknotes, sold them as art works and used the proceeds to buy up second-hand payday-loan debts at heavily discounted prices. This ‘debt’ – worth more than £1m – was stuffed into a van which they blew up near the Canary Wharf Financial Centre in London’s Docklands. Examples of their banknotes have been bought by the galleries and museums including the V&A and the Bank of England Museum, while a documentary about the project raised further revenue and has been nominated for awards.

It may be some time before they realise their ambition of getting solar panels on every house in Britain, but at least Hilary Powell and Daniel Edelstyn have made a start. And with the Local Electricity Bill making its labyrinthine way through parliament, they might just find they’ve hit the zeitgeist. As they say: “If the government really had the interests of the people at its heart and wanted to address the climate crisis and provide energy security, wouldn’t it concentrate on providing renewable, locally produced energy for all at scale and insulating all the housing stock?”



Peter Searle

Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn Rooftop Fundraiser

work with community schemes to sell the power they generate to local customers for a ‘reasonable’ fee. The parliamentary bill has cross-party support from nearly half of all MPs (326) including Hastings member Sally-Ann Hart. The campaign group behind the bill, Power For People, has also persuaded the government to provide a £10 million fund to help community power groups to start up and expand. However, until the big companies are forced to work

little or no incentive to improve their landlord’s property. Edelstyn admits: “only one private landlord is on board with the scheme so far, and it’s proving difficult to get others interested because – even if the costs are covered – they say there’s not much in it for them. After all, they don’t pay the fuel bill....their tenants do.”

PRINTING MONEY

One intriguing aspect of the Walthamstow scheme is a second-



FEATURES

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As well as being a regular HIP contributor, DAVID EP DENNIS has been appointed as Project Manager for Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council's Wild Domesday Project. One of his main areas of research is water: sewage discharges, sea level rises due to climate change, saturated ground water table, flooding and tide gates.

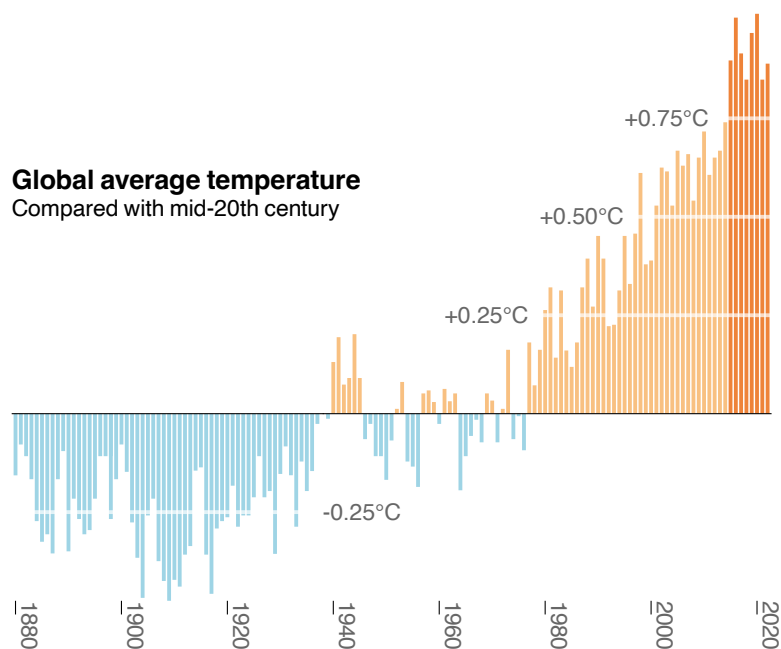
The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible for coastal and flood defence policy in the United Kingdom. Following recent talks with Environment Agency (EA) personnel, I have analysed the latest sea-rise/flood risk data from EA, the Met Office and NASA. Just like the tides, the situation keeps changing and there are no sacrosanct final figures but instead, estimates – the best possible scenario and the very worst.

throwing the remnants of its moraine in the form of shingle and flints into the centre of the 'English Channel'. These shingle beds have been mapped. Now that sea levels are rising, the first lines of defence are beach groynes and shingle banks. Since scientists believe that the global warming process will continue to at least 2300 no matter what we do, we need to focus on how we tackle the inevitable changes over the next 277 years.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES

Defending the coast from Eastbourne to Cooden Beach, including Cooden Beach Hotel (inside Bexhill Town Council's St Marks Ward), is the responsibility of the EA's Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme. There are 10,000 homes at risk. The area includes the Waller's Haven tide gates that allow excess

Global average temperature
Compared with mid-20th century



CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE GASES

Some say that humans are responsible for the damage being done to our wonderful blue planet and some deny this, pointing to the natural rise and fall in warm and cold periods over the last 800,000 years that brought on successive ice ages and catastrophic flooding.

After the last ice age began to melt some 600,000 years ago, a giant lake built up behind the Weald-Artois Ridge connecting what was to become England and France. There were two major incidents of lake formation. After 150,000 years the pressure became too much for the 100-foot-high chalk ridge and it became a giant waterfall that thundered for thousands of years and finally burst,

flood water from Pevensey Marshes to reach the sea at Norman's Bay.

From the Bexhill side of the Cooden Beach hotel, to the edge of Combe Valley in St Leonards-on-Sea, the responsibility lies with Rother District Council, not with Bexhill's Town Council. Combe Valley itself is a well-known winter flooding area. Like Waller's Haven it has flood gates at the interface between Filsham and Bo-Peep, the responsibility of the EA team at Worthing. From the east bank of Combe Haven to the cliffs at Rock-a-Nore in Hastings the responsibility is with Hastings Borough Council, helped by the EA. Once we reach Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach we are into the territory of the EA's Kent and South London Flood Risk Team.

SHINGLE DEFENCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Despite the eternal longshore drift caused by waves, the shingle cannot get around Beachy Head to Eastbourne and so the ice age shingle banks in mid-channel are being dredged to spread on the beaches of Eastbourne. The EA plan for Eastbourne to Cooden Beach will be researched and refined, with opportunities for public discussion until 2027 when work will begin to ensure that Eastbourne and Pevensey Marshes do not get flooded. The EA states that the main defence is to be shingle banks and groynes. However, it is obvious that if the sea does rise as predicted under mid- to high-scenarios detailed below, or if the almost endless ex-

traction of shingle gets too expensive, then some hard landscaping will be required and shingle spreading may stop. If it does stop, then, since nothing is coming around Beachy Head, the longshore drift will take all the shingle away from the beaches of Bexhill and Hastings unless it is replaced by the mid-channel resources or external area contractors. Worn or damaged groynes allow the sea to take shingle along the coast much faster.

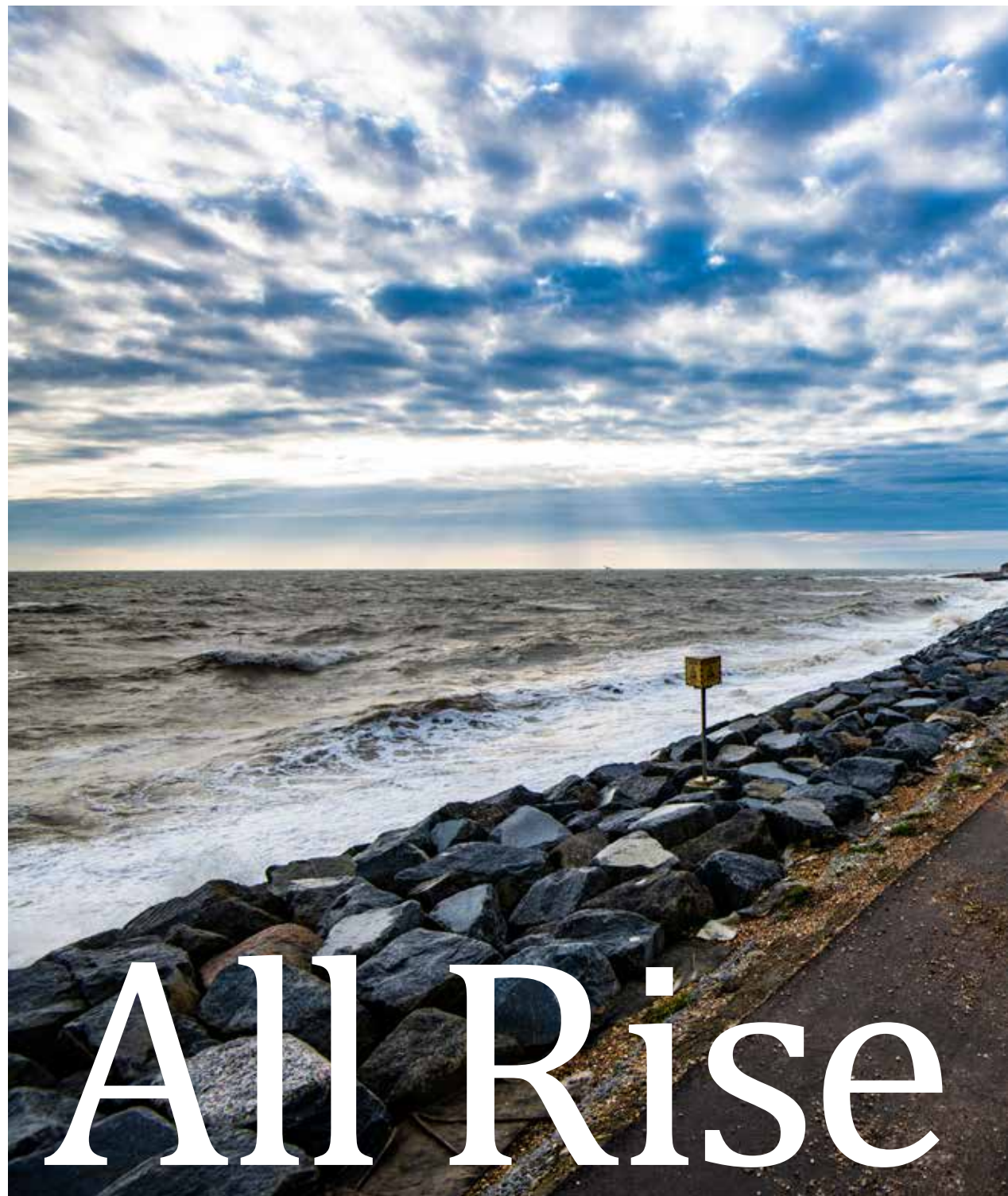
HOW HIGH WILL THE SEA RISE?

Scientists measure the rate that the tide heights are increasing. Two government official tide gauges are at Newhaven and Dover, with an additional tide height ra-

dar which was fitted to Hastings Pier in 2017. The Hydrodynamics Project Manager of the Channel Coastal Observatory at the University of Southampton's National Oceanography Centre monitors the Hastings Pier radar.

The National Meteorological Office, known as the Met Office, is the scientific department EA uses to assess how high the tides will become. The Met Office's Hadley Centre, which studies climate change, draws its data from many global and local sources. It states:

"New sea level projections... show a continued rise beyond 2100 under all climate change scenarios. Sea level rise is the dominant driver of increased coastal flood risk, both historically and in future projections of climate change. Individual





UK flood events are usually associated with extreme weather conditions, particularly the generation of storm surges, which can be compounded by the action of wind-generated surface waves. However, projections of changes in frequency and severity of future coastal extreme water levels are dominated by the long-term increase in coastal water levels associated with climate change."

THE MET OFFICE SETS OUT PREDICTIONS FOR 2100 TO 2300:

"For projections to 2100, the low-likelihood, high impact storyline could lead to an additional metre (3.2 feet) of global mean sea level rise and is associated with loss from both the Greenland and

Antarctic ice sheets. The implications for uncertainty in UK sea level projections will need further work because the impact of ice loss from Antarctica is more important for sea level rise around the UK than ice loss from Greenland."

For projections to 2300, the low-likelihood, high impact scenario could lead to global mean sea level rise of up to about 15m (50 feet). This storyline is based on possible widespread loss from the Antarctic ice sheet. Under this storyline, large ice loss from Antarctica would have an even larger impact on UK sea level rise. This highlights that we need to work with scientists around the world to better understand and monitor the Antarctic ice sheet."

So how much higher will the sea



The winter flood in Combe Valley Countryside Park SSSI

get on a calm day with no wind or storms? In the nearest area to Hastings under consideration – London – this is the situation:

"Under a low emissions scenario, the approximate Met Office projected ranges at Year 2300 are 0.5 to 2.2m for London. Under a high emissions scenario, this increases to 1.4 up to 4.3m."

Obviously, these figures will be much worse in winter when storms direct the wind onshore, especially during natural high tides and North Sea surges. Clearly we cannot afford to plan only for calm weather. In order to be safe we have to plan for the worst combination of circumstances and increase our civic resilience.

HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL EXPLAINS:

"Hastings has approximately 12km of coastline and has powers under the Coast Protection Act 1949 to carry out works to protect the coast from erosion. Major works were carried out from 1987 to 1991 to restore the defences and future works are planned to take account of predictions of sea level rise and climate change. The developed 5km frontage of Hastings and St Leonards is protected by a system of seawalls and groynes which help to retain the shingle beaches. To the east of the town are 7km of sandstone and clay cliffs which extend past the cliff top village of Fairlight to the low-lying land at Pett Level, both of which are in Rother District Council. The cliffs are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and for the 5km within the Borough of Hastings there is a policy of no active intervention, and the cliffs are left to erode naturally."

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

At present the strategy is to defend the coastal railway line using giant

blocks of granite (see photo). The rest of the coast from Eastbourne to Rye Harbour, apart from any cliffs, will be defended by shingle and groynes. Councils may be short of money or in debt, and replacing groynes and heaping shingle is expensive. If global warming continues at its current rate, then gradually the low tide sands and beaches will disappear, the tide will come in far more quickly and the sea will almost always reach the sea fronts. The coastal towns will not want their sea fronts to be protected by giant granite boulders, so they may have to develop cosmetic solutions involving hard landscaping such as walls and higher sea fronts. There is time to plan, but the cost will be a problem. Other concerns will be public acceptance and planning consents. Inter-tidal wildlife will be affected, and I have already received a complaint from a fisherman about the removal of mid-Channel shingle. Furthermore the coastal path at Bridge Way to Glyne Gap, St Leonards, is already at risk in winter due to waves and cast shingle.

WHAT IS TODAY'S STATE OF PLAY?

There is no shingle at Camber, just blowing sand, because Rye Harbour's storm beach and sea wall stops the shingle moving to Camber. Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach has its shingle heaped up to a six-foot wall, initially making it impossible to get safely onto the beach. On a second visit I found that the sea had quickly softened the profile and reduced the protection. Hastings and Bexhill have shingle and some granite blocks, but many groynes are worn, and some are so low as to be useless.

Combe Valley Countryside Park and Crowhurst Village on the Powdermill Stream come under the authority of the EA's East Sussex

Partnerships & Strategic Overview Team, Flood & Coastal Risk Management, Solent & South Downs Area at Guildbourne House in Worthing. Combe Valley suffers from summer drought but is a winter wildlife paradise with a giant lake (see photo).

The Combe Haven tide gates have to be shut at high tide and EA have told me that they do not believe in pumping excess water over the tide gates so hinterland winter flooding will become more severe. However, my personal view is that this is a mistake because Hastings Shopping Centre was once a harbour and so was Combe Valley, and Pevensey and Romney Marshes were once the sea. We may be forced to pump water into the sea at high tide to get rid of flash flooding despite the cost of installation, operation and continued maintenance.

Furthermore, EA warn that the cellars of homes along Bexhill Road at Bulverhythe should not be used to store equipment as they will flood. The EA explains that these homes were built so that the living room and kitchen floors would be above historic flood levels at all times – but not the cellars.

At Norman Bay's Wallers Haven, the tide gates will have to be shut for longer so the water table on Pevensey Marsh will rise to flood levels. The groynes at Waller's Haven are so worn away that the shingle is already being stripped off the beaches.

There may also be a temptation as costs rise for agencies and local authorities to vie for shingle and take it off the beaches instead of the centre of the English Channel.

All this would take many years to come to pass if the sea was always calm and there were no storms. However, because the climate is now more chaotic than usual, anti-flooding measures are even more vital. In the mid to long term, people will have to adapt to a different Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings with significant sea defences, making beach holidays difficult, and the stripping out of coastal paths, cycleways and sea edge housing due to erosion.

Humans have adapted to climate change for thousands of years and modern detection systems are superb. Yet there is no doubt that on current data, our children and their children will have a very different time when they go to the seaside. Even if we don't have sufficient political will or motivation and even if people do, or do not, believe in climate change, change is coming. We need to be ready for it.



SPECIAL

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Invasion of the Dead Cats

ROBIN HOLTOM was struck by a line in the evidence of Dominic Cummings to the Covid Enquiry: "At one point in the autumn he [Boris Johnson] told me to figure out how we 'dead cat' Covid."

It's not hard to track down the reference. In 2013 when Mayor of London, Johnson wrote a column for the Telegraph describing the 'dead cat' as a piece of Australian political strategy:

"There is one thing that is absolutely certain about throwing a dead cat on the dining room table – and I don't mean that people will be outraged, alarmed, disgusted. That is true, but irrelevant. The key point, says my Australian friend, is that everyone will shout, 'Jeez, mate, there's a dead cat on

the table!' In other words, they will be talking about the dead cat – the thing you want them to talk about – and they will not be talking about the issue that has been causing you so much grief."

The 'Dead Cat' concept is becoming a well-known strategy



employed by politicians to distract from a more serious issue which they do not want to discuss. Politicians, of course, traditionally try to avoid answering direct questions. Often they answer questions they have not been asked to confuse their interviewer. The dead cat strategy is yet another level where the politician introduces an entirely different topic which provokes another reaction altogether.

A particularly shameless case occurred recently when a junior minister was speaking on TV to defend Matt Hancock's record as Health Secretary during the pandemic. He argued that the cabinet was completely overwhelmed at the beginning and had at one point even been advised that cats might spread Covid. Denmark culled 17 million minks in response to Covid-19 and the thought of a dreadful massacre of thousands of innocent domestic cats drew the audience's attention away from considering the facts of Hancock's management of the pandemic. The trivia of many headlines in both newspapers and on social media suggest to me that we are being invaded by dead cats from many directions most of the time.

These weapons of mass distraction are a threat, since in this universe of curated information, it is becoming more difficult to debate policies in a straightforward way. Perhaps we have mislaid the art of debating altogether under the torrent of unedited or lightly edited fast moving information. We no longer attempt to investigate the provenance of much information because the means to do it are complex and time consuming; and so we are tempted to fall back on unchallenged and over-simple opinions – often very polarised

opinions familiar from our own small bubble.

'Bread and Circuses' have been the distraction strategy for governments to control a passive population ever since the Roman Empire. The modern circus of 'celebrity' is a particularly seductive dead cat. Donald Trump himself appears to be an ambulatory deceased feline. He never proposes a policy but just elaborates more and more dead cats so that he is completely camouflaged by them. Politicians have, of course, always emphasised particular characteristics and created a brand for themselves – Churchill's cigars or Wilson's pipe for example – but now we are in new territory where there are no actual policies but only disruptive sound bites and slogans.

Doubtless in the past, politicians wished to disguise their unpopular moves with various distracting ploys, but the current avalanche of dead cats makes almost no policy discernible. This suggests (if one is at all curious or sceptical) that there are a great many unpopular or suspect policies beneath these disguises. Perhaps all sensational and disruptive acts are dead cats? Spectacular political demonstrations, terrorist actions, invasions of other people's territory by powerful armies, regime change, could these all be mere distractions? If so, distractions from what exactly? This sense that there is something behind it all which is not good, in turn, nourishes any number of proliferating conspiracy theories.

At the same time, it should be remembered that disruptions frequently have beneficial consequences. Donald Trump and Osama Bin Laden were disruptive but

so were Socrates and Jesus of Nazareth. Disrupters cause roughly equal consternation both in favour of them and against them. Which may be why they sometimes end up being executed. Otherwise they would not be disruptive, they would simply be moderate reformers. But it is very difficult for people to experience disruption without taking one side or another, and consequently disruption often helps to polarise the situation. As to which side is ultimately right in the broad sweep of history, who knows?

I find that staying with the tension created by these polarities, though very difficult, can be rewarding. By resisting being drawn into a ferocious judgement on one side or another one can achieve the 'Negative Capability' which the poet, John Keats described as follows:

"It struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

The notion of negative capability – which should be distinguished from a compromise or balanced view – seems to me not unlike the Buddhist notion of non-attachment ... resisting being drawn into an oversimplified discourse. The "irritable reaching after fact and reason" that Keats mistrusted combines with the instantaneous nature of social media to facilitate the polarisation of opinions and make this capacity for negative capability more difficult to develop. Nevertheless, such a capability is an excellent antidote to the invasion of dead cats and perhaps it is the only antidote. Too often we are drawn into fixed opinions often based on the loudest fashionable voices. These are, in turn, underpinned by bland orthodoxies or by popular confected outrage rather than consideration based on our own experience.

The psychologist, Carl Jung, was asked once if there would ever be a nuclear war. His answer was that it would depend upon the number of people who could withstand the clash of opposites in themselves. If enough could, we would just survive and if not, our civilisation would be destroyed like many other civilisations have been destroyed before. Like negative capability, withstanding the clash of opposites is easier said than done but may be more than just a poet's insight. It may be a practical necessity.

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ARTS

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Cold Night, Warm Sax

VICTORIA KINGHAM at Barnaby's on a new jazz night

Storm-tossed nights in Hastings aren't the best portent for an evening out. After a flood, on the cusp of the winter, there's a definite hibernatory air about the sea front, the town centre, the shopping precinct. How pleasant then to spend an evening at Barnaby's Lounge, friendly and warm with a splendidly eclectic atmosphere, an upstairs gallery for activities and art sales, a slightly-out-of-tune upright piano on which stand two lamps made out of old trumpets, carefully removed just before the performance.

If all this sounds slightly kitsch, well maybe it is. Ironic and self-aware, obviously. But there was nothing kitsch about the two excellent musicians, Liam Noble and Geoff Simkins, who took us through a fascinating range of numbers via their own unique musical relationship and technical



Geoff Simkins and Liam Noble

pro prowess. As in many jazz performances, that musical closeness became more evident as the evening progressed, and the last three or four numbers showed massive technical ease, joy in collaboration, and a rare ability to state melodies almost incidentally.

What melodies though! The first set was bounded by two classic jazz

standards – *Stella By Starlight* and *How Deep Is the Ocean*. In between were Ellington and Burrell numbers, and *Grace Under Pressure*, one of guitarist John Scofield's more complex tunes (fiendishly difficult to play), but this duo bounced through it with aplomb and a great deal of imaginative invention. Hemingway would have been delighted

at the musical homage his words had inspired.

After the interval came a version of Chopin's stately prelude no. 20, given a particularly un-stately but original treatment. The tune that came next – Scott Colley's *Is What Is*, is based loosely on *What is This Thing Called Love*. Somewhere in the cascading torrents of notes I think I heard four bars stating the first phrase of the original melody. The composer of this variation is currently gigging round New York City with the great drummer Brian Blade, and is up there with Joshua Redman, Mike Brecker, Chris Potter and Blade himself, as one of the great American improvisers. Simkins and Noble performed it with consummate ease, following it up with a frenetic version of Duran Duran's *Save a Prayer*, and a Stan Getz tune that segued elegantly into the haunting folk tune *Blackwater-side*, for me one of the highlights of the evening.

A jazz duo performance, without drums, is necessarily going to put pressure on both artists. Noble's piano style, despite its harmonic adventure, is percussive, and Simkins played an elegant vintage Selmer alto sax with a lovely fruity, furry tone. His father,

he told me, gave it to him on his eighteenth birthday and he has brought it quite recently out of retirement. The pair are skilled in the art of listening to one another, the rhythm never let up, and neither did the originality.

This was a first venture into the Barnaby's venue for Hastings' local jazz impresario Reggie Hendrickse, and it was a great success. The eponymous Barnaby is the brother of the well-known saxophonist Josephine Davies, who also lives locally. Like Davies, both Simkins and Noble teach at Trinity Laban music college. Simkins is quoted as saying "jazz, and music, is trial and error and we have to experience it for ourselves. So I think that I can act, hopefully, as a guide, as an advisor, somebody who can point the way for people." After a lifetime on the British jazz scene he is still inventing, still progressing, searching. Noble is younger but is equally as dedicated a teacher. A remarkable evening, British jazz at its best.

■ sussexjazzmag.com/geoff-simkins-interview
trinitylaban.ac.uk/study/teaching-staff/liam-noble
facebook.com/BarnabysLounge

Zero Gravity

VICTORIA KINGHAM on Dorsay Alavi's exceptional biopic of Wayne Shorter

March of this year saw the death of an extraordinary musician, and another small piece of magic went out of my life. A unique talent, a unique spirit, admired and adored by musicians, friends, relatives – the Newark Flash (so named by Lester Young on first encounter with his magical ability) was a once-in-a-century phenomenon.

Most people, when asked if they can name a jazz legend, will say Miles Davis, John Coltrane, maybe Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie. Fewer of them will name Wayne Shorter. Yet he was one of the most original and influential jazz composers of his lifetime, and had a musical career that lasted from his teenage years in the school band at Newark in the 1940s, to (in the twenty-first century) leading complex orchestral performances which intentionally made no division between the written and the improvised, that correspondingly

required only the most gifted musicians to play them.

His music was a background to my life during the early 70s and 80s, less so in the frenetic subsequent years, until now. It is beautiful, unexpected, 'cliché-free' yet unforgettable, impossible to classify, sometimes opaque, always reaching out to express the hitherto inexpressible. "Hearing Wayne's music", affirms Herbie Hancock, "made you question what music was."

CREATE LIKE A CHILD

There would be little point in a long exposition of Shorter's achievements here. Others have done this, in a raft of obituaries. Recently though, a brilliant friend, whom I have always considered a mentor, drew my attention to a superb documentary of Shorter's life, made shortly before his death but released this September, by Dorsay Alavi. It's an exceptional film, thoroughly researched, and faithful to detail, made with love. "Play music for the kind of world you want to create", Shorter told his fellow musicians, who were almost like his children. And Alavi's film, in a wonderful way, puts him in that world. He is perhaps the Picasso of music. His compositional skills were honed in the music department of NYU, but it



Tom Beetz

seems that by the age of 22 he could already play everything in every style. Like Picasso, an artistically essential factor for Shorter was to retain the ability to create and to think like a child.

The biography covers three episodes of Shorter's life, and intentionally makes little separation between the musical and the personal, individual events. "Wayne never really wrote a song. He's been writing a soundtrack for his life", was how it was described by one of his long-standing collaborators, off-

the-wall creative pianist Danilo Pérez. Alavi's documentary positions him absolutely within his own world with its joys and its tragedies, while at the same time showing his lifelong search for the world within and beyond each moment. "When he plays one note ... they're not notes any more, they're big galaxies, constellations", Carlos Santana says of his playing.

He had visual as well as auditory gifts: according to Joni Mitchell he was the only person able to interpret musical instructions

metaphorically, to think of swooping birds, empty rooms, lost horizons, and play them. The film correspondingly shows some memorable drawings he made of his wife and his children. "Talking to him you realised that not only was Wayne Shorter a genius, but that he assumed everybody else was as well", was the conclusion of bass player Reggie Workman.

COMPELLING VIEWING

A biopic as good as this is rare: it requires not only filmic knowledge but incredibly detailed documentation of its subject, their personal history, and the surrounding international history. Research that has probably taken ten years or longer is squeezed into three hours of compelling viewing: the result is to give us intimate insights into the long trajectory of the life of a human being who was convinced from a child that there was nothing he could not or should not be able to achieve. It is sometimes funny, sometimes heartrendingly sad, always illuminating. Further, it opens up and extends our understanding of what jazz music is, and what it can be.

■ *The three-episode film, Zero Gravity, is available free to watch on Amazon Prime. Go there.*



Crowning it All...

TOM BLASS on the Cable Street Rag Band

Jazz is a funny world. It has its deities of course: Coltrane, Miles, Bird, Monk, Billie and Ella *et al*, towering above mere mortals from their Olympian heights. Below that exalted circle is a denominational splintering, and while some jazz fans discern no contradiction between their loves for Bix Biederbecke and Carla Bley, for Ayler or for Engelbert, others are wedded to their sub-genres. Clamorous big band makes bop-heads wince. Bossa Nova is too saccharine for devotees of late Coltrane. Free jazz makes for incomprehensible noise to those for whom a beat and a key are indispensable aids to listening.

But *good* jazz is a breed that trumps all distinctions, and it is



Cable Street Band

in this category that Ewan Bleach's Cable Street Rag Band belongs, exultant at Decimus Burton's old show home of Crown House on St Leonards seafront.

The Cable Street Rag Band is described on Bleach's website as "Where Limehouse meets New Orleans". In other words, the street that gives the band its name is forever associated with the march against the Blackshirts in the 1930s, i.e. a good fight that still needs fighting. But his band's

tunes are not obviously pugilistic.

On his website, Bleach says that he "specialises" in the early styles of jazz, ragtime, blues and swing, and says his "interest lies primarily in old sensibilities of pre-war music... for dancing and romancing", which does sound a little schmaltzy at face value. In fact the event, which brought to life a wonderful medley, was executed with glorious brio but complete absence of past-wallowing or lily-gilding. They swung

through ballads and tight instrumentals with verve, lightness of touch, and a kind of musical honesty that brought them bang up to date.

Bleach's playing, both on tenor sax and clarinet was superb. And — if one might stop short of calling him a 'singer' — his voice suited the musical setting admirably and correctly. Double-bass (Harry Evans), trumpet (Lewis Taylor), and guitar (John Kelly) were all distinct and brilliant in their own right and as an ensemble, consummately-well coordinated and respectful of each other's playing.

The 'guest player' for the evening was St Leonards' own musical superstar, the violinist Max Baillie, whose exquisite — if ever so slightly diffident on this occasion — violin added a Grappell-like poignancy, wherever it contributed. The repertoire included familiar standards (*All of Me*, *Way Down Yonder in New Orleans*, *Bouncin' Around*) — and rarities by early Brazilian and Venezuelan jazz composers and other less-heard masterpieces, all of

which evidenced considerable research on Bleach's part.

But here was the thing: while the evening sipped, nay dipped, freely from past decades amid the cabaret-style setting, it served as a kind of reminder that, tempting though it might be to imagine otherwise, this was music that sprang not from innocence, but from periods of great unrest and change: racial inequality, economic turmoil, and the prospect, reality or aftermath of war. And somehow because of that, here and now, these old tunes seemed neither quaint nor dated, but curiously pertinent reflections of, or deflections from, a troubled age.

Chapeau to Baillie (who in this case was not only hired fiddle, but indeed the impresario) for bringing Bleach to St Leonards — and to Bleach for bringing his rag band along too. My sense was that everyone who attended really liked it. Body and Soul.

■ Ewan Bleach's Cable Street Rag Band played at Crown House, St. Leonards on Friday 3 November.

Pigfoot Play Ellington

BEN THOMPSON at EHSAA

"They never dance, some of them don't tap their feet, some of them are actually asleep... but still it's full every month?!" Such is the bewildered response of the Sea Angling Association bartender to the loyal clientele who flock there every cycle of the moon to sample whatever savoury smorgasbord of jazz the committed non-profit community organisers of Jazz Hastings have laid before them. Beneath its somewhat sedate outward aspect, this M&S pastel shades-clad gathering is actually one of the most receptive and open-minded regular crowds the thriving Hastings gig circuit has to offer, and while the admission price of fifteen quid might seem a little steep by local standards, it's a lot cheaper than Ronnie Scott's for music of equivalent quality, and you can save a train fare on the bar prices.

This month's guest quartet Pigfoot Play Ellington belonged in the very highest echelon of Jazz Hastings nights, alongside such stellar



Gregory Heath

previous visitors as the great South African drummer Louis Moholo and South London compositional visionary Byron Wallen, the only man to write a jazz concept album about Woolwich. For those with limited knowledge of Duke Ellington, perhaps perceiving him only vaguely as a suave old guy playing the piano with a big band, this show offered an exhilarating crash course in the oeuvre of a man who was, as a matter of informed consensus, one of the ten most significant and radical artists to have graced the 20th century.

Given the under-celebrated fact — local pub quizmasters pay atten-

tion here — that Duke Ellington played the last show of his extraordinary career just down the A259 in the unlikely jazz hotspot of Eastbourne, it was especially joyous to hear his music brought to such exuberant life here by an ensemble (James Allsopp on baritone sax and bass clarinet, Chris Batchelor on trumpet and Paul Clarvis on drums) which walked fearlessly in the footsteps of such storied Ellington sidemen as Harry Carney, Sonny Greer and Cootie Williams. The player in the real hot-seat was pianist Liam Noble, who, perhaps acknowledging the impossibility of precisely matching Ellington's elegant interven-

tions, threw a shopping trolley into the canal of collective memory by supplementing his fluid right-hand upright piano chord clusters with a left hand somehow picking out Zapp Band-tinged basslines on a farty Novation Bass Station synth.

To understand the level of technical challenge being undertaken here, readers are advised to pat the top of their hand with one hand and rub their stomach in a circular fashion with the other, while making themselves a cup of tea with their right foot. There were occasional moments — such as a version of "African Flower" (the sublime standout track on

Money Jungle, Ellington's great trio album with Max Roach and Charlie Mingus) which flirted with outright travesty — where Noble's heroic efforts seemed to invite one of Samuel Johnson's most celebrated retorts: "Difficult do you call it, sir? I wish it were impossible". But overall his fearless *jeu d'esprit* was the key to accessing the unmatched scope of Ellington's legacy, from the jaunty 1926 floor-filler "East St Louis Toodle-oo" through the Shakespeare suite with which he effortlessly overturned colonialist hierarchies of 'high' and 'low' culture, to the adventures in exotica undertaken on government-sponsored travels which were one of the most persuasive manifestations of American soft power ("Blue Pepper" from Ellington's *Far East Suite* was a particular highlight tonight).

Now moving into their second decade, Pigfoot's mischievous approach (previous touring shows have been dedicated to 1920s New Orleans jazz, the music of Elvis Presley and the sounds of 1972 — apparently the Dolly Parton segue was sensational) sidesteps the solemnity of illustrious reputations to access the playful spirit of the initial creative impulse. More power to their collective elbow.

■ Next month's Jazz Hastings event is the Darius Brubeck Quartet on 12 /December.



ARTS

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

Quiet Realism Makes a Noise

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING explore the David Tindle exhibition at the Kino Gallery.

When you think of British painters of the 1950s and early 1960s, there is a tendency to think of the bohemian Soho crowd who swirled around Francis Bacon in what became known simply as Muriel's Bar. The trail of great paintings, love triangles, alcoholism and suicides, of which their lives seem to consist, can make you think all of these painters are best defined by their commitment to carnality.

BAGGY JUMPERS

However, some of the painters of that era were not hanging out in paint-spattered baggy jumpers in a vortex of gay sex and bebop noise. In amongst this band of hedonists and self-destroyers, there were some painters who just quietly stuck to their craft. One such painter was David Tindle, an artist who - whilst strongly attracted to the magnetic personalities of Bacon, Lucien Freud, Keith Vaughan and John Minton - stayed true to his own vision. Russell Baker and Olga Mamonova have undeniably pulled off quite a coup



David Tindle: *Blue Bed Sheets and Pillowcase* (2006)

in putting together a retrospective of the work of this important, but rather neglected, survivor of that volatile period.

Russell told us of the time when he spotted Tindle outside his Kino gallery in 2009 and invited him

in; "as two northerners we immediately hit it off." Russell remains a friend and has even visited him in his current home in Italy. Baker says that he feels "privileged" to hear David's tales from the almost mythic Baconian world. Whilst

Nick Pelling

myth and fact may not always coincide, it is certainly true that this friendship has brought us a remarkable show.

LEAVING THE PROVINCES

David Tindle was born in the very unbohemian town of Huddersfield. He later studied at the Coventry School of Art and might very well have remained a little-known provincial painter in such environs. But in 1951 at the age of 19 he took a gamble. He moved to London and found work as a set painter in West End theatres. He was quite well regarded as such but what seems to have changed his fortunes was an out-of-character decision to reach out to quite a well known London painter, John Minton. Minton was both a great painter and an aesthetic networker. For whatever reasons he took to Tindle.

Minton knew how to connect Tindle to the right people. In 1954 Tindle achieved his breakthrough exhibition at the Piccadilly Gallery. The gallery was run by the slightly snooty gentleman collector Godfrey Pilkington, scion of the great glass manufacturing family. Pilkington hated the fashion for abstract work that was seeping into London from New York. Tindle was a realist and one can only assume Pilkington welcomed him as a very British antidote to American splatter.

NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

Tindle is still painting today at the age of 91 and, inevitably, a retrospective that covers at least seven decades leaves a sense of shifting concerns. His work in the fifties

displays the influence of early Lucien Freud. The deeply meditative *Broken Egg Shell*, painted in 1954, has the sharp kitchen-sink silent realism of Freud's *Girl with a White Dog*, from 1952. But the kitchen is not quite what it seems. It comes freighted with a curious atmosphere. As in so much of his work, people are absent but feel just out of the painterly camera. Works such as *Blue Bed Sheets* and *Pillowcase* carry a sense of a human bed story just hanging in the air.

Rachel Cooke, in the *Guardian*, was also onto a truth about Tindle when she spoke of his tendency to "play with realism". The scene of an unpeopled room, in the subdued style of a Gwen John, is familiar but almost too normal. Tindle himself felt that his work had a sense of a time half-remembered: of quiet moments slipping away.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN PAINT

The later work, such as *Two Young Women and a Stray Dog*, from 2017, have a feeling of distant viewing: like long swathes of contemplation on canvas. The painting style is somehow both thinner and deeper. No matter how one interprets the work, the wonderful exhibition brings you a kind of journey through a painter's life. As you wander around Kino, upstairs and downstairs, you slowly realise that you are inside one man's total commitment to painting. An autobiography in shades.

■ *The exhibition continues at Kino in Norman Road until 28 January 2024*

Wreckless Eric plays the Pig

JUDE MONTAGUE

On a dark October night, just before a storm, we stood on White Rock seafront watching for the main act to drive up. It's a great moment before a gig, full of nervous energy. Then there are the processes of getting the gear in, lifting it, setting up, sound checks. No tour machine, no hands were employed to help. We were doing this event ourselves, the biggest name we had put on here so far. Tickets had sold well, many to those who had been in the audience for the original Stiff tour, the stuff of legend. This turned out, though, to be far more than a nostalgic reverie.

Indeed, it was a thrill to be able to promote Wreckless Eric on his recent tour. Those of us who were there experienced something magic that evening. It felt like one of those occasions when you know you are witnessing an artist at the top of their game. Eric Goulden, aka Wreckless Eric, was born in Newhaven and brought up in Peacehaven, a land he once described vividly as full of bungalows. In Hastings, we gave him the welcome a native poet deserves in his homeland. I was relieved. I was proud.

Eric's new album *Leisureland* (Tapete Records, 2023) is inspired by life on the South Coast, by boy-

hood frustrations and dreams, by love of American music, by stories of ignorance and exploitation. He has created a fictitious town called Standing Water, full of the air of a decaying seaside - slot machines, seagull-shouty promenades, reckless wind and waves. This night he sang those songs. He's not an artist stuck in the past but a poet of the present, sharing his life experiences, evoking vividly the life of a small-town boy growing up in wild lands of bungalow outbacks.

Eric has been a prolific artist, and the last time I interviewed him he had released his (pre-Covid) album *Construction Time & Demolition*, perhaps a more free-form work. Eric appeared on *Later... with Jools Holland* (BBC) on Saturday 14 October 2023, singing not only his classic hit *Whole Wide World* (1977) but tracks from this, his nineteenth album.

I was moved by the live rendition of a song about Radium Girls in the USA, female factory workers who developed radiation sickness from painting watch dials and hands with luminous paint. The women ingested deadly amounts after being instructed to point their brushes on their lips to give a fine tip. The lyrics were delivered with passion and point. You had to be there.

VINTAGE ERIC

Eric played acoustic and electric guitar with a vintage valve amp turned way up. He was very much in control of his guitar sound, which was full and varied, and when he needed the effects, overdriven and saturated. As a one-man act he had a complete sound, honed by playing bars throughout the USA. In between the numbers he told stories of being on the road, the motels, the swimming pools, the wild, wide-

open spaces crossing from East to West, the depressingly visceral nature of modern America.

Young Eric Goulden, in his Peacehaven bungalow, looked to great American artists - Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen - for inspiration. That night I was inspired by this songwriter, who was born and raised down the road of my hometown, and consider myself lucky to have been that night in The Pig back room; there among the paintings of US independence that hang eerily around those walls, reflecting the legacy of that area called America Ground, once home to itinerants, radicals, and dissidents, considered 'outside'.

■ *Wreckless Eric appeared courtesy of Montague Armstrong at The Pig on Wednesday 25 October 2023. His album Leisureland (Tapete, 2023) is available now.*



Ed Barrett



Voice, Community, Uplift

VICTORIA KINGHAM talks to Day Levale about a life singing and building a community

Day Levale, choir leader, is deceptively slight and unassuming. Bundled against the rain in a cap and overcoat, I hardly recognise the man whom I saw last week energetically teaching the 80-strong 'Lifted Up Community Choir', a large, disparate (but enthusiastic) collection of local residents, to sing their parts for a big concert in December. "The main heart of this thing is community," he says. "We come together not talking politics, religion, or war, we're just singing together, enjoying people for who they are."

IMAGINE NO RELIGION

So when I ask Levale how far he would call this a religious venture,

he answers conclusively that 'religious' is a no-go word for him. "You learn, as you get older, that what people call religion is not necessary. Your life, living right, that's the religion. You just have to ask yourself, is it wrong or is it right? I lean towards Nature. God and Nature are one, and God and Nature teach you how to live. I do accept the add-ons, the cars and the aeroplanes and so on, but you can live without all these things. Religious 'habits' may have been taught to you as a child, but that doesn't necessarily make them right."

Levale was brought up in Hackney, North London. His childhood and teenage years centred around the Pentecostal Church headquarters in White Lion Street, Islington. He was immersed in this community, so much so that he tells me: "All our parents were shared. The

families were from all over – Birmingham, Luton, Hitchin – all the different branches of the church. I could go into any one of their houses and stay as long as I liked."

In his early teens the White Lion Street choir won a competition, and as a result were chosen to back the band Madness on *Wings of a Dove*. After that they were signed to Island Records as The Inspirational Choir, and appeared on the BBC programme *People Get Ready!* By then they were booked to venues up and down the country, riding by coach every weekend from place to place, supervised by two church elders *in loco parentis* wherever they went, meeting British dignitaries and royalty along the way.

Later, Levale wanted to better understand 'the formal side of music' and completed a jazz course at

Goldsmiths College. He also enrolled on another course which would enable him to teach in schools but "the interviewer said, 'I can't let you do it because if you do, you're going to be labelled in the system and you will only be able to do the work that the other tutors do. You won't be able to go into schools with your own projects,'" which was what he was already doing – teaching the teachers.

LONDON TO BRIGHTON

Disappointed at first, Levale understands that that refusal worked out better for him in the end. "It's weird. I started a choir in Jackson's Lane Community Centre (in Archway, North London) and 50 people turned up. It never got smaller! In the end I had to run two choirs there. Then I moved on to doing work in schools, and started choirs in Brighton – I spent years travelling up and down to Brighton from London running choirs twice a week, driving to Norfolk, driving home – we were young and strong then, we could do anything!"

"When I first came down to Hastings it was because I'd burnt out in London. I had a programme by then called *Sing Inspiration* and we used to teach in hundreds of schools across the country, then bring them together in the Royal Festival Hall or the Royal Albert Hall, so the choirs would be 500 strong, 1000 strong. As a team we'd be writing songs, performing songs, starting community choirs in Scotland, Brighton, Norfolk, six London boroughs. There were about 30 tutors and keyboard players all over the place teaching. We were doing a lot of work. And after doing that for so many years you just feel, I haven't done anything myself! I came away thinking I'd just get away from it, do something different."

TO BE CONTINUED ...

He laughs, since he is patiently growing a community here, though of a different kind. It started in St Leonards with just four people, and he said at the time that they would do a wonderful concert with 100 people. They laughed at him, which made him more determined that it would happen. Now he has at least 100 people between St Leonards, Bexhill, Eastbourne and Brighton. "Some people will come to all the rehearsals," he tells me, "and they can see the improvement."

About the material they would perform, he admits that "finding stuff that is suitable for this kind of group is a bit of a push, but you want people to strive a bit. With gospel, for example, I've taught

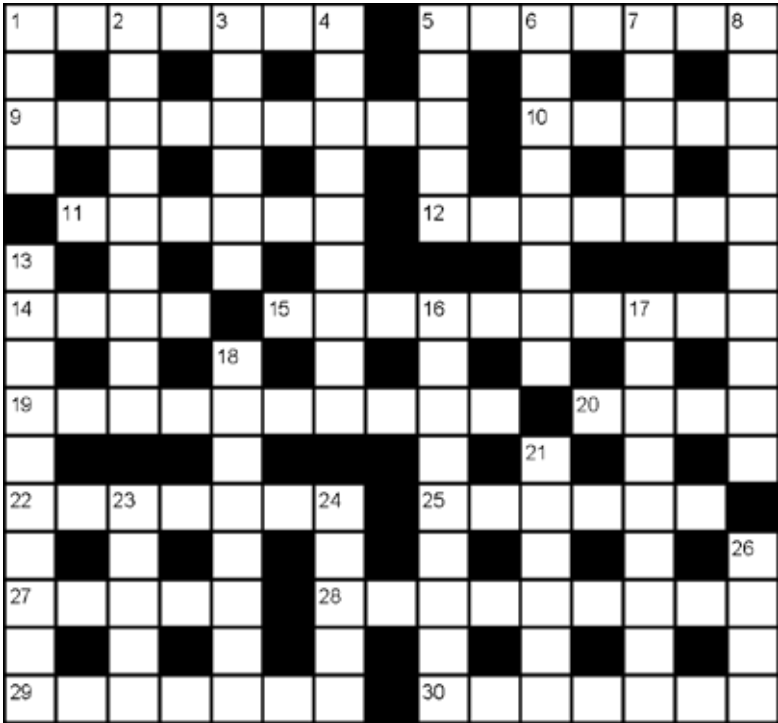
the choir different ways of expressing themselves. Soul music and gospel music are very different in their delivery." In rehearsals he sings the choir's parts to them in the exact way he wants them to sound, in falsetto pitch for the female parts. "So now," he continues, "people are saying 'oh, now I get why soul makes you feel one way and gospel makes you feel another' because it comes from another place. Aretha Franklin, even when she sings soul, it's gospel. Even though Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin used to hang out in the same neighbourhood as children – they were that close – the sound is different. And again, the British and American gospel sounds are very different. The accent as well – how much do you want people to sing in an American accent? You can't really sing those songs any other way. It's like, if you sing opera you have to learn Italian. The pronunciation is the music. We're getting through that struggle."

In past performances they have always added artists like Justin Brown, "big names to bring in the crowd. Well-known people on the gospel circuit. But things have changed a little bit, and we're not doing that. Also, I usually bring not only my own band but people from that circuit to do backing vocals. So for a fifty-strong choir, we'd use three backing vocalists to hold that tight sound. But we're not doing that either! We're taking on all the other stuff – I'm even limiting the amount of band that we use and the guy that plays for us in rehearsals, Nathan Whittington, will play at the concert. Which is unusual, but there's no doubt he's ready for it. The budget's just not there to do anything else but see how this goes. But I'm really surprised and happy with the results that we're getting. People are fighting for it."

"I write a lot of songs," he goes on. "It was great meeting Nathan here, because we can share the musical arrangements. We record them, get them together outside rehearsal time. I am sending them to a guy I worked with in London, Gareth Fuller [an award-winning choir master], who is going to come down and MC the concert and put the music together. He runs choirs in London, Northamptonshire, doing exactly the same thing as we were doing back in the day. The tradition goes on."

■ *The Lifted Up Community Choir will perform at the De La Warr Pavilion on Sunday 10 December at 6.30.*

Hanushka's Cryptic Crossword No. 4



EXPUGNATIO

ACROSS

- 1 He acts, with 100 tricky tricks (7)
- 5 Nerve cells, none sure, damaged without constant (7)
- 9 Disgusting bog, urinal at work (9)
- 10 Post follows drug electronically (5)
- 11 Careless about a girl (6)
- 12 Jazz ditties, the most well-finished (7)
- 14 Maniac rabbit swallows small wild apple (4)
- 15 'E's in a depression, skirting watery depression, depressed (10)
- 19 Distributors disperse around North and South (10)
- 20 Deeply involved, Nymph swallows part of the Bible (4)
- 22 Retarded, dim, model hesitates before master part way through session (7)
- 25 O, beam! A changing, ever-changing tiny creature! (5)
- 27 Outsize alteration round A55: gunfire (5)

- 28 Lots of balls, and a little ball: too much (9)
- 29 Submissive Pole is hot (7)
- 30 Model soared, causing sharp pain (7)

DOWN

- 1 Company takes 50 old pence for virus (4)
- 2 Protective pads can do, little bonnet askew in descending thoroughfare (5, 4)
- 3 After length of time, I go south – beautiful maidens (6)
- 4 Single women, befuddled, press tins (9)
- 5 Near model, after sunset (5)
- 6 Rigid, lacking a musical note, interminable (8)
- 7 Alligator, at evening, harnessed discourse (5)
- 8 Saul and I make lace on form of greeting (10)
- 13 Following a rogue, eastern vapours for philosophers (10)
- 16 Partake, with hesitation, in tropical bird (9)
- 17 Exalting toff on heather, topped by printer's measure (9)

- 18 Spicy sausage and pie prone to crumble (8)
- 21 Variegated albinos left out small tree (6)
- 23 Greek character elated, sorted without ecstasy (5)
- 24 Skulk around low church (5)
- 26 Noddy's PC? (4)



HANUSHKA COFFEE HOUSE are 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 26 November. Alternatively you may send to Hanushka Crossword, 39 Quarry Road Hastings TN34 3SA.



Peter Mould

Mike Hatchard: How Music Became an Extreme Sport

ROD WEBB

Mike Hatchard is at it again. He's not only a renowned musician and composer, but full of ideas for raising money. To celebrate moving into his 60th decade, he cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats towing an electric piano – raising almost £12,000 for Children in Need.

Despite a history of raising money for good causes, it was only recently that he became interested in breaking records. This came about when he was invited to take part in an event to mark the 10th anniversary of the Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year competition. Over a thousand artists of varying talent from around the world came together in the Lindley Hall, in London – and online – to paint Sir Lenny Henry. "In the hall the atmosphere was great. Nobody knew what they were doing, I found the chaos intoxicating. Easels everywhere!

This set a new Guinness World Record and got Mike thinking of others he could break. He found that the record for singing upside

down was only three-and-a-half minutes – later raised to four-and-a-half on live TV in India. But Mike wasn't daunted. "I knew I could do three times as long, so I thought I'd have a go at beating it." He managed 16 minutes live at the Crown & Anchor in Shoreham, raising over £800 for St Barnabas House Hospice.

His next cunning plan was to set a record for playing the violin upside down. He did a trial run online about a month ago and then live at a Bavard Bar event at the Towner – where, despite technical issues, he still managed about six minutes.

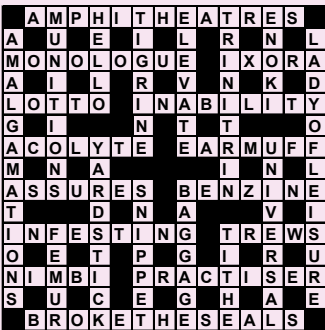
Then, at the Kino last Wednesday, he managed ... (not yet completed when we went to print). But we do know BBC South East has invited him to play for them after the News on Friday. And that he was then approached to appear on the *Children in Need* main show in Manchester! If they can get health and safety clearance, you'll see him performing there on Friday 17 November. "It should be pretty cool," says Mike, "I believe

they get an awful lot of views – scary."

If you're wondering how he does all this, bear in mind that he has a long history of performance, starting his career as pianist for the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, going on to play with the John Dankworth Quintet and working with the likes of the Chamber Ensemble of London. But his secret weapon is that he hangs upside down for about 30 minutes a day, to improve his bad back, and it's now become "quite a habit".

■ To donate to Mike's fundraiser go to tinyurl.com/yjaj4x6k

SOLUTION TO HANUSHKA'S CRYPTIC CROSSWORD NUMBER 3



WINNER OF HIP237 £10 HANUSHKA'S VOUCHER WAS PENNY BEALE



BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Weird Walk

By 'Weird Walk'!

PUBLISHED BY WATKINS BOOKS,
2023 RRP £19.99

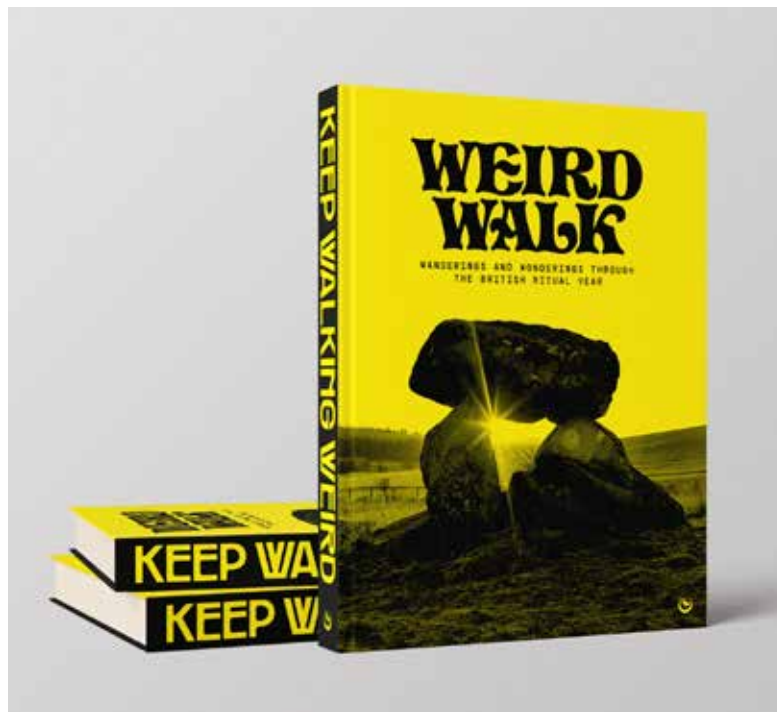
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

The *Weird Walk* zine has been selling well at Bookbuster for a while now, and has reached issue #6, as well as putting out one-off zines, *Magic Circle*, *Ritual*, and new-in, *Leyline*. But now they have gifted us a really lovely book. There is little overlap, though zine features get mentioned along the way, between book and zine. Naturally, though, the book follows the format and explores 'wanderings and wonderings through the British ritual year'. Author attribution is to itself, though I assume Owen Tromans is behind much of it.

Weird Walk, the book, is divided into sections by season, beginning with Spring. Under each section a selection of spooky places gets examined, and a short list of regional events to match each season is given. As you may expect, Hastings Jack-in-the-Green gets a mention in 'Spring', and the Lewes Bonfire in 'Autumn'.

A FOLKLORIC RAMBLING GUIDE

Choices of places to examine for walks are many and varied. Though predominantly sites chosen have neolithic stone circles or burial mounds, a number of 'weird walks' are through more recent landscapes. The definition of 'weird' is signposted by various other inherently vague concepts, such as 'uncanny', 'haunted', and 'liminal', essentially, you know it when you see / feel it! The pream-



ble describes the book as taking 'the form of a folkloric rambling guide; a gazetteer of the physical, historical, and magical landscapes of the isles, and the customs and traditions that arose around them'.

The zeitgeist is rich with references to 'hauntology' these days, and it is a key idea behind *Weird Walk*. Although coined by Derrida, it has become common usage through *The Wire* magazine's application of it to a certain brand of 'retro' 'spooky' music, such as Burial, Kode9, all the artists on the Ghost Box label, Delia Derbyshire and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop's 1970s radio and TV soundtracks, to name just a few. The late Mark Fischer popularised it, too. It is a close cousin to 'psycho geography', as exemplified by Peter Ackroyd's early novels, and the stories gifted us by occasional St Leonards resident Iain Sinclair, and Gareth Rees. The musician John Foxx recently produced a spoken-word album that, too, is centred on the hauntological and the psychogeographic.

AUTONOMOUS SENSORY MERIDIAN RESPONSE

Touchstones for the movement, if we dare call it such, are Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass*, and his *Stone Tapes*. Also, *The Children of the Stones*, filmed in Avebury and referencing the old Christianising custom of interpreting the stones as petrified dancers, as described in *Weird Walk* in the chapter on the nearby megaliths at Stanton Drew. In such cases the audio effects and music queues are a fundamental element of the atmosphere created. Many of us drawn anyway to neolithic sites such as Avebury and Stonehenge get a more or less 'tingling sensation that usually begins on the scalp and moves down the back of the neck and upper spine', peddled as 'autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) not only in visiting such sites – also described in the book, as 'an uncanny disruption' – but also from a shared nostalgia for these cultural tropes.

The book gives eight walks to each season. Here I will give ex-

amples, two from each season: Spring includes Cerne Abbas in Dorset and the Druid's Temple in North Yorkshire; Summer, Castlerigg in Cumbria and the hill of the White Horse at Uffington; Autumn, Coldrum Long Barrow in Kent and Fernworthy Forest on Dartmoor; and Winter gives us Wiltshire's Silbury Hill and the ultimate liminal zone after Dungeness, Dunwich Beach in Norfolk, of which 'it is said that if you find yourself alone at high tide...the bells on the sunken churches can still be heard ringing out from the depths'. Each site has a fascinating potted history given before the route of an actual walk is broached.

WE LOVE THIS WEIRD, DIVERSE, HAUNTED PLACE

There are excellent anecdotes throughout the book too. For example, the entry for Padstow notes that Edward Woodward, who starred in another hauntological touchstone, *The Wicker Man*, is interred there. In the Stanton Drew chapter the Worzels founder, 'North Somerset legend Adge Cutler', gets a look in. It seems only right that the chapter on Avebury references another superb book on our spookiest heritage, Julian Cope's *Modern Antiquarian*. The chapter on Castlerigg has a fascinating aside chronicling the trade in Langdale stone axes, giving us a brief glimpse of the reach of Neolithic trade routes. Many of the sites used for winter solstice rituals were much larger than you

might conclude from the remains we see today and we now believe people travelled to the most special of these, such as Stonehenge and Orkney's Barnhouse Neolithic Settlement, from far away, in the latter case possibly as far away as Norway, Shetland, and the Western Isles.

The Kent chapter speculates about ley lines and notes other nearby mythic sites along the Pilgrim's Way, such as Kit's Coty, and speculates that this ancient track may have extended through the Salisbury Plain mega site as far as the Somerset complex. Just in time for Halloween, the chapter on the Rollright Stones gives an insight into the injustices of the witch hunts. At the 'very centre of England' lies Lud's Church, associated with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and the location of a novel by another uncanny storyteller, Alan Garner, a 'must visit' amongst this great selection.

A minor criticism is that each could benefit from a map alongside the text although O/S references are given. But this is easily forgiven. *Weird Walk* can be summed up with a quote from EF Benson, who wrote about the liminal zones at Dunwich and Romney Marsh: here you can meet 'something out of the past, some condition of life long vanished, [...] leaking through into the present'. The author(s?), after trawling around Britain's byways, 'found that we love this weird, diverse, haunted place even more than we did when we started'. Now, it's our turn!

CROSSWORD CORNER

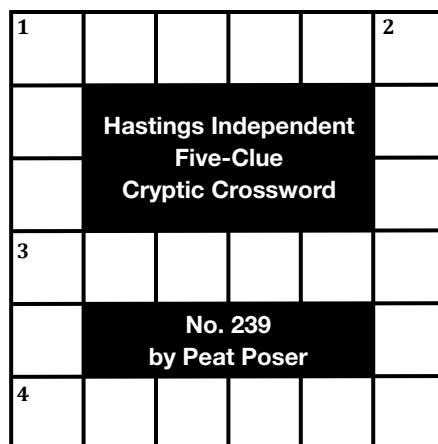
Across

1. Pulse fast and nearly sick (6)
3. Some go to XY genes for life support (6)
4. Lose momentum re flat arrangement (6)

Down

1. Chaotic elf oft got away with it (3, 3)
2. Housekeeper loses head to become thinner (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 15





FOOD

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

Climate Action in the Kitchen

EDWINA HUGHES

As we start to focus more on the climate emergency, many of us are asking what we can do differently to live in a more sustainable way. Eating in a less climate impactful way is one thing we can all try to do. But how easy is it to change our diet? Is it worthwhile (especially if we don't feel we can go fully vegan)?

Starting with the basic facts: leading scientists now agree that food and agriculture account for between 25-30% of total global greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). That's eye-wateringly large and a huge opportunity to do things differently in our food system, from production right through to consumption - including you and me



Roast Cauliflower

and what we choose to eat.

Take beef consumption: today in the UK we eat approximately two burgers worth of beef a week (in the USA it's three) and if we want to improve our health and reduce the damaging effects of factory farming, it needs to be something

closer to one. To make this shift, we need to embrace more plants - vegetables, pulses, grains. But meat-lovers can breathe a sigh of relief - while we do need a significant reduction in consumption of meat and animal-based produce (milk, cheese, yoghurt, eggs etc) we

can still eat some of these foods; just not as often and not as much.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

If you want to eat more sustainably why not start at home. Think about what you cook and whether there are opportunities to rebalance meals towards veg, pulses and grains. Here are a few techniques that have been proven to work in food service and can be adapted for the home:

1. Reduce the amount of minced beef you cook with. Replace some of the meat with lentils or, even better, mushrooms. Because lentils can dry out a dish you might prefer to substitute mushrooms - they are moist, and their umami flavour really complements the beef and can enhance the overall taste while taking nothing away (except the emissions).
2. Ramping up the quantities of veg and reducing the amount of meat works brilliantly for stir fries, curries, burritos and tacos. If you are worried

about flavour, roast the veg first to bring out the flavour more (try roast cauliflower!), or add spices and condiments that can stretch the flavour.

3. Celebrate the veg - make it king of the plate. There are loads of great veggie and vegan chefs on social media and they can teach you how best to prepare vegetables with interesting flavours like celeriac or beetroot or parsnips! Try Meera Sodha's festive pilau rice - hearty and enjoyable for this time of year.
4. Recreate favourites with a veggie twist. What do you love to eat? What do the people you are cooking for enjoy? Is there a veggie twist you could try out? How about a lentil shepherd's pie or a veggie chilli?

The good news is there are lots of ways to tweak your cooking habits to take climate action in the kitchen today. For more ideas see our interview with local author, Richard Makin in *Have Fun and Veganise* (Issue 225).



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FOOTBALL

United Resume Winning Ways

4 November:
HASHTAG UTD 1,
HASTINGS UTD 2

11 November:
HASTINGS UTD 3,
KINGSTONIAN 2

HUGH SULLIVAN

How much of sport is talent, how much is work, how much luck, how much self-belief? Supporters of Hastings United will have been wondering about each of those elements, as their team has resumed winning ways under returning manager Chris Agutter.

The new-look United side were unbeaten in their first eight league and cup matches up to mid-September. They then lost seven of the next eight matches, their only success a narrow victory in the inconsequential Sussex Senior Cup over South-East Division side Three Bridges. Exit their short-lived manager Paul Barnes on the heels of a couple of apparently key players. Re-enter Agutter after an absence of two years. And – lo and behold – an immediate return of good results: four wins out of four prior to Tuesday's home game against Carshalton (taking place after this paper has gone to press).

There do not seem to have been any radical differences in the way



Davide Rodari - a trademark shuffle

the team has been set up by Agutter, though the loss of Femi Akinwande as principal striker has forced a somewhat different approach in attack. Davide Rodari played as an outright centre forward in last Saturday's game against Kingstonian – not the battling physical presence which Akinwande, and before him Ben Pope, used to provide, but always a goal threat.

ENTER TOMMY PENFOLD

Meanwhile, Craig Stone, United's key central defender over the last five years, has departed for Ramsgate, but has been immediately replaced by Tommy Penfold, recruited from Isthmian Premier rivals Cray Wanderers. The same pivotal role seems to be expected of the new recruit. Agutter told the Hastings Observer last week: "See-

ing Craig move on is a huge loss, but I'm really pleased to sign Tommy. I coached him when he was a 13-year-old 5-foot winger, and he's now a 6-foot 5-inch centre-half." On the league website Agutter describes him as "a big and powerful left-footed centre back who will add quality, physicality and personality to the team. Most importantly, he's the right type of character that we want to see in a Hastings United shirt."

Away at Basildon side Hashtag United on 4 November, the 'U's took the lead midway through the first half with a Jason Fregene goal, were immediately pegged back to 1-1, went ahead again shortly after halftime through Tayo Oyebola, then absorbed a lot of pressure to keep the 2-1 scoreline intact till the finish. Penfold, playing the whole of the second half as a substitute, made a promising debut.

HEAVY PITCH

Last Saturday's opponents Kingstonian, although without an away win in the league this season, had beaten Hastings at Pilot Field in the FA Trophy on 7 October during the latter's losing streak, and for much of the game seemed very capable of repeating that victory. In bright autumnal sunshine but on a heavy pitch clogged with recent rain, the 'U's methodical possession football created nothing of note. Midfielders Adam Lovatt and Jamal Lubanga both sat deep, and the home crowd (numbered at 883) became impatient at the lack of engagement up front. A long-range effort from right back Sam Okoye was virtually their only shot of a dismal first half.

Charlie Grainger, in the home goal, was much the busier of the two keepers, and after 18 minutes conceded a penalty when Penfold lost his bearings and misjudged a

high ball hoisted over his head. Kingstonian duly scored, and the 'U's were frankly fortunate to turn around only 1-0 down.

Agutter brought on Freddie Legg in place of Lubanga at the start of the second half, deploying him to push up the right wing and provide more physical assistance to Rodari in the centre. Immediately, there was forward momentum that had been previously absent. The equalising goal came from a traditional route: a long throw by another of Agutter's former academy protégés, Ollie Black, a ricochet, and a back post prod by Fregene. Three minutes later John Ufuah chased a long ball out of defence and screwed his cross back to Rodari, who had found a pocket of space beyond the penalty spot. With a trademark shuffle, the Swiss forward bamboozled the defender in front of him and rifled in with his left foot: a scintillating strike to put the 'U's 2-1 up.

Kingstonian were quickly back on level terms when Grainger, unbalanced by an opponent's challenge, dropped a corner over his own line. But Hastings remained in the ascendancy, and soon Penfold – making up for his first half error – headed powerfully in from a corner at the other end. The remaining 20 minutes, plus five of added time, were vigorously contested, but with Adam Lovatt careering around midfield and the rest of his team galvanised to protect their lead, there weren't any undue alarms to shake the final 3-2 score-line.

Talent? Work? Luck? Elements of all three were on show in this performance. But what Agutter certainly seems to have brought to the players on his return is some self-belief. United supporters may dare to share it, as their team ended the day fifth in the league table.

RUGBY

H&B struggle in lower league

After their relegation earlier this year, Hastings & Bexhill may have been expecting a more comfortable experience in the Kent 3 Coun-

ty League this season. It hasn't worked out that way so far.

They started well enough, racking up ten tries in a 64-19 home victory over Whitstable in their first match in September. Unfortunately new skipper Harry Walker broke his wrist in scoring one of them, and has been sidelined since. Jake Stinson, who claimed a hat-trick of tries, took over the captaincy.

The following two fixtures pitted them against the 2nd XVs of bigger clubs, Tonbridge Juddians and Old Alleynians. Despite valiant efforts they succumbed 12-38 and 15-32 respectively; in the latter game, fly half and place-kicker Bruce Steadman also suffered a

serious shoulder injury.

The distraction of the Rugby World Cup taking place in France combined with the unseasonable volumes of recent rainfall – that rendered even the generally accommodating Ark Alexandra home pitch unfit for play – led to only one fixture being fulfilled over the next five weeks, a disappointing 17-20 defeat at Gravesend on 21 October. And last Saturday they were beaten again 7-24 by Faversham.

The next two fixtures will be at home. Tomorrow (Saturday) they entertain New Ash Green, then on 2 December Sittingbourne are the visitors. These are games they will feel they need to win.



Jake Stinson, H&B captain in absence of Harry Walker



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