

Hastings Independent

253

7 JUNE 2024

THE **FREE** & INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR HASTINGS



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Your Pull Out
Guide to What
is Happening
in and Around
Hastings



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Waits**

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Green Takeover, Independents Frozen Out

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

The appointment of an all-Green Cabinet by Julia Hilton, the leader of Hastings BC, has sparked discontent among the Hastings Independents group of councillors. The Greens and the Independents were coalition partners prior to the local elections, but their civil partnership seems to have ended acrimoniously following the poll.

The election resulted in a Green surge, with the party winning five seats from Labour and three from the Conservatives to leave them with 12 councillors overall. Although falling short of a majority, Julia Hilton was emboldened by her electoral success to appoint only her colleagues to Cabinet positions.

At the inaugural meeting of the new full council held on 22 May, she confirmed the portfolio holder appointments of her deputy, Glenn Haffenden, for Housing and Community Wellbeing; Darren Mackenzie for Finance, Assets, Risk and ICT; Adele Bates for Arts, Culture, Tourism and Leisure, Equalities and Community Engagement; Joanne Walker for Environment and Neighbourhood Wellbeing; and Mark

Etherington for Planning, Infrastructure and Active Travel. Tony Collins was appointed Charity Committee Chair, responsible for the Foreshore Trust. In addition to being the leader of the council, Cllr Hilton will be responsible for the Regeneration and Community Wealth Building Portfolio.

JUDY ROGERS ELECTED MAYOR

The council meeting also saw Labour's Judy Rogers elected as the new mayor. She replaces Margi O'Callaghan, who stepped down to take up her new role as Labour group leader. David Whitehill, the new Labour councillor for St Helens, was elected deputy mayor following Heather Bishop's defeat in the local election.

Elections were also held for the chairs of the major committees. Labour's Margi O'Callaghan was elected Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Billie Barnes took Planning and Danuta Kean got Audit, whilst Amanda Jobson of the Greens was elected Chair of the Licensing Committee.

Despite Paul Barnett and Nigel Sinden securing the Chairs of the Standards Committee and the Environment and Safety

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EDITOR'S NOTE

There seems to be a tentative nod towards the future in this edition of HIP, be it our local MP's seat appearing increasingly marginal at the national election on 4 July, or Southern Water's proposal for a five-year investment programme, inevitably leading to an increase in customer charges (p2).

Conversely, in Spotlight, we travel to the year 2124, and the case is made that for an equitable and sustainable future we must firm up our community roots - like resisting plans to cut school staffing at Baird Academy and protesting on behalf of local tenants, both reported in HIP's News section (p4).

In that same spirit, there are opportunities to volunteer at several not-for-profit organisations, such as Age UK and the Summer Reading Challenge - check out our Community pages for details. In the same section, you'll find a lengthy list of things happening around town in June and July, including Art in the Park, Comedy Fest and filmmaking classes for young people at the recently opened Benbow Arts Space in St Leonards (p10).

Happy reading!

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News



DAVE YOUNG

Burst Pipe Replacement ‘Wasn’t Necessary’

HUGH SULLIVAN

HIP recently reported that in 2007 Southern Water obtained planning permission from Rother District Council to replace the mains supply pipeline on the basis that it was “outworn”. Eight years later, in 2015, the company had taken no action, but informed Rother in a letter that it intended to “progress” a revised

replacement scheme as the existing pipeline was “approaching the end of its operational life”.

In fact, Southern Water never applied to the regulator, Ofwat, for approval of a scheme to re-lay an alternative pipe. Questioned about this, a company spokesperson said: “On review, it was not necessary to do so, due to the pressure being reduced in the pipe instead...These decisions are made regularly by utility companies”.

HASTINGS TIDES						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET MOON
FRI 7 JUNE	L 6:56am	H 12:25pm	L 7:13pm		04:45	09:08
SAT 8 JUNE	H 0:42am	L 7:42am	H 1:09pm	L 7:58pm	04:45	09:08
SUN 9 JUNE	H 1:27am	L 8:25am	H 1:51pm	L 8:40pm	04:44	09:09
MON 10 JUNE	H 2:09am	L 9:03am	H 2:31pm	L 9:19pm	04:44	09:10
TUES 11 JUNE	H 2:51am	L 9:39am	H 3:11pm	L 9:58pm	04:43	09:11
WED 12 JUNE	H 3:34am	L 10:15am	H 3:53pm	L 10:39pm	04:43	09:11
THURS 13 JUNE	H 4:22am	L 10:55am	H 4:42pm	L 11:24pm	04:43	09:12
FRI 14 JUNE	H 5:17am	L 11:42am	H 5:37pm		04:43	09:12 FIRST
SAT 15 JUNE	L 0:16am	H 6:20am	L 12:38pm	H 6:39pm	04:43	09:13
SUN 16 JUNE	L 1:16am	H 7:24am	L 1:40pm	H 7:42pm	04:43	09:13
MON 17 JUNE	L 2:18am	H 8:22am	L 2:46pm	H 8:39pm	04:43	09:14
TUES 18 JUNE	L 3:22am	H 9:13am	L 3:51pm	H 9:29pm	04:43	09:14
WED 19 JUNE	L 4:20am	H 9:59am	L 4:49pm	H 10:14pm	04:43	09:14
THURS 20 JUNE	L 5:13am	H 10:40am	L 7:40pm	H 10:55pm	04:43	09:15

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

£1M GOODWILL PAY-OUT WON'T REACH HOME CUSTOMERS

Southern Water has announced a £1million ‘goodwill fund’ to compensate businesses and community groups in Hastings which suffered the double whammy of flooding and loss of water supply over the past 16 months.

But, although the company acknowledged the twin calamities also took their toll on residential households, no compensation is being offered to them. While there is a statutory scheme that seems, at first sight, to require a £30 compensation payment to be made to each household for every 12 hours of water loss, a burst of a strategic water main is an event beyond the remit of the relevant regulations, according to the company spokesperson. The company insists that the offer to businesses and community groups is a goodwill gesture, not a legal requirement.

At the first full meeting since last month's election, Hastings Borough Council leader Julia Hilton said: “All councillors reacted with anger and dismay at the news that Southern Water are not intending to compensate individual residents for the loss of water over the Bank Holiday period...We need to put pressure on [the company] to ensure that the households that most deserve compensation are directly reimbursed.” She did not elaborate

on how this would be achieved. Meanwhile, ‘goodwill’ money is being allocated as follows:

- £500,000 for community projects
- £380,000 to support businesses
- £120,000 for “local festivals and events”

Tim McMahon, Southern Water's Director of Water, who led the company's response to the burst major water main earlier this month, said: “We recognise that the services we provide have not met all of the expectations of our customers in St Leonards and Hastings in recent months – and we are very sorry... We accept that we need to put things right so far as the community and businesses in Hastings and St Leonards are concerned, and therefore want to give something back as a meaningful goodwill gesture.”

A spokesperson for the company said last week that eligible businesses are being contacted directly. Some of the worst affected hospitality firms (about 15% of the total) will receive £1,500 each; the rest are being paid £150 each.

The company was “still in discussion” with Hastings Borough Council about setting up or working with a community foundation which would make allocations to community groups. The “local festivals and events” would include the Jack-in-the-Green charity and local education providers.

By 2023, Southern Water had changed its tune, submitting a record £7.8bn business plan to Ofwat to deliver: “Major improvements in water resilience, wastewater treatment, and customer service, as well as enhancement and protection of our precious environment.” The company describes its desired programme as the “greatest ever single investment in the environment”, representing over £3,500 expenditure per household and creating an estimated 5,000 jobs across the region. It further claims that shareholders have invested £1.6bn since 2021, whilst having received no dividend since 2017. But is also reported as seeking the highest percentage increase in water bills by any water company in England and Wales – 91% over the next five years.

Southern Water's chief customer officer, Katy Taylor, said last week: “We share everyone's concerns about rising payments in the face of a cost-of-living crisis. We have been able to keep bills low, with the average combined water and wastewater bill increasing by only £2 in the past 10 years in nominal terms. We agree with our customers that we must now charge more so we can bring our bills in line with inflation, rising costs and, more importantly, so we can invest more to meet the expectations of our customers, and protect and enhance our environment.” She went on to stress that discounts would be extended to needy households. “For those that

need support, we already provide a 45% bill discount to over 120,000 customers today and estimate that number will rise to around 200,000 by 2030.”

Southern Water's five-year investment programme and its proposals to increase customer charges were submitted to Ofwat last October, alongside those of other water companies. The regulator is tasked with ensuring they meet the twin targets of making environmental improvements while also delivering value for money for consumers.

Ofwat's “draft determination” was due on 12 June but has been delayed until after the general election on 4 July – an indication of the potential political impact. Assessment of Southern Water's needs may in any event have been revised following the bursting of the mains water pipeline from Darwell and consequent cut-off of supply to Hastings and St Leonards at the beginning of last month.

A Defra (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) spokesperson said last week: “Investment in the water industry has not kept pace with where it needs to be. This needs to change, and we want to see ambitious plans from water companies that meet our targets and deliver for customers... This process will resume post-election to ensure customers do not pay for water companies' poor performance.”



Guy Harris: Alive and Kicking

PAUL McLAUGHLIN writes the last of in-depth profiles on our local prospective parliamentary candidates who will be contesting the General Election on 4 July

Older residents of the town may well remember the Liberal Democrats. They used to run Hastings Borough Council way back in 1996, in those far-off, analogue days, when mobile phones were the size of bricks.

The party last held a seat on the Council in 2008 when Richard Stevens won in Old Hastings. Labour won the seat four years later and the town has been a Lib Dem-free zone ever since.

There are many reasons why the Liberal Democrats were largely forgotten about in these parts. Support for the party plummeted nationally after they joined the Conservatives in coalition government between 2010 and 2015 to preside over a period of austerity and deep cuts to public services. Before the 2010 General Election, Nick Clegg, the then party leader, made high profile commitments not to raise VAT or increase tuition fees - yet within weeks of taking office, he and his colleagues backed a VAT rate rise from 17.5 to 20%, and an annual

increase in university tuition fees from £3,000 to £9,000. The public's trust in the party was significantly damaged.

This slump in support coincided with the evolution of environmentalism into the political mainstream. In recent years, it has been the Green Party that has emerged as the broadly based, radical alternative to Labour and the Conservatives. It's the Greens who pick up the votes of those on the progressive centre and left, and it's Julia Hilton's Greens that now run Hastings, after a successful local election campaign.

Margaret Thatcher famously ridiculed the Lib Dems as "a dead parrot," mocking the party's bird of liberty logo, in reference to the famous *Monty Python* sketch. After 2015, and with the emergence of the Greens, it looked like the Lib Dem bird, if not dead, was resting quietly, nailed firmly to its perch.

Guy Harris, the recently selected Liberal Democrat candidate for the Hastings and Rye constituency, is

determined to breathe new life into the old bird, however, and he is giving the local party renewed purpose.

The 52-year-old Harris is a relative late-comer to the political world and admits to having little interest in the tribalism usually associated with membership of a party. He was born in London, the son of an engineer. His childhood was somewhat nomadic as his family spent time in South Africa, Scandinavia, and Australia, moving with his father's work. The constant crossing of continents in his formative years left an indelible mark on his character and worldview.

After graduating with a degree in law, he spent 10 years working in television as a programme director. In 2006 he was part of a team that won a Bafta for Best Factual Series for his episode of Ross Kemp on Gangs (South Africa).

The following year he moved to the Middle East to become a strategic communications adviser to the Iraqi government and later to the Kurdish Prime Minister's Office. He witnessed at first hand the desperate attempts to reduce violence and rebuild peace in a conflict zone, working with local and international partners in very challenging conditions.

On his return to the UK, Guy and his family moved to Winchelsea, where they have lived for 14 years. He has two children, one of whom was born in the Conquest Hospital; both attend local state schools.

It has been his recent experience of having to deal directly with a range of key public services "starved of funds" that has motivated him to join the political fray. He is particularly angered at "a health and social care system near collapse; failing schools, with buildings in disrepair; and a road network riddled with dangerous potholes." The levels of inequality, poverty, and hunger are "truly shocking", he believes. He came to the realisation that if he did not want his children to grow up in such an inequitable society, he needed to do something about it.

Harris joined the Liberal Democrats because he felt they offered "real progressive change" and shared his belief that politicians of all persuasions needed to work together to restore the fortunes of the country. He thinks Britain is facing a peril akin to that of 1940, with public services degraded and people demoralised, cynical and fearful. "The threat to our democracy is real," he says, and "only by working together can things change for the better."

He acknowledges that improvements to public services will require a significant increase in public funding. He also recognises, however, that taxes are already too high and that the demands on services will always outstrip supply. Finding sustainable solutions will be crucial, he believes, for ensuring the wellbeing of citizens and the

effective functioning of essential services. He readily admits that this will not be easy, particularly with increasing international threats to peace and stability leading to pressure to boost defence spending.

As a first step to the radical changes needed to transform Britain, he supports a change to the voting system and the introduction of proportional representation (PR) - a long-held goal of the Liberal Democrats. He says that without PR there is no incentive for parties to work together, and the old way of doing politics will continue and perpetuate the spiral of decline.

The Liberal Democrats have been undergoing a resurgence in many areas across the country in recent years, winning a series of parliamentary by-elections from the Conservatives, and Harris is confident that his party will make progress in Hastings and Rye, too. He acknowledges that the experience of the coalition years will put off some people who would previously have voted for the Lib Dems. He is undeterred, however, and believes the secret to getting ahead is to focus his energies not on fixing and fighting yesterday's battles, but on building and growing something new.

Guy Harris says he offers a dif-



ferent vision to those of the other parties in the coming general election and believes his focus on addressing pressing issues resonates with those who seek an alternative path forward. "It's about changing the future, not just the government."

It remains to be seen whether this strategy will lead to the restoration of the Liberal Democrats as a political force in Hastings, but a revived bird of liberty will certainly add an intriguing dimension to the political landscape.

MARCHING FOR NATURE LONDON 22ND JUNE

JOIN A LARGE FRIENDLY GROUP FROM HASTINGS GOING BY TRAIN

EMAIL: UNITE4NATURE@PROTON.ME

RESTORE NATURE NOW

FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/SUN.HASTINGS.ROTHER

RSPB National Trust WOODLAND TRUST WWT WWF LOVE REE

Even Banks Should Learn: Homes Aren't Assets

MERLIN BETTS

We're marching down the middle of the street. I've got a notepad and placard in hand, red jackets rustling, red banners flying. We're chanting, "The renters, united, will never be defeated!" as we make our way toward the TSB on Western Road, Brighton.

Myself and three other members of Hastings Acorn have turned out with around 45 Brighton comrades to fight TSB's unethical buy-to-let mortgage policy. Across the country, in 29 other towns, Acorn members are doing the same chant, marching on their own targets.

Despite the grand and, arguably, aggressive nature of our action, we're actually making quite a rea-

sonable ask: TSB is the only bank to restrict their buy-to-let mortgage policy holders to one year tenancy contracts; we want that to stop.

The one-year restriction creates a culture where it's normal for tenants to have the terms of the contract redrafted every year, or be forced to move out. It makes them vulnerable to unnecessary rent increases and Section 21 evictions. It stops them from being able to feel their home is their home. Maybe that's not so bad for a single student or professional in a room or a studio flat. But for a family it can be disastrous.

OCCUPY WITH MERRIMENT AND SONG

As we reach the bank, everyone is well behaved. Inside, the band starts setting up and we make space, ensuring that anyone can still ac-



cess the branch. This is the most life the place has seen in years. TSB's manager asks us to keep away from the main desk, and we comply, but we've already seen him press his emergency button – the police are on their way.

Our house band, Far Darrig, in their own words, "the most sluttish, slouching, jeering, mischievous phantoms," stand centre stage and start with a rendition of *Dirty Old Town*. For maybe half an hour we make the branch feel like a lounge, a home from home, a place of music and welcome.

Then the police turn up and negotiate with us to leave. Ignoring some nasty sniffing and silent snarl-

ing from a couple of officers in the bank, we reach agreement and file out onto the pavement, setting up our picket and a picnic bench – time for a game of renters' wheel of fortune, hosted by the mask of TSB CEO Robin Bulloch.

CLOSING TIME

While we have no problem with the bank staying open (if they want to stay open), the staff have shut the door behind us, and aren't allowing anyone in. Even a disabled woman asking to use the toilet. Anything, in their mind, could be a ruse to get the band and dancers back into the bank... and what would happen then? Would the paint start drooling

down the walls in rainbow-coloured rivulets? Would the barren floor grow a luscious carpet? Would some strange hairy Irishman start serving pints from behind the main desk? How much would it cost the branch to clean that up at the end of the day? No – everyone must be kept out.

Our picketing clearly isn't helping, but they hold out for a couple of hours before finally putting up the sign, "This branch is temporarily closed due to unforeseen circumstances."

FINALE

We pack up and march off to our rally point for a debrief, and that's that. We head off to the pub to watch the other success stories roll in. Victory seems inevitable. And it is.

On Wednesday 22 May, 11 days after the action, Acorn representatives attend a sit-down with reps from TSB at their swanky HQ in London. The bank agreed to extend the one-year limit to three years, and apparently maintain a discourse about further adaptations to assist renters. No rest for us though – there's always more to be done.



To find out more about Acorn or join your local branch and get our representation, visit @acornunionhastings on Instagram.

Academy Trust Row Continues

Parents and carers at Baird Primary Academy recently received a letter announcing a move from two form entry to "1.5 form entry," almost certainly meaning different year groups will be sharing the same classes from September. This would presumably also mean larger classes, although, as the school is currently undersubscribed, classes are unlikely to rise above 30.

Although 1.5 form entry is not unusual, there is concern about the lack of transparency, particularly over how it might be structured and how two year groups, at different stages in the curriculum, can share the same tuition. The fear is that pupils might be matched on skill level, and those deemed 'underperforming' relegated to classes which may be harder to manage.

Baird is run by University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT). A recent HIP story, *School Strike Threatened Over 'Diversion' of Funding*, noted that the trust is diverting 25.9% of the money it receives for running another of its schools, St Leonards Academy, to its central funding pool; more than triple the national average. Another of UBAT's schools, Hollington Primary Academy, recently received a "poor" OF-

STED rating and subsequently transferred to another trust.

In the same letter to parents, Baird also announced that a teacher will be "redeployed" to another UBAT school, while "some of our teaching assistants (TAs) have been put at risk of redundancy." Baird claims, "We want to be transparent throughout this process," but parents counter that the trust is notorious for bad communication.

According to Jenny Sutton, National Education Union (NEU) district secretary for Hastings: "Our schools are already in crisis with decrepit and often dangerous buildings, large class sizes and too few staff. UBAT schools serve deprived communities with a high proportion of disadvantaged students and SEND needs. Attendance and achievement rates are already below national average."



The NEU is contemplating strike action and holding a public meeting for parents, school staff and the community, to explain their complaints on Saturday 8 June, 12-2pm at Henry Ward Hall, 45 Robertson Street, TN34 1HL.

Committee, respectively, it was a disappointing evening for the Hastings Independents. From being key players in the council before the election, they have now been frozen out of power. Andy Batsford took to social media to vent his frustration, posting on Facebook that he found the orchestrated voting of the Labour and Green pact "frankly upsetting". He accused the Greens of working with Labour to take the whole Cabinet for themselves, whilst Labour took the positions of Mayor and deputy Mayor, and major paid chairs of Planning, Overview and Scrutiny, and Licensing. He and his Independent Group colleagues, he said, "have done nothing but put out a hand of friendship" but this has been thrown away for a "cheap deal with Labour." He said talk of cross-party working together was "just that, talk."

Julia Hilton reiterated her party's position of wanting to work with other parties. However, she said that because the Labour Group had ruled out entering into a formal deal, as well as being opposed to working with the Independents, the best approach was not to be aligned with either faction but to be free to work cross-party on a vote-by-vote basis. Cllr Hilton insisted that she still wants to work with other parties on both the new corporate plan and the budget. She also confirmed her support for replacing the cabinet with a committee system, although again



she said this would not be possible in the short term due to the council's heavy workload.

FIRST MEETING FOR NEW CABINET

The new Cabinet will meet for the first time on 10 June. Because of the General Election on 4 July, business will be limited to discussion of essential items that need agreement so that procurement and tender

processes can be completed, and to items involving third parties. This also means there will be no public questions at the start of the meeting. The agenda includes the *High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2024-2029*, funding for the management of landslides across the town, the appointment of a welfare funerals contractor, and the housing acquisition programme.

Hastings Assemblies: A Different Politics

FELICITY LAURENCE

As we approach the general election, here in the swing seat of Hastings and Rye there is a growing swell of unease and even distrust about many aspects of how politics is being done – at local as well as national levels. Many of us are unsure about what candidates really intend, and about whether they are listening carefully to our concerns rather than trying, first and foremost, to persuade us of their respective parties’ agenda.

These concerns have prompted a group of Hastings citizens to come together and explore alternative ways of going about politics; all interested fellow citizens are invited to come together at the Stade Hall on Sunday 16 June to talk about the issues that matter to us here, now, in a people’s gathering – HASTINGS ASSEMBLES.

We are despairing about the state of our country and our world, and about the party political system that offers more of the same. We are desperately concerned about crumbling public services such as housing, health and water; we are acute-

ly aware of climate breakdown and the lack of political will to act on this; and we join the millions of people in our country and over the entire world in wanting our governments to stop the genocide taking place in Gaza.

Here are some of the questions people across our town are thinking about:

- What are OUR priority issues in this election?
- Can we hold politicians to their promises AFTER the election?
- Could this kind of assembly be the start of a new type of grassroots politics to challenge the system in Westminster and create real change?

Political candidates will be welcome to Hastings Assemblies if they are prepared to listen: our assembly is a real alternative to a political hustings, a chance to listen to each other as well as to be heard.

Hastings Assemblies will meet on Sunday 16 June 5pm-7pm at the Stade Hall. For more information about the local people involved, see the Hastings Assemblies Facebook page. You can register at bit.ly/hastingsassemblies

Assembly of Voices

“... When you really do allow all kinds of people to input their wants and needs, the same themes come to the fore over and over again. People like things to be fair, they want life to be affordable, they want local authorities taking responsibility for health and social services, and they want the Post Office, water and public transport to be public services, not the playthings of irresponsible profiteers – and people don’t like war.” (Kay Green).

“I’m tired of being represented by politicians who don’t listen, don’t respond and don’t care about our community and world and just want to further their careers and look after their own. ... I want my vote to be a positive one that translates into improved conditions where they are most needed and tackling issues that the majority are constantly raising.” (Olivia Cavanagh, Immigration Advisor).

“We the people need a voice and need to be heard. To take our power and, especially, to care for nature and each other.” (Mary Dawson, Church Wood Community Orchard, Standing up For Nature).

“Like so many, I despair about the state of our country and our world. I don’t think the solutions we need will come from any kind of top-down political system: the answers will come from communities coming together, listening to each other and choosing a path forward. I believe that local peoples’ assemblies, supported nationally, could ultimately overhaul our political system...” (Shannon Ghannam, community arts and education).

“As public discourse gets sucked into the whirlwind of the election, I think it’s vital to have a conversation where the agenda is set by local people and that recognises that a strong local community is the foundation for action and for hope.” (Polly Gifford, Organiser, Sanctuary Festival).

“I support the Hastings Assembly because it’s time for our community to reclaim our voice and shape our future. Our planet is suffocating, the military industrial complex grows bolder each day, and people are suffering and dying. Traditional two-party politics is failing us, and we need new, inclusive plat-

forms to ensure our collective concerns and voices are heard. By coming together, we can create a more representative and effective democracy.” (Ben Dawson)

“I’m sick of empty promises and no action. It’s time for people to take action themselves.” (Jaen Loftin, artist and activist with Extinction Rebellion).

“In 41 years of various voluntary groups, advocacy and NHS workshops, I’ve seen how people come together, the immense agency they have, and how it can so easily be undermined. Hastings is a well-informed, creative community with ingenuity equal to any major city.” (Kendal Eaton, Author *A Chance for Everyone: The Parallel Non-Monetary Economy*).

“... I’m interested in a representative politics and know our sclerotic political system is dangerously unambitious at this point in history. Our leaders are sleeper agents for interests that are not ours. With a few exceptions, politicians in the UK selected are mostly sub-standard careerists constrained by party. I am all for a locally-rooted ‘all-sorts’ group; it needs to be disciplined and committed enough to first agree upon a list of goals and then fight effectively for our chosen common interests.” (Rosie Brocklehurst, convener of campaign group Lost Chances for the Children of Sub-Postmasters).

Restore Nature Now

JILL KAYE

On Saturday 22 June, members of local campaigning group, Unite for Nature, will join thousands of others in central London for what could be the UK’s largest-ever gathering in support of the natural world.

Dismayed by the *State of Nature* report last autumn, which catalogued the devastating loss of wildlife nationally, the group formed earlier this year and set up the umbrella organisation Standing up for Nature to enable local wildlife and conservation groups to share information (see Features in HIP 252). Its Facebook page now has over 280 members, indicating the strength of support in our town.

And this local support is now going national with at least 50 people expected to be travelling up to join the *Restore Nature Now* march in London. This peaceful family-friendly event is organised by a broad coalition ranging from na-



Jane Ripley protesting with her granddaughter

ture charities like the RSPB to activist organisation Extinction Rebellion, and speakers including Chris Packham. With a general election just weeks away, they want

to send a powerful message to all political parties.

Science lecturer Jane Ripley says: “As a water pollution analyst, I have first-hand experience of how badly

nature is under threat, so I will be marching on 22 June with my children to show our leaders we need to protect and *Restore Nature Now* for us all.”

Local preparations are heating up, with costumes being made at community wellbeing hub, Art in the Park. A 2m long banner, featuring animals, trees, flowers, insects and birds, is being created by local craft groups Stitch TLC and Crafty Magpies, with contributions from other participants, including children. The co-ordinator, textile artist Mary Dawson – representing Church Wood Community Orchard – says: “We need to show we can work together and have a bigger voice to wake up those who are still not responding.”

And Jo Howell of Unite for Nature eloquently captures the feelings of

so many: “I’m going with my partner, because global warming is real and time is running out. It hurts my heart to hear about the state of nature, so I’m marching to stop governments and big businesses putting money first and get them to take meaningful action NOW. History tells us that peaceful protest does work, so I want to be part of the voice of change.”



More information at restorenature-now.com
Pledge support here: campaigns.restorenaturenow.com/pledgetomarch. To join the Hastings group on the train to London, see updates on [facebook.com/groups/sun.hastings.rother](https://www.facebook.com/groups/sun.hastings.rother) or contact UNITE4nature@proton.me

SITE NOTICE FOR APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF A PREMISES LICENCE

This notice is hereby given that on **29th day of May 2024** an application was made to Hastings Borough Council by **Keir Halliday**
6 Chatham Road
St Leonards on Sea
TN37 6PJ

to vary a premises licence for the premises known as:
La Belle Vue
31 George Street
Hastings, TN34 3EA

in the following respects:
Recorded Music
11:00 to 22:45
Supply of alcohol
12:00 to 22:30

Any person wishing to make representations about this application for variation should write to the Head of Environment & Place, Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings, TN34 3UY, www.hastings.gov.uk within

twenty eight consecutive days of the application date shown above.
It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application & the maximum fine is £5000 for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence.
Dated this **29th day of May 2024**



Sewing Machine Awareness Day

Community Happenings in June and July

LIBRARY OF THINGS

After a short break, the Library of Things has relocated and reopened within HEART community information hub at the Priory Meadow entrance of Hastings Town Hall.

The library has some new librarians and is open on Fridays from 12.00-4.00pm and Saturdays from 10.00am-1.00pm. Fridays also include Make and Mend workshops during library hours and the relaunched cargo bike delivery service for £2.50 a trip.

Friday 14 June is Sewing Machine Awareness Day, and there's an opportunity to come and try using a sewing machine between 12.00-3.30pm – and maybe even borrow one to take home.

Another exciting event is the Functional Mobile Phone Project taking place on the first Friday of every month from 5 July onwards. Drop off old phones and chargers so they can be given to people who need phones – with six months'

worth of data. Broken and unfixable phones will go for recycling via community supporters eco project in Bexhill.

For more information, contact info@umbrellasussex.org.uk or visit umbrellasussex.org.uk

FREE FAMILY FUN DAYS AT BROOMGROVE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Throughout the summer, Active Hastings will run a number of free themed Saturday Family Fun Days at the Broomgrove Community Centre, including a Beach Dance Party on 15 June, 1.00-3.00pm and Olympic-themed games on 20 July, 1.00-3.00pm.

Active Hastings also run a range of low-cost or free activities at the Community Centre, including Zumba, Pilates, Creating a Healthier You exercise class, age-friendly activity and social sessions, Boxercise, under 5s Play and Stay, junior Muay

Thai and the Friday Night Project.

Heather Jury, Physical Activity Development Officer for Broomgrove at Active Hastings, says: "As part of the UK Prosperity Fund, we are delivering a variety of physical activity opportunities in the Broomgrove area, which we hope will increase social interaction and encourage an active and healthy lifestyle."

She would also like to hear what other activities the community would like to see at the centre, as well as anything that stops people from being active. "Pop along to one of the Saturday Family Fun Days to chat to the team."

For more information visit active-hastings.org.uk/listings or follow the Active Hastings Facebook page facebook.com/activehastings

REFUGEE WEEK WITH THE REFUGEE BUDDY PROJECT

Following its 25th anniversary last year which saw over 9,500 events in 130 locations in the UK, Refugee Week once again aims to inspire audiences and convey the shared human experiences that bring us together.

The Refugee Buddy Project Hastings and Rother (TRBP) is one of hundreds of organisations responding to Refugee Week from 17 to 23 June. TRBP works with artists, creators and businesses for a week-long celebration creating a 'community of welcome' along the coast. Each year, Counterpoints Arts chooses a theme, and for 2024, it's *Our Home*: "Everyone is invited to celebrate what *Our Home* means to them and make [it] a more welcoming, safe and sustainable place for all."

Various strands are woven into the TRBP celebration: food and hospitality, stories and memories, and visual representations. There are activities for all, from a pub quiz (to test knowledge of all things British) to a pop-up exhibition and workshop in Priory Meadow; from setting up a garden project (behind Dove café) to a film depicting Hastings' intergenerational, multinational community (*Flavours without Borders*) at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery.

The week offers an extraordinary exhibition by Palestinian photographer Samar Abu Elouf at Electro Studios Gallery. Entitled *The Light from Hell*, it explores the line between hope and despair in Gaza, living without power, in every sense.

On the Solstice, Friday 21 June, activities centre round a community picnic at the West St Leonards Bathing Pool site. Everyone is encouraged to bring their own food, and there will be shared Palestinian food. Activities include a cycle ride, a beach clean under the title of *Caring for our Earth*, music, dancing and 'visual scribing' to create a visual memory of the event.

For more food experience, the Crown will be teaming up with



ARTS ON PRESCRIPTION

Arts on Prescription

guest chef from Dove café, Roa al Madi, to include *Maqluba*, a special collaborative dish, on their menu for the week.

For full information, see programme on p8 of the HIP List or contact rebecca@therefugeebuddyproject.org

ART IN THE PARK

On 19 June, between 10.00am and 3.00pm, as part of Refugee Week, the

Art in the Park team are inviting people to come and picnic to find out more about what they do and how they can get involved with the wonderfully creative Arts on Prescription (AOP). This will be a fun day with interactive creative workshops, once again celebrating the theme of *Our Home*. This will be in collaboration with other local groups promoting the services they offer.

AOP projects aim to bring art to all, making it accessible and af-



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- Hippocrates

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- Post-Operative and Injury Recovery
- Mental Health Problems

...and many more!



The Light from Hell exhibition

SAMAR ABU ELOUF



Sanctuary Festival

fordable. Tara Reddy says: “We rely on our community and fundraising to cover overheads and a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers to make it happen!”

The team of peer volunteers, artists and wellbeing practitioners provide accessible and inclusive weekly creative activities from Art in the Park at the old bowling pavilion in Alexandra Park to adults and families at pay-what-you-can rates.

Through the AOP peer mentoring

volunteer programme, attendees flourish, access further education and training opportunities, often leading to employment.

SANCTUARY FESTIVAL

On Sunday 23 June there is a free festival organised by Hastings Community of Sanctuary, which works closely with the TRBP. The Sanctuary Festival is a day of music, workshops, talks, activities for kids, food and friends and takes place at Hast-

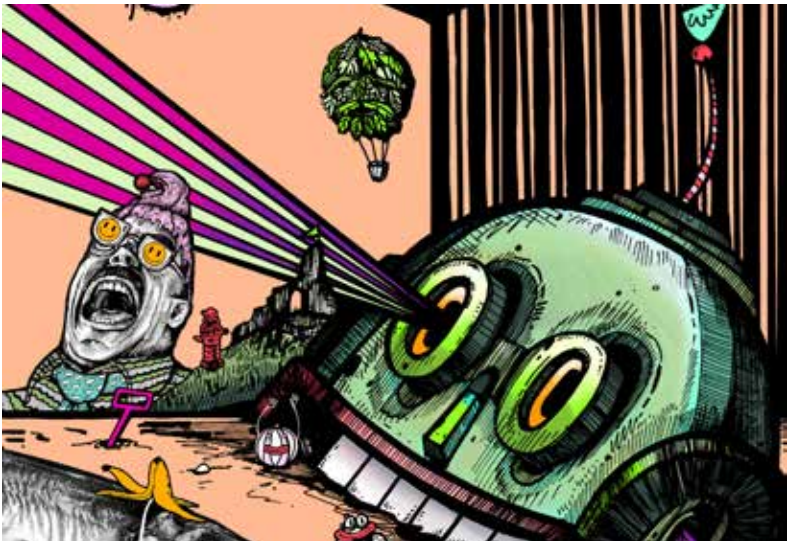
ings Museum & Art Gallery. It will be bigger than ever this year, with participants from 18 countries taking part.

HASTINGS COMEDY FESTIVAL

Get ready for a week of laughter as the 9th annual Hastings Comedy Festival returns this month. This year the festival will run for seven days from Monday 10 June to 16 June. Participating venues include, Electric Palace, Jenny Lind, East Hastings Angling Club, Ye Olde Pump House, Albion, The Crypt, The Printworks, Brewing Brothers (Courtyard) The Good Place, as well as The Piper, Heist Market, Oscars, Sugar Pie Honey Buns and Cumbia Kitchen in St Leonards.

There is a packed programme of shows throughout the week. Headliners this year include previous British Comedian of the Year Jeff Innocent, Desiree Burch, Lucy Porter and Russell Hicks. Award-winning comedians such as Funny Woman winner Kate Checka, BBC new comedian of the year Frankie Monroe and 2022 Hastings Comedy Festival newcomer winner Dan Harding will be performing their shows during the week.

Britain’s Got Talent star El Bald-



Hastings Comedy Festival

iniho will be performing his kid’s comedy magic show at The Observer Building on Saturday 15 June along with Jed and Gary and award-winning kids show, *Chemistry of Chaos*.

Hastings Comedy Festival Newcomer competition, *The Norman Award*, returns on Saturday 15 June at The Crypt. Dan Harding, winner in 2022, will be performing his show at Albion on 13 June. There are many, many more shows to choose

from. Programmes are available throughout the town, or you can check the festival’s website for full listings. This year’s poster and programme design is by talented local artist Georgie Wheeler.

Many shows are on a low-ticket warning, with some shows already sold out. The team encourages booking in advance to avoid disappointment, although tickets will be available on the door if the show is not sold out.

IT'S A
REVIVAL!



Henry Ward Hall

Inspiring Hastings

SUN 9TH JUNE
VOICES FROM THE EAST POLINA & MERLIN SHEPHERD, SASHA LURJE & CRAIG JUDELMAN
KLEZMER MUSIC, YIDDISH SONG AND THEIR CULTURAL NEIGHBOURS

FRI 14TH JUNE
KING SIZE SLIM
FROM THE M/V SEAWITCH
RETURNS WITH PABLO AND CREW

FRI 21ST JUNE
SONGS ON SEA WITH SAM CALVER MARIE WHITE, ALEX BRYSON & MIKE WILLIS
THE BEST LOCAL SINGERSONGWRITERS



SCAN HERE

Age UK at the Big Help Out

This week (3-9 June) is Volunteers' Week, and one way to get involved is to join *The Big Help Out* event, which takes place this weekend, between Friday 7 June and Sunday 9 June.

The Big Help Out is an online platform, available as a web browser or a downloadable app. It brings some of the country's best-known charities together to encourage people to sign up as volunteers to help their local communities.

The app allows you to contact groups or organisations near you and find out what options are available for volunteers. It also allows you to organise your own community events and contact others who would like to get involved. More than seven million people took part in last year's *Big Help Out* - getting together to make a difference in their local area.

Age UK East Sussex is one of those

joining the initiative, and it invites residents of East Sussex to try their hand at volunteering across a variety of roles. It is a locally focussed charity dedicated to supporting older individuals through services including befriending, practical assistance and social activities. The organisation aims to combat loneliness, promote independence and improve the well-being of older adults in the community. They say:

As well as providing much-needed support, volunteering also enables people to gain valuable new skills, confidence, experiences and friends. Age UK East Sussex offers many services, some of which include:

- **Befriender Volunteering:** to make sure that older people can access the services they require.
- **Macmillan Home Support Volunteering:** to ensure people diagnosed with cancer can access timely and practical support in their homes.
- **Social Prescriber Volunteering:** which involves working closely alongside employed colleagues, doctors and nurses in GP surgeries to help people over 50 engage with local services.
- **Age UK East Sussex Shop Team:**

the five shops and two furniture stores are reliant on volunteers to help raise vital funds for the charity's work and services.

- **Information & Advice Line Volunteering:** you will provide administrative support and assist with client enquiries.

To learn more about volunteering opportunities with Age UK East Sussex, pop in for a chat at one of the below venues on Friday 7 or Saturday 8 June, between 10am and 2pm.

- **Age UK East Sussex Furniture Warehouse** – Ranalah Estate, Newhaven
- **Age UK East Sussex Furniture Warehouse** – Maple Road, Eastbourne
- **Age UK East Sussex Shop** – 54 Cliffe High Street, Lewes
- **The Isabel Blackman Centre**, 3 Winding Street, Hastings
- You can also visit ageukeastsussex.org.uk or call 01273 476704



Take The Big Help Out Pledge and commit to volunteering between 7th June and 9th June. To find out more, visit thebighelpout.org.uk.

Summer Reading Challenge Volunteers Wanted

The East Sussex Library Service is looking for volunteers to help with this year's Summer Reading Challenge. Volunteers (13 years or over) are needed across the county's libraries to encourage children to take part in the Reading Challenge, which aims to keep youngsters reading during the long summer holidays.

Volunteers need to be available from mid-July to mid-September in all East Sussex libraries, with the minimum requirement being one shift per week of two or three hours. They will be involved in motivating children to complete the challenge and will also need to be prepared to talk to parents and primary

school-aged children about books and reading and hand out rewards for each book read.

There are other activities in the libraries, such as craft events, and volunteers can also get involved with these if they wish. Full training will be given.

Cllr Claire Dowling, lead member for transport and the environment at East Sussex County Council, says: "The Summer Reading Challenge is a great way to ensure our young readers keep reading throughout the long summer break, but we need your help to run the Challenge successfully in our libraries."

The 2024 Challenge starts in East Sussex Libraries on Saturday 6 July. It encourages children aged 4 to 11 to read six books during the school summer holidays. This year's theme is *Marvellous Makers* and centres around creativity.



To find out more about being a Summer Reading Challenge volunteer, or to apply, visit eastsussex.gov.uk/libraries/local/volunteering-roles-in-libraries/summer-reading-challenge-volunteer

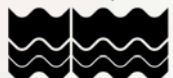


HM Government

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*Travel restrictions may apply.

Winning the Peace

KENT BARKER urges Labour to adopt manifesto policies from the party's famous 1945 victory

Keir Starmer's task on 4 July is being widely compared to Tony Blair's in 1997, but a more apposite parallel might be with Clement Atlee's battle in July 1945. Then Churchill had been in power for five years, heading first the coalition War Ministry, and for a few months afterwards a caretaker administration.

However bad things are today, there's no doubt they were far worse almost 80 years ago, following six years of fighting. Food was still rationed, Britain had spent close to £7 billion, or a quarter of its overall wealth, on the war effort. The national debt had risen by nearly £3 billion and there was a desperate need for housing. Yet a Labour leader took his party into a general election with a really radical agenda and won a landslide 145 seat majority. So perhaps Keir Starmer should re-read what his predecessor promised the nation in the 1945 manifesto.

To begin with the document, with a large red V emblazoned on

the cover, outlined the scale of the task ahead: 'The nation needs a tremendous overhaul, a great programme of modernisation and re-equipment of its homes, its factories and machinery, its schools, its social services.' The 2024 manifesto could import that sentiment wholesale. Atlee's Labour party recognised that, as today, there simply wasn't going to be enough money to pay for all their aspirations straight away and so proposed a National Investment Board to determine 'social priorities and promote better timing in ... investment in essential industries and on houses, schools, hospitals and civic centres.' This would be a useful concept to revive. Rather than policy being subject to immediate political expediency, Labour could allow the Investment Board to determine priorities – and to regulate private investment.

This, though, was but a preamble to radical proposals that were to

follow: 'There are basic industries ripe and over-ripe for public ownership and management in the direct service of the nation. Public ownership of the fuel and power industries ... gas and electricity ... will lower charges (and) prevent competitive waste.'

Given the price cap that even a Conservative government has been forced to impose on fuel bills, this doesn't look too radical. Nor, indeed, would the next commitment: 'Public ownership of iron and steel.' Yes, re-nationalise Britain's steel industry. Only last year the Tories handed private steel-maker Tata £500 million in



what they said was 'one of the largest UK Government support packages in history'. Rather than give the money away, let's invest in our own steel-making capacity. It's never likely to be profitable, but would save millions on foreign imports.

Housing was at the centre of the 1945 Labour manifesto, proposing the 'centralising and pooling of building materials and components by the State, together with price control'. But that didn't then, and wouldn't today, guarantee enough available land. And thus came the really radical proposal: 'Labour believes in land nationalisation and will work towards it, but as a first step the State and the local authorities must have wider and speedier powers to acquire land for public purposes wherever the public interest so requires.'

This policy was not just to free up building land, but to regulate agriculture to increase food self-sufficiency in food production. Although it never happened, it's another policy that could gain traction today.

Finally, a proposal that wasn't in the post-war manifesto but one that could certainly help Labour win now: a national programme to fill in potholes and resurface our crumbling roads! In 1945 Labour wasn't afraid of radical proposals and believed state ownership was nothing to be ashamed or scared of. Would that Starmer might grasp that nettle.

More Democracy

STUART ROBINSON argues that tactical voting following a 'primary' is the most likely way to achieve a progressive victory in Hastings and Rother

With Rishi Sunak's 'Drowning Street' announcement, at least we now know the date of 2024's general election. Could 4 July be our 'Independence Day' from the Tories?

Pundits and pollsters have all been telling us to expect a 'Tory wipe-out' or a 'Labour landslide'. Political observer Steve Richards in his Rock & Roll Politics podcast is certain there's no way back for the Tories. Johnson's Brexit psycho-drama and Partygate disgrace, plus Truss's near take-down of the UK economy have put paid to that.

The last time 'small-c' conservative Brits moved en-masse against the Tories followed the 1992 Maastricht Treaty/ERM fiasco. They lost one by-election after another until their eventual defenestration in 1997 with Blair's New Labour land-

slide. For any 'progressive' voter - Labour, Lib Dem or Green - after 14 years of Tory (mis)rule, a similar result can't come soon enough.

While Labour won't be every progressive's cup of tea, more than anything, I want to see the Tories put on the subs benches – or relegated altogether. There they can work out whether they do actually want to become the English Nationalist Party - who knows, they might finally get Farage as their leader?

But I'm still nervous, despite the recent run of record-breaking by-election swings for all progressive parties and most pundits soothing a Labour landslide. Remember the 2019 general election? The progressive and independent vote in Hastings & Rye was split and we stayed Tory. The era of pulling our



DAVE YOUNG

teeth out with pliers began.

Threatened with similar voting jeopardy, South Devon's progressive voters recently held their own 'primary'. Labour, Lib Dem and Green Party parliamentary candidates were invited to hustings across the constituency over several weeks. Interested voters then selected their preference. The result was shared across the constituency. Irrespective of underlying allegiances, progressive voters - as well as disaffected Tories - were encouraged to get behind the primary favourite.

Next level tactical voting! More democracy, not less – and not the other way round, as some within Labour and the Lib Dems have tried to frame it. Progressive voters taking back control – doesn't that have a ring to it?

The team behind South Devon's primary has run the numbers for every constituency in the country. Apparently there's a 96% chance of a Labour majority in Hastings & Rye this time round, so the constituency is not on a key primary list. This is a serious comfort. But even if we

were on that list, it's probably too late to instigate this most tactical of voting devices.

So, fellow progressive voters, think back to the dying minutes of the last zombie/schlock horror film you saw, one where the offending creature pulls the axe/shovel/stake out of its head/heart/torso to set up, yes, you guessed it, the next 'shocking' instalment of the franchise.

If you don't want to wake up on 5 July to find a Tory bogeyman in No.10 further sharpening the public-service slashing-knife there's only one thing to do: vote for the progressive party that's got the best chance of winning in your constituency.

Whether it's easy for you or you'd have to hold your nose, tactical voting has got to be better than plier teeth-pulling at some stage in the future.

I'm not party aligned. In the past I've voted Labour, Lib Dem and Green. This time round, it's going to be Labour for me. Personally if I had a magic wand, on 5 July, we'd wake up to a Labour majority and a Lib Dem official opposition. I dare to dream!

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and not of the publication. The Hastings Independent has no political affiliation and does not endorse any particular party.

Using Your Grief to Decorate Newspapers

BECKY STRONG



Salena Godden

MERLIN BETTS

The title here is a line that sticks with me, especially as election time comes round, and don't worry – the irony is not lost. When you're struck dumb by the weight of madness that flushes down from our politics and permeates the essential fabric of daily life, arguments start to seem trivial, complaints become impossible. You enter the twilight zone where the only thing that can pierce the murk and mire to express how you're actually feeling ... is poetry.

At least that's how I feel (as much as I'd like to throw a Molotov from time to time). Hastings poet and now national treasure Salena Godden recently re-released a piece she wrote for Black Lives Matter and performed with the movement's co-founder, Patrisse Cullors, in 2020. My title comes from that poem, *While Justice Waits*.

It feels like the horror and frustration expressed through social movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo are now drab, unremarkable, as though British citizens no longer have the luxury of sexism and racism. They're losing water, home, health, education – we are all losing the essential ingredients of life while the politicians sit by and re-elect themselves time and time again, just as racist, just as sexist, better at hiding, better at manipulating. We are all part of the same festering grey soup the political parties have abandoned on the stove.

*there they go again
suffocating light and hope
like a pillow held fast over the face
of the kicking and struggling truth*

And so Salena's poem can now access another audience and give voice to fresh frustrations. The latest release is accompanied by video

and music from filmmaker Wolfgang Dubieniec, which complements its stark portrayal of betrayal made commonplace. A hand floats and weaves from an arm stretched out of a car window, flying the slipstream – playful, childlike in another context. But as the poem progresses it becomes the obvious falsehood, the faceless operator, the politician, the policeman, feeding us all an infantile lie that we accept, that we are forced to swallow as the scene goes on. Cellos establish a sombre mood, and a chanting or droning becomes a wail:

*how can it be?
that when you wake in the night
wailing and mourning and hurting
they are marching on your tongue
they are renting your insomnia*

The hand adopts a life of its own, its movements embodying the refrain "there they go again," its gliding a mockery and a sideshow, its innocence subverted into the careless "theatre of performative cruelty". And then, we glimpse a face, a body. The hand becomes once again part of a human, a puppet master. Perhaps, for a moment, the sense of naivety is restored. Perhaps we imagine a face on "them," a humanity... which they don't yet understand, which they might never understand.



Express your grief, feel some solidarity, find the poem and video @salena.godden on instagram. And check out @wolfgangdubieniec for his other excellent work. Salena's own comments: salenagodden.substack.com. Her latest books: *Springfield Road* (about her childhood in the eponymous road here in St Leonards); *With Love Grief and Fury*, a new book of poetry befitting these times.



Through a Lens Brightly

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING
find out about an exciting new opportunity for young creatives in Hastings

I suppose you could argue that we are all film makers now. You can just get your phone and maybe with a little thought, make today's Instagram splash. But, what if you are really interested in making a film, with its guts and complexity? If you want to go beyond wacky or silly or just self-involved, then serious help is at hand.

In late May the Benbow Arts Space opened its doors in St Leonards. It promises real technical and creative instruction about the strange, complex world of making a film. The Benbow centre is a new creative learning hub that aims to give young people a genuine introduction to the whole gamut of skills and processes that underpin the making of a film. The courses allow students to use high-end kit and receive advice from experienced

film makers who really know their stuff, such as Will Davies, the respected local documentary maker from Whalebone films.

The centre is located at number 2 London Road within what used to be the Admiral Benbow pub. The project is being funded by the Bright Foundation charity which established itself in Hastings in 2022 as an educational and artistic resource centre for children, set in a delightful rural setting just minutes out of Hastings. John Bright is an Oscar and Bafta-winning costume designer who has decided to use his knowledge and connections to help young people in this town. In order to fund his projects, he recently held an auction of many of his famous costumes, which raised almost half a million pounds. Notably, Mr Dar-

cy's white shirt from the film *Pride and Prejudice* - as worn by a wet Colin Firth in the famous lake scene - sold for £25,000. Inexplicable perhaps, but extremely helpful for the Foundation.

The opening night at the Benbow was a wonderful event with live music, glitzy costumes and a room dedicated to the history of cinema. Along with the twinkly-eyed Bright himself, there were numerous luminaries including renowned international actor Greta Scacchi.

We asked if the Benbow Centre would be turning some young people of Hastings into film stars. That, as you might expect, is not quite the plan. The main idea is to offer people the chance to learn how to take the germ of a filmic idea from inception to final resolution. Genuine filmmaking is, in many ways, not glamorous at all; it requires planning and consideration of all manner of logistics before the cameras can begin to roll. In short, this is a fantastic opportunity for anyone who has even the vaguest sense that they might be good behind the camera.

If you have a story to tell, or an issue that you want to zoom in on, this centre could be your means of making it a reality. After all, the Admiral Benbow was the pub in *Treasure Island* from where Jim Hawkins' wild adventure began.

For more information contact office@brightfoundation.org.uk

Chantel McGregor Comes to Town

VICTORIA KINGHAM in conversation with a musical prodigy

Chantel McGregor is genuine, unpretentious, and supremely talented. She is from Bradford – an important characteristic in my opinion, but probably only because I was born in Leeds.

She's a phenomenon – read anything about her on the internet (her self-publicity isn't excessive, unrealistic, or exaggerated) and you'll note that she went to Leeds Music College and gained one hundred per cent in her final exams, not just for one segment or another but for the whole course. "It sounds a bit geeky," she told me. It does, but there's nothing wrong with being her kind of geek.

Her music is her own – she has recorded a couple of albums of other people's songs, many of which she covers so well that they sound better than the original. There's a reason for that, and it may be the concentration and the isolation of the lockdown period, or it may simply be the detailed attention paid. During lockdown, she published (on YouTube) a weekly video session: her audience told her she should record whatever song she felt like singing at the time. So she recorded, for instance, Bonnie Raitt's *Love Has No Pride* – just her and a perfectly tuned acoustic guitar – and I'm sure that if Bonnie Raitt has heard it, she might acknowledge not only the deference to, but the improvement on, the original.

AUTHENTICITY AND DEDICATION

Chantel has written many songs, some of which she will perform when she is here headlining at The Carlisle, normally a venue for substantial metal rock. She plays fabulous electric guitar too, with an authenticity that's born (incredibly in one so young) of more than thirty years' experience. She plays Voodoo Child with great skill and aplomb, and she loves 70s and 80s rock groups – Neil Young, Fleetwood Mac, Jeff Beck. She's also a big country fan – Miranda Lambert, Laney Wilson, Brad Paisley. Her taste is eclectic but excellent, her guitar work impeccable. Not, as has been said about her musicianship, how a girl ought to play. But she is one of a generation of girls and young women who care more about the music they love than any general preconceptions about what their gender 'should' be doing.

The more contemplative songs she carefully recorded on *Shed Sessions* 1 and 2, are beautifully done. Did she,

I wonder, have much input into the production of those two solo albums, released during lockdown and just after? Well, she says, I passed the weekly streams over to Wayne (Proctor) and he had the equipment to make them sound good.

You recorded them yourself? Turns out the vocals were initially done in a wardrobe in her home. "We've got a wardrobe with a trouser rail," she says. "So we covered it with a massive whiteboard and a blanket, and parted the clothes. We put a mike stand and a mike on top, and it made it completely soundproof". She had substantial input into the production: "there was a lot of sending things backwards and forwards and I was like, this is a bit ess-y, the sibilance is too high, and can we take out the string bit there. I'm quite obsessive ... but I don't know that it's detrimental."

It isn't. Her approach to songwriting is meticulous, techy, as she said, geeky, but in a good way. For lyrics she uses techniques to generate ideas: mind-mapping, diagrams, word association, that kind of thing. Of course, her own experiences as well. Sometimes a phrase just occurs to her and she works with it. Her song *Walk on Land*, for instance, was to do with revisiting a pub where she and her dad used to play a jam night. "It was absolutely terrible" she goes on. "Nobody was listening. I just said to my dad look, nowt changes, does it? Later I sat with it and found a rhyming line, and *Walk on Land* was developed, but I don't quite know what it's about!" That's OK, I think, Leonard Cohen was never sure what his songs were about either. It's the best song on the album, faultlessly produced, with a heartfelt, wailing guitar break.

IMPROVISATION

A substantial part of her music is improvised, so I ask her about jazz. Not that much, she says, "but I'll put something on in the van while we're touring, and it will really stick with me and I'll say OK, I want to play like that tonight. There's this band called Snarky Puppy ..."

Here I start to jump up and down. Snarky Puppy is one of my own favourite bands. I obsessed about them during lockdown and bored everyone I knew by making them listen. So she decided that on that particular night she would like to play guitar in the style of lead guitarist Mike Lettieri. Wanting to do

that is one thing. Being able to do it is quite another. Starting out with a guitar at four years old, as she did, she has enabled her infinite versatility of style.

What will your set be when you're here? I wonder. "It'll be a mix – a bit of everything. I do a little bit on my own in the middle of the set acoustically. It's just really a mishmash of different styles, and also what we fancy playing on the night and how the audience respond – if they like the heavy stuff we'll play more of that. You just read it. I always refer to the list as a menu, rather than a set list, so we choose while we're on stage, depending on the audience. A lot of

what we do is improvised, so a song could be 10 or 15 minutes depending on how we feel."

ALWAYS ON THE ROAD

She is constantly on tour. It's the thing she likes best, and probably why she hasn't made more albums over fourteen years. She acknowledges, too, that since everyone now streams everything, albums don't make the money they used to. (Spotify is great for listeners – who wouldn't want access to a hundred million tracks? – but unless you're Taylor Swift or some other singer with 32 million plays – it's terrible for many many good musicians). On her recent tour of Ibiza she was ac-

companied by her boyfriend, keyboard player Jamie Brooks, but she doesn't quite know yet who she will be bringing to Hastings. She makes a choice from a couple of people whom she regularly plays with, depending on availability. The gig will be all her own work, unless the audience has special requests for other songs. She'll go down a storm at The Carlisle. Whoever they are on the night, the band will shine. Tickets will sell out soon; get yours before it's too late.

Chantel McGregor headlines at The Carlisle, Pelham Street, Hastings, on 5 July 2024. Music starts at 7.30 p.m.



CHRIS GRIFFITHS



Auberon Waugh

Dynamism, Polymathy, Idealism

VICTORIA KINGHAM talks to another of many exceptional women concentrated in this small area. Trisha Napier is currently exhibiting portraits at the St Leonard pub, but her talents and involvements seem limitless.

Trisha Napier is lively, self-deprecating, wryly humorous. The portraits currently on show at the St Leonard are good, but as much as anything else they are markers along her life's trajectory. "A picture of Naim Atallah", she begins, "was selected for the BP Award at the National Portrait Gallery, along with one called *The Look of Love*, basically a hirsute gent in a bright shirt." That one is pictured here. "Naim was introduced to me by Auberon Waugh. He asked for a portrait and actually bought that one. For some of the other portraits I contacted *The*

Tatler and said, I'm a portrait painter, and they wrote an article about me and a couple of other portrait painters. I did a few actors, but some of them own their portraits now. Then I got distracted by other things, so portraits went a bit to the side. I did a course making holograms and designed these holographic pendants. I advertised them in the RSPB magazine and started selling them."

Victor Serebriakoff, a portrait of whom is on display in the exhibition, was an early member of MENSAs, involved in setting IQ tests and ex-

tensively promoting the organisation. As you might expect, Trisha is a member, and this led eventually to the portrait. Meeting people seems to be her speciality. "You meet someone in a pub, and they say, did you know so-and-so is looking for a PA? I became PA to BMP International, went to Kiev and set up a Telecoms conference for the World Bank. Then there was another company – a trade association promoting videoconferencing – we put on shows and workshops and stuff and I ended up as Executive Director."

I wondered how the portrait painting began, and whether she had been to art school. "I started painting quite young – my father used to frame my pictures, and an art teacher at school was very complimentary," she remarked. About art school, she says "I'd been acting in the local church in Shrewsbury where I grew up, and I thought: do I want to paint to order, or just paint for myself? In the end, I went to Webber-Douglas (drama school) at Kensington. I did drama and stage management, went on to be acting ASM at the Thorn-dyke, then went on to the National Theatre. I didn't end up staying there, because I had offers to do other things. I did a few small films, including a small part in *Quadrophenia*. I went on tours to Israel, Ireland, Sweden ... It was great! Then in the end I got sort of cheesed off, strapped into a corset in a film, all

that hanging around and waiting. I wanted to be busy, so started painting again. And I'd done a course in Speedwriting and typing, because I thought it would be useful."

Trisha then started working for the Independent Police Complaints Commission. "The job was PA to the Chief Exec, but I transferred down to case work, which was really interesting – you just had to do a quick test. Initially this was the police investigating themselves, but it turned into the IOPC [Independent Office for Police Conduct] and restructured. The IOPC were just starting, so they had people who were temps who were sensible and organised and had logic and awareness. I think now they recruit more intensely. I was perfectly able to do the job. I became an investigator, and was eventually running my own cases as lead investigator."

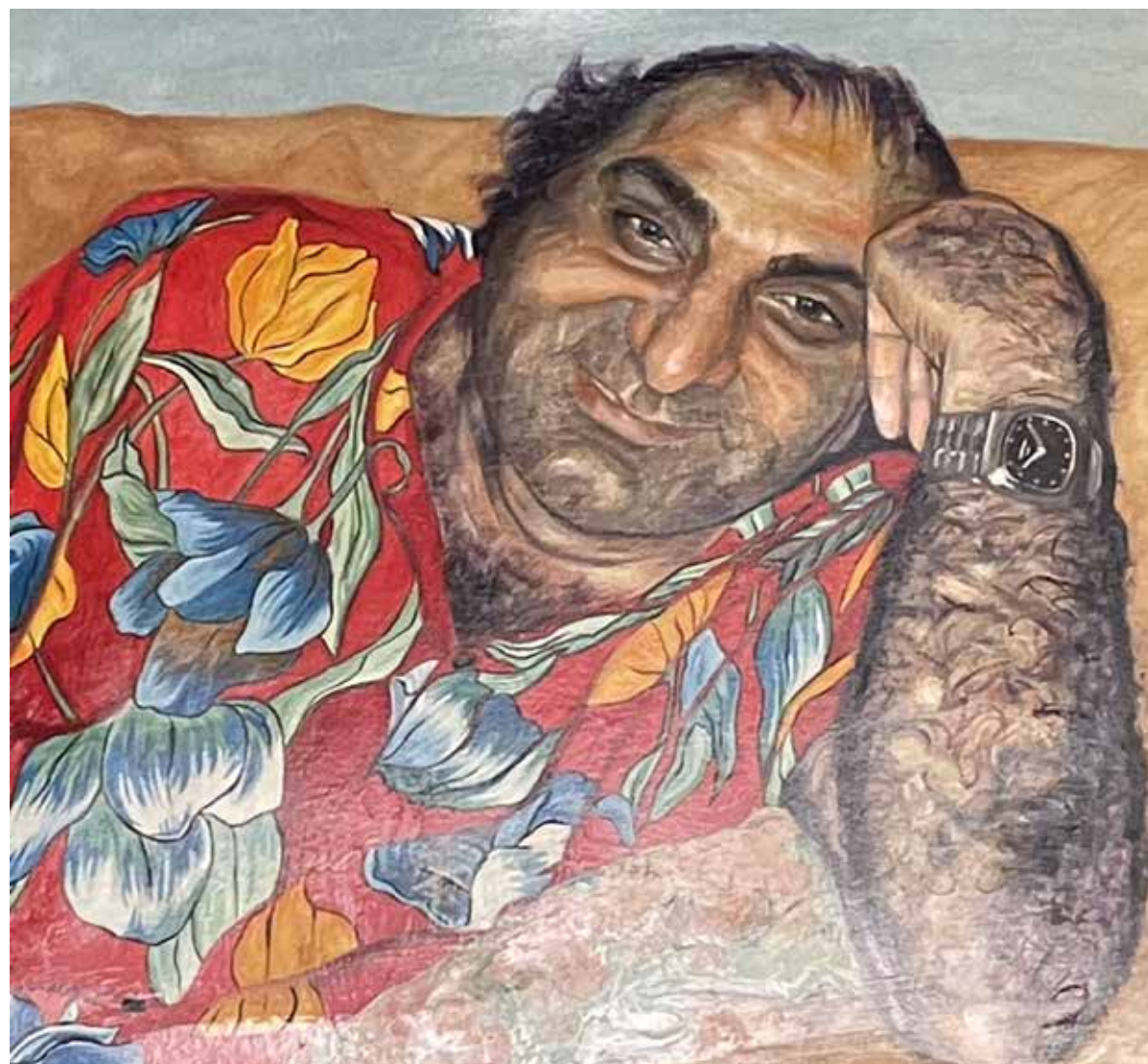
And if you find this oddly familiar, then yes, she is that Patricia Napier, who was interviewed on *BBC Newsnight* about the Bianca Williams and Rodrigo dos Santos case, and resigned after many years because as lead investigator on that case, she felt she could no longer work for an organisation that did not support her. You can find the details everywhere on line, so I won't enlarge on them here, except to say that two of the police officers involved have since been dismissed. The result of Trisha's

own case for constructive dismissal is still outstanding.

She and her family came here from London, after living on a houseboat at Canary Wharf. They had a seaside flat on the seafront, then decided to move down here permanently. "The people in the St Leonard (Chris, Phil, and Hulya) are really nice, so I thought I'd give an exhibition a go. And perhaps do another one in a few months' time in a different space," she continues. "I'd like to continue acting. I think I should probably be playing Miss Marple! I nearly got a part in *The Mirror Crack'd*, but they thought I looked too much like Kim Novak. I also have a stall in the Bazaar on Kings Road that I share, having developed an interest in auctions. So I sell stuff in the Bazaar on Saturdays."

Somewhere within this extraordinarily varied and absorbing life, Trisha has also managed to bring up a family. "I have a son, he's living in America with a Turkish wife and son. My daughter is living in St Leonards with husband and son. I am very close to my family. When I move though, I'm going to set up as a hypnotherapist. I'm always working," she says. "Moving from one thing to another, so life doesn't get boring." The story continues.

Portraits by Trisha Napier will be on display in The St Leonard, London Road, until 20 July.

Naim Atallah *The Look of Love*

BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Against Landlords: How to Solve the Housing Crisis

By Nick Bano
Published by Verso, rrp £16.99
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

Nick Bano is a barrister and has a different take on the causes of our current housing crisis than is usual. Economists tend to talk about ‘rent-gap’ theory, expecting actual rents to rise only if rental properties are improved, or to agree that a lack of housing stock is the problem. Bano says that in fact ‘they rise on existing residential buildings without any significant improvements to homes’, and puts much of the steep rise in rents down to ‘a deliberate government policy of state-backed rent-raising’. He gives considerable space to explaining how – a process he calls ‘the ratchet system’.

As is all too apparent, ‘tenants are all but powerless to say no to rent increases, because they all know what might happen if they do’. Section 21 notices are notorious and toxic. In Hastings I’d guess, from anecdotal evidence, that in fact maybe 50% of evictions are currently due to house sales, possibly in some cases due to mortgage interest rises. ‘The logic of “I want my property back” has no regard to the human drama that this necessarily sets in motion.’

THEY TAKE POSSESSION LIKE COLONISING FERAL CATS
Here is a pithy quote from a recent Socialist Project article, The Unhoused: Scapegoating Politics and Housing Struggles, by Adolph Reed

Jr: ‘the separation of homelessness as an issue from its roots in publicly subsidized real estate profiteering and the proliferation of low-wage employment and underemployment’. This clearly illustrates the void opening up under the 40% of us that rent.

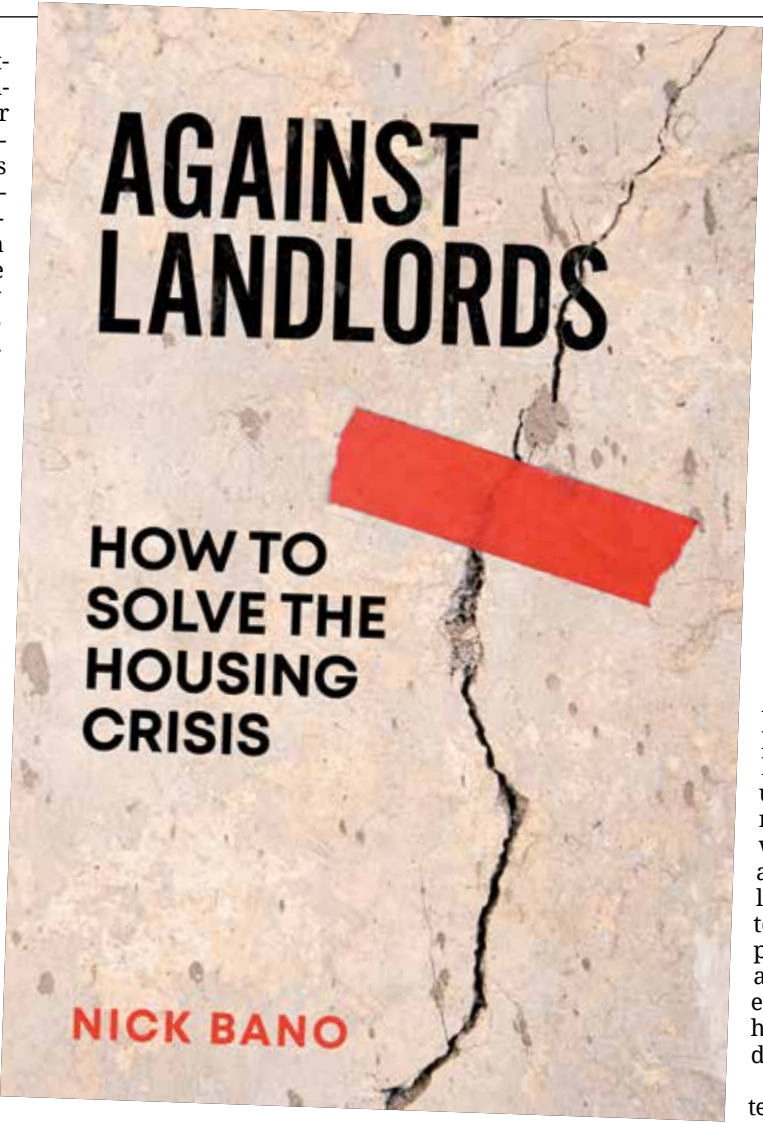
But Bano also goes against ‘received wisdom’ on the question of new-builds. As Jonathan Meades put it, in the London Review of Books (23/05/24), ‘Today’s volume builders, patently less accomplished than those of the 1920s and 1930s, hoard and ‘land-bank’ plots. They take possession, spraying their demesnes like colonising feral cats. Their behaviour is sanctioned by the Tory Party, which they wholly own, and by timid, somnolent Labour. Then, when the moment is deemed propitious, they dump repetitive boxes on their territory.’ Here in Hastings, ‘affordable’ housing – always actually unaffordable or at least out of our reach due to mortgage rules, whereby you can pay a high rent but apparently not an often-lower mortgage – barely exists anyway. And social housing elements are dodged regardless of HBC planning requirements.

THE MARKET IS BASED ON GREED
Naturally Bano critiques Housing Benefit, calling it the ‘landlord subsidy’, the benefit being a primary reason those of us in precarious employment can’t afford ‘affordable housing’. This critique takes us on a detailed analysis of what is nowadays called ‘rentier capitalism’, which is to say, capitalist profit with

no productivity attached, a core post-industrial last gasp for capitalism that massively exacerbates the poverty gap. Although housing benefits ‘may have been designed to alleviate severe poverty’ they in fact ‘merely serve to ensure that housing costs can keep rising [...as they] interact with the system of untrammelled rents in the private sector’.

These ‘perpetually rising rents’ are a uniquely ‘safe’ form of investment. If inflation makes your mortgage interest too high, raise the rent, or sell. I have zero sympathy for this conundrum, landlords have only themselves to blame, at a minimum I would ban second-home and buy-to-let unless no mortgage is required to make the investment in the first place. Historically, things weren’t so easy, but the deregulation of the private rented sector (and everything else) has blown the lid on the market, which is based on greed, an ‘I’m alright Jack’ culture, with no rent controls or tribunals to appeal to. These are the bastard children of Thatcherism, and her spawn rule free across our backs ever more gleefully. With an election due next month, we can hope for change, but as the elite in all parties are very often landlords themselves, and anyway cornered daily by construction industry lobbyists etc, while we stick a pencilled cross on a bit of paper every five years, I expect little change.

A WORLD WITHOUT LANDLORDS
Regardless, Bano takes a similar path as Ken Livingstone did when



organising, deeply informed by his experience and his historical perspective encompassing past successes, and failures. This includes an analysis of race and empire impact of the housing system, especially in London. He rightly sees ‘right to buy’ as a double-edged sword. All new council housing will still be required to include ‘right to buy’, which makes it a hard sell for cash-strapped councils. Ironically, first introduced under Labour in the 70s, albeit weaponised under Thatcher, it needs to go, along with second homes and ‘buy-to-holiday let’, indeed all ‘buy-to-let’ except under public ownership, and to address the estimated 70% of homes that are ‘underoccupied’.

The closing chapter is entitled ‘Conclusion: A World without Landlords’.

Recommending, amongst other things, law reform, he says ‘we can work towards decommodifying housing, and drive landlords and house-price speculators from the face of the earth. We have done it before, and we must do it again.’ In the current ongoing housing crisis, this is the sort of radicalism we need.

Against Landlords: How to Solve the Housing Crisis is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE

POETRY CORNER

Hastings Woman
BEN FAIRLIGHT

Our sea front is all curvy lines and flowing smiles,
Rock-striped huts and hats that glint for miles
Along sand and shingle and rainbow-dot dresses.
And then, across a crowded prom, the Goddesses’
Goddess herself breezes ‘tween team skate-bladers,
Wafts her scarf stylish, while paraders and followers,
Bides her shades, basking strollers, panting dog walkers,
Flicks her head back, as three towel robe wallowers
Whistle her and each other and coasting cyclists
Together all sway, sculpting joy out ‘the air
To ripple out the dance over cars, motorcyclists,
Shop windows, wan storerooms, streets in Ore village,
Through Old Roar jewellers after her own image
So sought after, so ever-young, so never there.
Seen her anywhere?

CROSSWORD CORNER

- Across**
1. Pull on Old Town bar (6)
3. Binding recording (6)
4. Title left to become small (6)

- Down**
1. A bit leaden, tall and all about teeth (6)
2. Legging about with no end could be an annoyance (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					



Sunshine and Cocktails

FIONA MCGARRY visits deluxe restaurant and cinema, The Sussex Exchange

The first time I visited The Sussex Exchange, I was struck by the fact that the clientele were nearly all women. This was perhaps because I was there to see *Barbie* with my 93-year-old mother and my two daughters – while the males of the family babysat. It was a perfect venue for *Barbie*: the pink cherry blossom décor imparts a calm, friendly and feminine atmosphere. Even the lighting has a pink hue, while some of the cocktails (and the mayonnaise) are very pink.

It is set in an impressive modern building, slightly unusual in that it seems in the middle of nowhere, the town to the east and the beautiful Sussex countryside to the west. It describes itself as “an eco-friendly restaurant and bar plus conference and event venue ... with views over

the ancient woodland of the Marline Valley.”

Encouraged by the setting, I went again with my elderly mother, this time for an elegant Sunday afternoon tea. There was a good range of tasty sandwiches and cakes, and the huge scones came with lashings of jam and cream.

We sat on the terrace, which had a Love Island/ Mediterranean vibe and was warm and sunny. Again, the clientele was predominantly female – both young and old (20s to 90+). It's the sort of place that will appeal to a lot of women, perhaps because it feels safe, luxurious and spotlessly clean (apart from the ‘dirty burgers’). The attentive but low-profile staff had tablets and headsets – more Dubai than Hastings.

My third visit was for drinks at



sundown. Customers had described the cocktails and mocktails as “elegant and more-ish”, “unreal”, “insane” and “the best around”, so I had to see for myself, this time with my husband. We chose two of their best sellers, a pink one and a blue one: the Cherry Blossom, with cherry vodka and Sourz, cranberry and lemonade and the Majestic, with blue Raspberry Vodka and blue curacao and served with peacock feathers. Egged on by the cocktails we then ordered a mezze for two – after all, it is Lebanese owned. It's not our usual kind of afternoon out but it was fun and relaxing.

Most online reviews for the Sussex Exchange are peppered with superlatives and adjectives like “AMAZEBALLS!” although a few customers have complained about their meat being too rare (or is it just the pink LED lighting?) and one or two raised an eyebrow at the titanic amount of ice in their cocktails. The “loud beach music” and occasional entertainers (bongo player, saxophonist, magician) don't appeal to everyone. But, if you fancy treating yourself to a bougie cocktail or two; a naughty cream tea; a vibrant meal while you watch the vibrant sunset or, of course, an immersive cinema experience ... this could be the place to throw caution to the wind and just go for it.



Introducing Bunka

A trio of foodies announce an exciting series of pop-ups. **STEVEN SHORT** investigates.

The world of hospitality is not going through a particularly sunny patch right now (hard to get good staff, soaring rates, cost of living, Brexit, etc) so it's great to hear that we are set for a summer of exciting pop-ups and residences around Hastings and St Leonards.

Working together as Bunka, chef Joshua Levy, street food pioneer Celia Farrar and operations expert Tad MacDonald are bringing years of food and restaurant expertise to Boatyard at Heist, Sleeper Store and The Beacon on selected dates throughout June, July and August. “We went through loads of name options,” says Celia. “Bunka is Japanese for ‘culture’.”

Bunka menus take in Italian and French, thanks to Josh, who was previously at the award-winning Eight Bells pub in Jevington and at Light at Eastbourne's Townner. Then there are Asian influences – Celia started Europe's first poké street food stall in London and has also written a book about Hawaiian-inspired sushi bowls. Highlights from the summer menus they will be showcasing include red curry sausage flatbread, aged Bavette steak with grilled chilli relish, hand-torn noodles and aubergine karaage with mission Chinese spice and dipping sauce – vegans are well catered for at all venues with separate menu offerings.

Celia and Tad relocated to Hastings from London after the pandemic – they both have parents here – and always intended to set up their own business when the time was right. While Joshua was working in Eastbourne and Polegate, Tad has worked as operations manager at

Heist, Boatyard and Farmyard in St Leonards, so it's safe to say the trio have a good idea of what locals want, what works and what doesn't.

They are also unfazed by working across different locations and with different menus – “Our menu options are diverse, and we can change it depending on the kitchen, and the market,” says Tad. “Sleeper is going to be takeaway Banh Mi (Vietnamese sandwiches), while at the Beacon there's a great outdoor oven so we'll focus more on flatbreads and that kind of thing.”

“We've done a lot of street food and events, so we know it's going to be tough,” says Celia, “but we're used to it so it's not too scary, going into new sites and new kitchens. Also it'll be easier because there are three of us.”

“We hope we're offering something a little different to what's available at the moment, certainly from a food perspective,” adds Tad. “We're really passionate about food but also about service and going the extra mile for our customers.”

A summer of moving around town, getting to know different locations, kitchens and locals is also great research into what and where the perfect permanent home would be – the trio's ultimate ambition. Watch this space.

Bunka will be at Boatyard in Heist on Mondays and Tuesdays throughout June, July and August and at Sleeper Store and The Beacon, as well as at Journeys Wine Bar in Eastbourne at various points throughout the summer. Follow @bunkarestaurant for updates, sample menus and schedules.

CRICKET

Priory Batting Comes Up Short

25 May:
Hastings Priory 175;
Cuckfield 176 for 2
1 June:
Middleton 214 for 4;
Hastings Priory 155 all out

HUGH SULLIVAN

In winning their opening two matches, the cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory looked well adjusted to their regained top-table status in the Sussex Premier League. But the past fortnight has shown there's still some tuning to be done, as they suffered comprehensive defeats at the hands of two of the strongest teams, Cuckfield - last season's champions - and Middleton.

Most obvious issues are in the batting. Captain Harry Scowen made centuries in each of the first two games. But at Cuckfield on 25 May, he was bowled out in the second over for a duck, and last Saturday (1 June) he wasn't available to play in the home match against Middleton. Shorn of his scoring power, the rest of the batting line-up marches to the wicket more in hope than expectation.

On the bowling side, the pack can be shuffled to maintain a variety of styles. Adam Barton and John Morgan offer an opening blast; Adam Page, Seaver Cowley and Iden McCleave have been returning good figures with their medium pace; Jed O'Brien made a welcome return to the team last Saturday to add his left-arm spin to the leg spin of Alex Osborne. But, unsurprisingly, it's proving harder to contain the higher quality batsmen of the Premier League than those Division 2 batting line-ups that were regularly skittled last summer.

Against Cuckfield, Scowen won the toss and chose to bat first - the formula for success in the previous two games. Within five overs Scowen, Osborne and Cowley were back in the pavilion with just two runs between them. Caleb Laloo, recalled to the side in place of the injured Dylan Woolley, made a painstaking 43, and the middle order - Tom Gillespie (21), Greg Devlin (17), McCleave (39) and Morgan (25) - all contributed valiantly, but all found boundaries hard to reach, and Pri-

ory's eventual total of 175 looked difficult to defend.

So it proved, as Cuckfield set off at a canter. Morgan took a couple of wickets, but the home opener Henry Rogers was in blistering mood, finishing with 100 not out off 85 balls (11 fours and four sixes). An unbeaten third wicket partnership of 105 runs brought victory with eight wickets and more than 20 overs to spare.

A week later, on a damp pitch at Horntye after heavy rain in recent days, visitors Middleton won the toss and elected to bat. For much of the innings they scored slowly, with captain Sean Heather taking 143 balls to score 72. Barton, Morgan and O'Brien all enjoyed economical spells for Priory. But, with wickets in hand, the batsmen gradually accelerated, Josh Wood scoring 82 not out from 78 balls. The total of 214 for four (three of the wickets taken by Page) looked a tall order for Priory to match without Scowen in the line-up.

Deputy captain Tom Gillespie (22) started brightly, but Middleton's pace bowler James Hartshorn dismissed him, Osborne (0) and Laloo (4) within the first six overs, and the middle order had once again to embark on a saving mission. Cowley (15), Adam Keane (19), Will Hutchings (26), McCleave (19) and Morgan (10) all reached double



Caleb Laloo - a painstaking 43 against Cuckfield

figures, but none were able to take command as Heather and Wood had done, and the team were bowled out 59 runs short.

Tomorrow Priory travel to Three Bridges; the following Saturday (15 June) they host Worthing, who were promoted with them from Division 2 last season but have lost all four matches so far.



Kane Penn (in white) in action for Hastings 2022/23

FOOTBALL

Exit Agutter, Enter Danny Bloor

HUGH SULLIVAN

The merry-go-round of football management appointments is perennial material for the national media from back pages of newspapers to talk-Sport radio - who's coming, who's going, who's being paid what. In non-league football, the names may be little known outside of specialist fan bases, and the money parsimoniously allocated. But for local clubs, the choice of manager and the willingness to stick with him - or his willingness to stay in the post - are key ingredients in success.

Chris Agutter, who in his second period as manager of Hastings United steered them to a finishing position of seventh in the Isthmian Premier League in April this year, has departed. He has been enticed to move along the Sussex coast to Worthing, taking over a team which finished third in the league above, the National League South (NLS), but lost out on promotion after defeat in play-off semi-finals.

He has been replaced at the Pilot Field by 54-year-old Danny Bloor, who himself was manager at Worthing for four years between 2007



Danny Bloor at the Pilot Bar last Saturday

and 2011 and, more recently, enjoyed four years at the helm of Eastbourne Borough between 2019 and 2023.

AVOIDING RELEGATION

Agutter's remit, when he returned to Hastings last October, was straightforward, according to United owner Dean White - "to not get us relegated". He did a lot better, restoring confidence after a run of poor results under the previous short-lived managerial reign of Paul Barnes, bringing back a number of former players from exile (Jack Dixon, Sam Cruttwell and even Sam Adams), and guiding the team both to the brink of a play-off position in the league and to contest the final of the Sussex Senior Cup.

Even if both those ventures ended ultimately in disappointment, the team's performances over the latter part of the season were clearly seen in local football circles as confirmation of Agutter's pedigree. Seeking to better himself, at least in status, by moving to Worthing is not a big surprise - he's still only 36, and the opportunity to manage a team that looks capable of elevation to full National League level can't have been difficult to accept.

But, for Hastings United, the arrival of Danny Bloor is also potentially an important milestone in the development of the club since the Whites took it over. Bloor steered Eastbourne Borough twice to top half finishes in the NLS. He has signed a two-year contract at the Pilot Field and lost no time in mak-

ing a lively appearance along with Dean White at a forum meeting with 'U's fans at the Pilot Bar last Saturday morning.

"You are a unique club", he told his audience. "This is the best-supported non-league club in Sussex, and it's owned and run by real football people [the Whites]. I aim to be manager here for a long time."

'NOT A LOT OF CHANGES'

First step would be to appoint an assistant and other coaching staff, which he expected to be able to announce within the next ten days or so; and at the same time to agree terms with players for the 2024-25 season. He said he hopes to retain most of last season's team. "It's a young squad, they'll be a year older and stronger. There's not going to be a lot of changes."

Ollie Black, the defender renowned for his long throw, has followed Agutter out to Worthing. However, Bloor unveiled his first new signing at the forum meeting - another returnee, Kane Penn, who featured in Gary Elphick's promotion-winning side in 2021-22 but joined Folkestone Invicta last season. News of contracts for other players - those retained or new recruits - will filter through in due course.

Asked whether his future 'U's side would play out from the back like Agutter's, Bloor emphasised that he would prepare them to be adaptable. "Half the teams in the league now have, or are getting, 4G pitches", he said. "On those pitches you can play like that. If we had a 4G pitch too, it would be better for everyone. But we'll do with what we've got - and, if the surface gets bobbly, we have to adapt."

Asked about wider ground improvements, Bloor deferred to Dean White, sitting alongside. White confirmed that "something has to be done about the stand", and indicated that the United club board has already had a constructive meeting since the recent local elections with the new Green-run borough council. Further developments should be awaited.

SANCTUARY FESTIVAL

WELCOMING EVERYBODY SEEKING SANCTUARY AND REFUGE IN OUR TOWN

**Sunday 23rd
June 2024**

**Hastings Museum
& Art Gallery**

12-6pm

FREE ENTRY

**Music Art
Workshops
Talks
Storytelling
Food Friends
Fun for Kids and
more!**

**Organised by Hastings
Community of Sanctuary
Raising funds for Hastings
Supports Refugees**

Band from the Barracks

Fol'klor Musiqaa

Soundwaves Choir

Sanctuary Sounds

The Shady Pines

Now and Then

Charlie Austen

Orchestra from Everywhere

**Fat Tuesday Second
Line Youth Band**

Culbaba Theatre

DJ Remi Vibesman

hastings.cityofsanctuary.org

Disabled parking only on site